

THE LUTHERAN

JUNE 2014

# AMBASSADOR

A photograph of a person's arm and hand holding a small, dark brown leather-bound Bible. The person is wearing a light blue t-shirt and blue jeans. The background is a soft-focus field of tall grass under a bright sky.

*THE  
EVANGEL*

# He gives rest

BY ANDREW KNEELAND

*"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).*

**R**est and relaxation are popular goals in today's workaholic world. People rush to and fro from one activity to the next, striving to get that promotion or maintain that appearance. So much effort and energy is spent in the accumulation of things that many successful advertising campaigns offer "the most satisfying rest you've ever experienced, or your money back."

But that's one of society's greatest lies.

True rest is impossible without the One who makes it possible.

An afternoon snooze in a broken-in recliner may give you the energy you need to finish the day, and a weekend spent on a sunny beach in Miami might make the next work week a little less foreboding. But those breaks are temporary, and soon the weariness will be back.

The rest Jesus offers us in Matthew 11 isn't merely a pit stop, nor is it temporary. It's an all-sufficient, all-encompassing respite from everything that causes us worry or strife. And it's all offered free of charge from the One who has already paid in full.

When Jesus says, "Come to me," He's not giving us a laborious task, but a gospel invitation. It's not just another job on our list; it's allowing Him to meet all of the demands for us.

Some of the people Jesus was talking to in Matthew 11—the people who were weary and heavy-laden—were legalistic tax collectors and Pharisees. People who lived their lives dedicated to fulfilling God's demands and matching His standards. Jesus had



worldview-shattering news for them: their best wasn't nearly good enough.

Weariness is a symptom as common now as it was then. Take one look around you, even in the Church, and you'll see people trying their very best to get the very most. Ironically, people exert all their energies as they look for peace and fulfillment. After all the empty searching and aimless seeking, what is left is simply weariness, fatigue, and emptiness. We can't find true rest on our own.

But praise be to God that He doesn't leave us in this state of helplessness and self-pity. He asks us to stop our strivings and simply come

to Him. He invites us to join Him to enjoy the peace He freely and lovingly offers.

Jesus paid the ultimate price to give us the ultimate gift. He left heaven's throne room to become man, He lived a life without sin, and assumed on Himself the guilt of the entire world. Jesus satisfied God's standards, and proved His superiority by dying and coming back to life, conquering death and Satan once and for all. And now He shares the victory with us.

The work has been done. Jesus has taken care of everything. Let's stop trying to satisfy God's demands and start living as thankful children.

"For we who have believed enter rest ... For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His" (Hebrews 4:3,10).

*Kneeland, a 2013 graduate of AFLBS, attends Atonement Free Lutheran, Arlington, Wash.*

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It may be all too easy to think that the age of evangelism ... has come to an end. But this is the kind of thinking that leads to the blight which rests on the church whose vision has failed.

—Marcus Loane

To evangelize is to spread the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures, and that as the reigning Lord He now offers forgiveness of sins and the liberating gift of the Holy Spirit to all who repent and believe.

—Lausanne Covenant

The work of evangelism could be likened to the links in a chain. No link is more important than the other. Even the last link cannot take precedence over the first. ... How wonderful to be able to say with the great apostle, "We are laborers together with God" (I Corinthians 3:9).

—Billy Graham

Christians are reborn with silver tongues in their mouths. It is just natural for Christians to talk. Christians can fail to feel the urge to speak of Jesus Christ no more than children can suppress the joy of the heart or restrain themselves from sharing a secret.

—Robert Kolb

# ONE- W

BY PASTOR BRETT BOE

“Why does the Evangelism Committee exist?”

A good question, considering it came from a committee member during a recent meeting at King of Glory Lutheran Church in Shakopee, Minn. Members began their meeting with that question, but the discussion soon took a turn toward how to evangelize in modern-day society.

“People are tired of being marketed to. They want to know that you genuinely care about them. They want to know that you will seriously listen to their questions,” said Robert. This sentiment hits right on the pulse of a growing shift in evangelism. The face of evangelism is changing in the 21st century. One does not need to read the latest study by the Barna Research Group to know that times have changed.

If the face of evangelism is indeed changing, what is on the way out? While certain techniques seemed to work in the last century to bring many to Christ, those same techniques don’t seem to be as effective as they used to be. The huge rallies that were led by Billy Graham—in which thousands packed stadiums—now infrequently occur. People who were changed by these experiences many years ago often think that the techniques or styles of evangelism used to win them to Christ should be the same means employed to win people to Christ now. Though often well-meaning, we sometimes forget that God, in His sovereignty, can use whatever means He wants in bringing people to Himself.

On a smaller scale, church outreach events often don’t appeal to a younger generation. Churches strain to be cutesy and gimmicky in order to bring people into the doors of the church. We should put a kibosh on bait-and-switch techniques. People, especially millennials (those born from 1980-2000), feel burned by such events. They come for the advertised fun and games but feel used when they realize that the church really just wanted to grab their attention to get them to come to church, or they feel like the church is twisting their arms into believing Christ. It is important to keep in mind that whatever we use to win people to come to church, that is the same thing we will need to keep doing to keep them there.

The Church often forgets that we have the most powerful tool at our disposal when it comes to evangelism—the gospel. By using bait-and-switch techniques, the Church communicates to the world around them that she is embarrassed about the gospel. Recently someone pitched an evangelism outreach event saying, “Don’t worry. There is no doctrine contained in this production.” Of course it contained doctrine. If there is no doctrine, there is no teaching. And if there is no teaching, then what are





# TO-ONE

people clinging to by faith? “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation” (Romans 1:16).

What is on the way in? The shift in evangelism can be expressed as going from a mindset of “come on in, we’re here for you” to “we’re coming to you with a life-saving message.” The shift has gone from impersonal to personal. Impersonal techniques of evangelism are easy. While handing out tracts, books, and other Christian materials are great tools, they are not the end-all, be-all of evangelism. Christians are finding life-on-life discussion to be the most effective way to evangelize in today’s world. With the example of Jesus with the woman at the well in mind, people are engaging others around them in conversation.

The new face of evangelism is going to be hard work. Though the former techniques should not be thrown out completely, other opportunities are arising. It will happen when you talk to your neighbor as you lean over the fence between your yards. It will happen when the farmer throws out a spiritual feeler to his farmer friend in a conversation. It will be you engaging with the employee of the coffee shop that you frequent. It will happen when you invite unsaved friends to supper at your house. Give them space to air their doubts and questions about faith. Ask good questions that lead to further discussion. Learn how to engage the post-modern thinkers around you. Use social media to launch discussions that spill over to real-life conversa-

tions. In all of these ways, don’t shy away from pointing to Christ and the cross.

We may be tempted to despair, thinking that the myriad people who live around us will never believe in Christ. The world seems to be “going to hell in a hand-basket.” But, as Carl F. H. Henry states, “The early church didn’t say, ‘Look what the world is coming to!’ They said, ‘Look what has come into the world!’” This same Christ who has come into the world for us also sends us out into the world with His light and truth.

*Boe serves King of Glory Lutheran, Shakopee, Minn.*



# METHODS

Y

You're desperate. How do you reach a loved daughter, sister, or friend, who has for years been enslaved to immoral behaviors? Especially when she feels her beliefs are just as good as anyone else's. Can she possibly be saved from this bondage of death? Is there a method? Is it foolish to hope that God would bring a believer across her life's path—one who would listen to her and lovingly share the truth of God with her? Then, in an unlikely moment, He does just that. Someone listens and speaks. God acts. She is transformed. And the testimony of her faith brings many more to believe in Christ. To God be the glory!

*BY PASTOR MICHAEL BRANDT*

You're bewildered. From a human point of view, you don't really expect that a crusade crowd comprised of neighborhood religious types and skeptics will be very willing to gather and listen to a simple law and gospel sermon. Will this method of evangelism really work? And yet, when 3,000





noblest and greatest work and most important service we can perform for God on earth is bringing other people, and especially those who are entrusted to us, to the knowledge of God by the holy gospel." Keeping this in mind, prayerfully consider the following methods of evangelism:

**PREACHING:** Luther, expressing his heart to preachers of the gospel, said, "We must imagine that we are in a shipwreck or in a fire, where one must labor to snatch at least one brand from the burning if it is impossible to control or to extinguish the whole blaze." He said we can't save them all, but we can save some. Recognizing Sunday morning's evangelistic opportunity is vital. As I began my pastoral ministry, my dad motivated me with these words, "Michael, encourage your members to bring others to church and then preach so as to bring them to Jesus." There is no greater worship of God than the salvation of a soul.

**EVANGELISTIC SERIES/REVIVAL MEETINGS:** For years, this method of evangelism has been mightily used of God. Currently around the world, thousands are being brought to Christ through large and small crusades. However, with the busyness of the American culture enveloping rural and metropolitan communities alike, many church leaders have found this method of evangelism frustrating and difficult to implement. Nonetheless, it should not be abandoned. In order to confront the cultural challenges of our day, the Spirit's guidance through prayerful planning, coupled with effective equipping, is an absolute necessity. This method works, if we are willing to work.

**RELATIONSHIPS/FRIENDSHIPS:** God desires that every believer be engaged in personal evangelism. "He (Andrew) found first his own brother Simon ... he brought him to Jesus" (John 1:41a, 42a). Today's church needs an Operation Andrew method of equipping members to invite/bring souls to "come and see, come and hear." I Peter 3:15 says, "But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence." In order for this method of evangelism to be effective, building friendships with those outside of Christ is essential. To enhance your impact, consider connecting with other believers. One believer may have a unique gifting that enables him to easily make friendships, while another has an ability to concisely present the gospel message. Going two-by-two complements the gospel's impact in a dynamic way.

**EVENTS/OPPORTUNITIES:** When it comes to evangelism, what do the following have in common? Turkey shoots, a community food pantry, wild game feeds, friendship coffees, Moments for Moms, a neighborhood block party for Jesus, Family Life weekends, gospel concerts, financial freedom seminars, backyard vacation Bible schools, puppets in the park, etc. When the Spirit's limitless creativity is coupled with the gospel, each of these events offers an inviting way to draw people to Christ. Each event will require teamwork and preparation. You will find that the results will be well worth the effort.

**SOCIAL MEDIA:** "... I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some"

(I Corinthians 9:22b). I think the Apostle Paul would use Facebook as a method of evangelism.

From tweeting to blogging, the avenues for proclaiming the gospel abound. While the world uses it for evil, believers need not shy away from using it to proclaim Christ. As with every method, a careful and thoughtful approach must be applied. While the gospel may offend, our manner should not be offensive. In all truth, this is simply an extension of the time-honored method of sharing gospel tracts. It's the wireless form.

God-ordained methods of evangelism are as limitless as the creativity of the Holy Spirit and as powerful as the gospel. "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who is wise wins souls" (Proverbs 11:30).

*Brandt, Rapid City, S.D., is the director of Shepherding the Shepherds ministry and is on staff at Abiding Savior Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls.*

of them repent and believe, breathtaking hardly describes it. This is a divine, heaven-sent miracle!

Is there any doubt? Evangelism is the heartbeat of heaven. God is the relentless seeker of souls. And He has His ways. The above accounts are recorded in John 4 and Acts 2. They highlight two different methods. In both, the working of God's Spirit through the gospel is powerfully displayed unto His glory and the salvation of souls.

Convinced of this, we passionately take to heart the words of Martin Luther, "The

T

The host of a radio program I was listening to relayed some information that caught my attention. He noted churches were not showing the same enthusiasm for evangelism with the new wave of faith-based movies (*God's Not Dead*, *Son of God*, and to a lesser extent *Noah*) as they did ten years ago for the release of *The Passion of the Christ*. He then attributed this to the lack of commitments and conversions to Christ that were recorded as a result of the evangelistic efforts coinciding with *The Passion of the Christ*.

This doesn't really surprise me, to be honest. While films, books, and even current events might present us with unique opportunities to share the gospel with unbelievers, the fact of the matter still remains that it is the gospel message from the Word of God that needs to be communicated.

With that in mind, here are three facets of the Word of God that make it central to evangelism:

THE WORD OF GOD IS GOD'S MESSAGE. As you read Scripture, you are reading God's own words (II Timothy 3:16). And as God speaks to you through His Word, He is communicating a very specific message: law and gospel.

One of the basic tenets of Lutheran theology is that Scripture is divided between law and gospel. Earlier in the book of II Timothy, the Apostle Paul wrote, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth" (2:15). The Word of God is rightly handled when God's Word of law is distinguished from His Word of gospel.

God's Word of law reveals to us the standard of His holy and perfect will and shows us our failure to live up to that same standard—which is what sin is. God's Word of gospel reveals all that He has done for us in His Son, Jesus Christ.

What's important to note is that this law/gospel distinction in God's Word isn't a way of interpreting Scripture, but the very way in which God

has spoken in Scripture. Because of this, when we are communicating Scripture to someone else, it is important that we are letting God's Word reveal both sin in that person's life and draw them to Jesus with the promises of the gospel.

THE WORD OF GOD IS A MESSAGE ABOUT JESUS. As we are engaging someone with the truths of Scripture, it is also important to realize that all of Scripture is designed to point us to Jesus. Jesus taught this: "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me" (John 5:39).

The Bible is full of wisdom and practical application for just about every area of life. We can glean help from its pages for relationships, parenting, finances, etc. But







# NECESS- ITY OF THE WORD

BY PASTOR JASON GUDIM

the Bible is about Jesus Christ. From Genesis to Revelation, God is revealing His plan for salvation in Jesus, first in the history of Israel, then in the words of the prophets, and finally in the person of Jesus Christ.

Seeing Christ in every part of Scripture leads us into our final point.

THE WORD OF GOD IS A MESSAGE THAT CREATES FAITH. As fallen humans, our natural response to sin is to try and earn God's favor—to do something else that pleases Him (and hopefully cancels out our sin). We want to do better, try harder, etc. Ask just about any person on the street, and they will tell you they believe they'll get into heaven because they're good people. And they believe they're a good person because the good outweighs the bad in their lives.

That's not how things work with God, however. The Bible tells us that even the very best of what we do comes tainted with sin. "We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away" (Isaiah 64:6).

But God's response to our sin is foreign to us. Instead of demanding from us better behavior, He forgives us. He forgives us because of His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus fulfills God's law where we have failed. Jesus takes the

punishment we deserve for our sins by taking our place on the cross. And Jesus wins a victory for us over sin, death, and the devil, and demonstrates this with an empty tomb.

We couldn't invent this, and wouldn't even be aware of this if the message of the gospel had not been told to us. "... for, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ... So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Romans 10:13-14, 17).

As we consider evangelism today, what must be central to our thinking and to our actions is not the latest movie or book or trend. It is the Word of God—God's message about Jesus Christ—that creates faith. Amen.

*Gudim serves Faith Free Lutheran, Minneapolis, Minn.*

I

I was a fourth grade Sunday school student at Emmaus Lutheran, Bloomington, Minn., when I first met Gene and Doris Quist.

Gene was an executive at a prominent utilities company in Minnesota, my father told me. Doris was the bold and fascinating large-group teacher of our Sunday school group—leading 50 to 70 fourth to sixth graders, as I recall. Gene was a long-time member of our church, but a recent convert to Christ.

He would later resign from his high-paying position at Minnegasco to take a position at Campus Crusade for Christ. Years later, Gene also served on the AFLC Commission on Evangelism and encouraged me often when I was dean of the Association Free Lutheran Bible School.

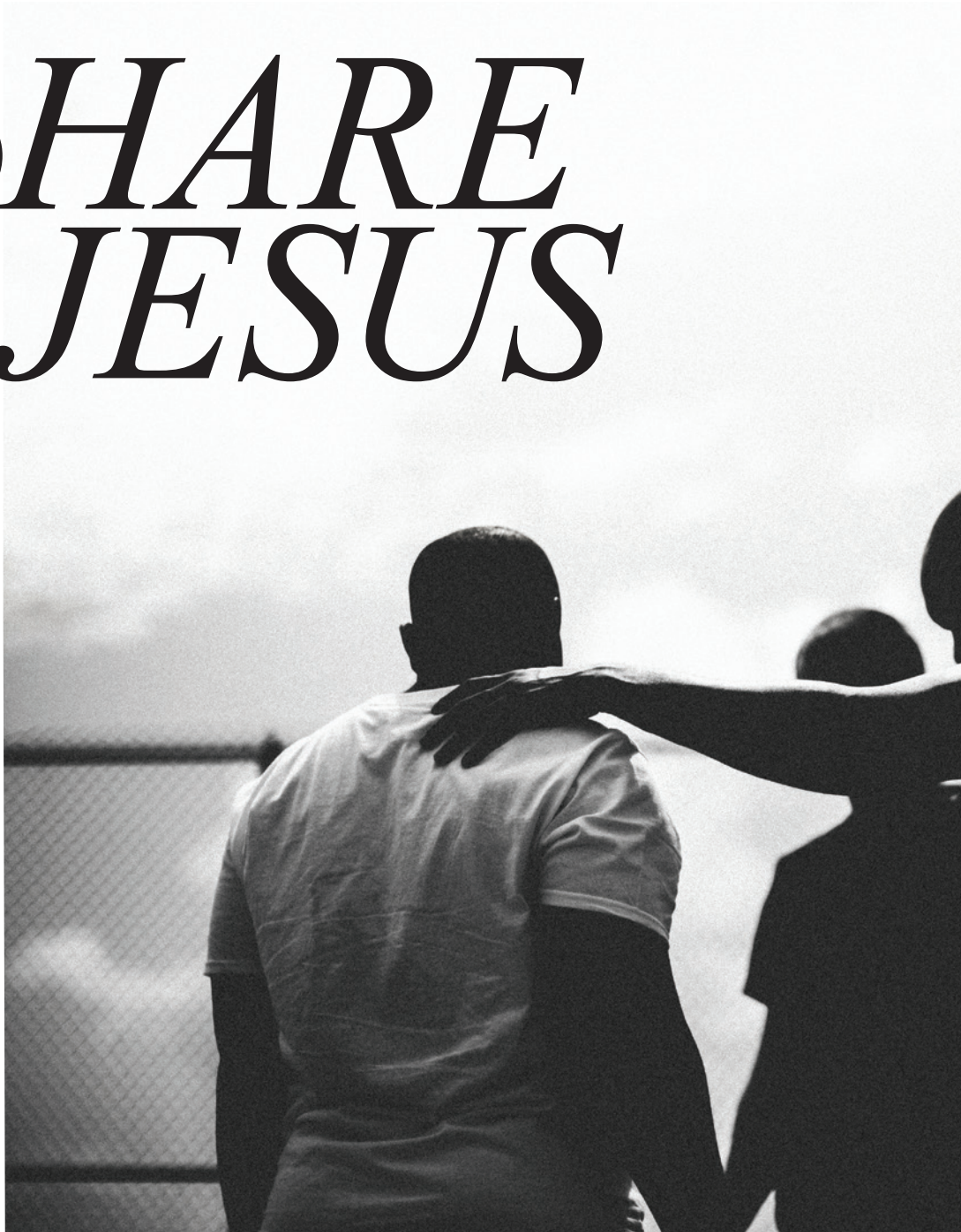
*BY PASTOR JIM JOHNSON*

But it was Doris who captured my attention each week when I was a kid. At the start of the Sunday school hour, she told stories of her witnessing experiences. “I’m praying for you,” she would tell friends and acquaintances to their faces. “You need to be saved.”

“How can she say that?” I thought to myself. But week after week, I would listen and wonder. Those edgy, poignant, and sharp conversations made me think for days on end.

Many of those people started coming to our church. Their testimonies

# SHARE JESUS





were convincing. I studied them and stared. They were real, live people, impossible to ignore, joyful and confident. They were friends of the Quists and now friends of Jesus. They told their stories of forgiveness and freedom, and I loved hearing them.

I was not yet a devoted follower of Jesus, so I didn't want to get too close in those days. I often veered from personal contact with both the Quists and their new friends. But I couldn't help but listen—Doris' stories of salvation astounded me and Gene's personal energy and warmth were hard to ignore. Gene would often quote from his training at Campus Crusade: "Witnessing," he said, "is taking the initiative to share Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and leaving the results to God."

I liked the definition, but I doubted that I would ever be a witness—even if the results were up to God. I was shy and a non-disciple. And scared to surrender to Christ.

I became a true follower of Jesus when I was in high school. Many of the young students the Quists encouraged and discipled were the ones who became influential in my own conversion. They were happy and honest and effective Christians and part of a 40-member youth choir that Doris helped organize. I wanted to be like them.

Gene and Doris are gone now. I saw them at my parents' funerals and remembered that fourth grader they helped inspire. Many times when I'm witnessing to a dad at a baseball practice, or counseling in a coffee shop with a young father who wants

to repair his marriage, or praying with a high school student to embrace Christ as Lord, I think of Gene and Doris. When I read the verse in Jeremiah 23:29—"Isn't my word like fire or like a hammer that shatters a rock?"—I feel like Gene and Doris are quoting it to me sometimes.

Austrian composer Gustav Mahler once said, "Tradition is tending the flame, it's not worshipping the ashes." I agree. Promoting evangelism isn't worshipping the ashes of the great evangelists of the past. It's doing what they did. It's sharing Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit, leaving the results to God. Georg Sverdrup would say the same, I think. I'll mostly leave evangelism history to the historians. I want to be a tender of the flame. They make disciples. Like Gene and Doris did.

When I get the privilege to pray with a senior woman on a hospital visit, or help a college student respond to God's call to missions, or sit with a man in his 40s at the Camarillo Starbucks to receive the Lord Jesus as Savior, and when I see the tears coming down his face, I think to myself, "I wish Gene and Doris could see this." They would praise God.


My guess is that you know couples like Gene and Doris Quist. They live and serve in northern Illinois. They teach classes in Iowa, and they make disciples in western Washington. They share the gospel in Camarillo and say, "You need Christ." They lead Beth Moore and "The Way of the Master" Bible studies. They sometimes use "Sharing Jesus Without Fear," a curriculum that Gene liked. Some teach at our seminary and pray for souls.

Some are executives. Some are IT net workers. Some are auto mechanics or home school moms. Some are as articulate, bold, and edgy as Doris used to be, back in my boyhood. Some do it more quietly and gently. But either way is fine with me. They all come from God. They are sent out by the Lord of the Harvest.

And some are fourth grade students who want to tend the flame.

*Johnson serves Good Shepherd Free Lutheran, Camarillo, Calif. This article is reprinted from the May 2012 issue of The Lutheran Ambassador. Gene Quist, a member of the Evangelism Commission and a tireless advocate for evangelism, died March 25 His obituary can be found on page 20.*





T

BY KAREN PEDERSON

Timothy was given encouragement in his second letter from the apostle Paul to “fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you” (II Timothy 1:6). That gift of salvation, wrote Paul, was a “good deposit” given to Timothy, which had the express intention of being multiplied in the lives of others. The “work of an evangelist,” wrote Paul, begins with fanning the flame with the power of the Holy Spirit. I think of Paul’s second letter to Timothy when I recall the ministry of evangelists in my life.

I grew up going to summer Bible camps and attending special meetings at Bethel Free Lutheran Church in Grafton, N.D. Those events often included evangelists who were invited as special speakers. Those meetings made an impression on my life and I know they impacted many more lives, as well. In the 30 years that I have been a member at Zion Free Lutheran in Tioga, N.D., I have talked with fellow members who were positively impacted by the work of evangelists.

Most of us recall special meetings held at our church every spring and fall. Those meetings included a week of services on a special theme. Many remember the “fresh Word from the Lord” delivered by Pastor Herb Franz. And others described a “revived spiritual life” after a series of meetings with Pastor Michael Brandt. An evangelist by the name of Pastor Lars Stalsbrotten spoke at Zion in the 1950s and those who were there recall that when the Word was shared, they received “a new perspective from a new voice.”

Over dinner, we reminisced about evangelists with big laughs, big humor, and big personalities such as pastors Franz and Brandt, and Pastor Ken Pentti. But when the preaching of the Word began, these same men “fanned into flame the gift of God’s salvation,” just as Paul exhorted Timothy. Each of them had the knack of warming up to people, then asking them the important question, “How is it with you and the Lord?”

We all experienced evenings sitting under the teaching of God’s Word from these men. Those evenings were much like the encounter of two disciples with Jesus on the road to Emmaus. When their eyes were opened and they recognized Jesus, they said, “Were not our hearts burning within us while He talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?” (Luke 24:32).

Pastor Brandt has shared in our congregation and also last summer at the FLY Convention in Estes Park, Colo., where many of our young adults responded to the preaching of the Word. They said that they felt like they could not sit any longer, but needed to get up and go forward because the Holy Spirit was working on their hearts. My heart burned in the same way back in the early 1970s at Bible camp in Cooperstown, N.D. Pastor Richard Snipstead preached and I felt God’s call to come to the altar and commit my heart anew. I felt that same burning in my heart that the disciples who met Jesus on the road to Emmaus felt when He explained the Scriptures to them.

Another evangelist, Pastor Rosenius Norheim, used music in a unique way by beginning his service with his autoharp. I can still hear his Norwegian brogue from listening to him as a child. Ron Nelson played piano for Norheim’s radio ministry, called The Lutheran Gospel



# AN INTO FLAME

Hour; he still stops by to talk about his travels with Norheim. Roy Hope was another evangelist who ministered God's Word through teaching and music as he visited churches across the AFLC.

After the passing of pastors Pentti and Franz, the Association had a variety of evangelists and our church had many speakers. They may not have been known as evangelists, but they did the work of evangelists. Pastor Steve Snipstead came to our church and shared a series in an interesting format about making disciples. Pastor Ken Thoreson preached the good news through the media of chalk drawings. When the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy about a time coming when "teachers say what itching ears want to hear" (II Timothy 4:3-4), I think of Pastor David Barnhart who teaches clearly from Scripture and points out the error of churches that have strayed from the truth.

We have sat under the teaching of Pastor James Molstre and his brother, Pastor Mark, as they both challenged us. Through them,

the eyes of our hearts were enlightened and we knew the hope of our calling. In fact, I've been taught by their father, David, and his father, Pastor Harry Molstre.

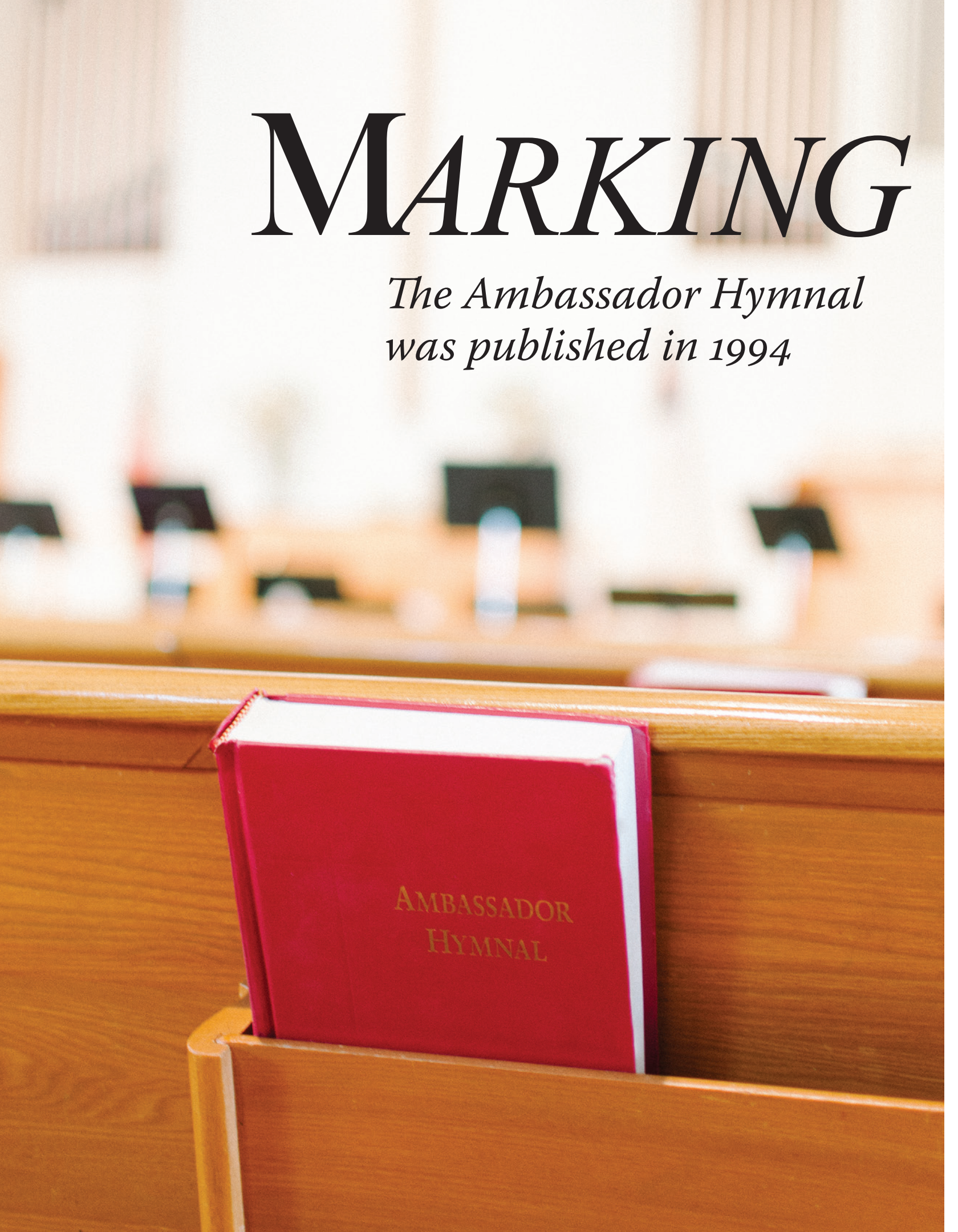
God has used these men as conduits of spreading His Word. And that Word has been actively at work in the lives of many people. Acts 2:37 says that when the people heard the Word of God, "they were cut to the heart, asking, 'What shall we do?'" I am thankful that the evangelists that I have known throughout the years have always had an answer for that question. They were ready to "preach the word" (II Timothy 4:1) to everyone who asked and were able "to give the reason for the hope that [they] have" (I Peter 3:15). When the Holy Spirit has done the work of conviction, evangelists have been used by God to lead people to repentance and new life in Christ.

*Pederson is a member of Zion Lutheran, Tioga, N.D.*



# MARKING

*The Ambassador Hymnal  
was published in 1994*

A photograph of a church interior. In the foreground, a red hymnal with the title 'AMBASSADOR HYMNAL' in gold lettering is placed in a wooden pew. The background shows other pews and a blurred altar area with a cross and candles.

AMBASSADOR  
HYMNAL



# 20 YEARS

BY PASTOR TOM OLSON

A note in front of my *Ambassador Hymnal* says, “First copy of the hymnal seen, June 2, 1994, AFLC headquarters.” In 20 years, more than 25,000 copies of the hymnal have been printed.

In the early 1980s a committee was appointed by the Board of Parish Education to study the possibility of reprinting the *Concordia Hymnal* with a supplemental section of “choice hymns,” or creating a new hymnal. The committee conducted a survey and reported to the 1983 Annual Conference that there was not sufficient interest, and the project stalled. A few years later, I was directing the AFLBS Choral Club while I was studying at the Free Lutheran Seminary. During a spring tour, we sang at several churches, and I noticed that generic evangelical hymnals were rapidly taking the place of the Lutheran hymnals. I thought it was a tragedy to lose the Lutheran hymns and worship services, so I decided to do my Master of Divinity thesis about that topic. I had just started work on my thesis when members of the AFLC Coordinating Committee recruited me to head up a new attempt to assemble a hymnal for the AFLC. The project became my focus for the next six years, and the thesis had to wait.

The Coordinating Committee appointed a hymnal committee and members were tasked with choosing content and other duties: Oryen Benrud and I edited work from the *Concordia Hymnal* and gleaned content from *The Lutheran Hymnary*; Pastor Donald Greven chose hymns from the *Augustana Hymnal* and *Favorite Hymns of Praise*; Pastor Rodger Olson chose hymns from *Great Hymns of the Faith* and *Hymns for the Family of God*; Pastor Norman Dornquast gleaned content from other Lutheran hymnals and edited the Common Service; Barbara Moland produced a children’s section; and Cynthia Erickson developed ideas from the organist’s perspective.

Other exceptional participants included Pastor Brian Davidson, who edited and contributed computer expertise; Marilyn Johnson, who typeset content and commissioned her son, Lee Eddie Johnson, to contribute two new hymns for the book: “God of History” and “Our Praise;” and Emil Fossan, who proofread the hymnal.

Contributing content to the hymnal were several members of our fellowship. A communion service was designed by Pastor Robert Lee. The topical index was prepared by Carol Knapp. Pastor Curt Emerson contributed the confessions of sin. The “Way of Salvation” was written by Pastor Ralph Tjelta. And Pastor Einar Unseth and Kathy Daeley contributed hymns they wrote. Seminary professor Gracia Grindal edited the hymn tune names, composers, authors and dates. And Pastor Davidson developed a concordance of all the words in the hymns.

These people worked long hours along with no less than 72 other helpers. All of their names and their contributions, along with a detailed history of the hymnal project, are documented in my thesis, “The Development of the Ambassador Hymnal.”

The AFLC Declaration of Faith (1962) states: “Hymn books should be such as will give honor to the Word of God and the Sacraments.” In light of that, the following guidelines were also set by the hymnal committee: Lutheran doctrine would not be compromised; it would reflect the congregations of the AFLC as it exists at the moment; it would meet hymn needs of congregations; it would include a children’s section; and the hymnal would include a variety of services.

AFLC people sent in hundreds of hymn suggestions, which we culled to 634 hymns. We also added the “Augsburg Confession,” “Luther’s Small Catechism,” and the three ecumenical creeds, along with Bible responsive readings. The simple *Concordia* order of worship and the full “Common Service” are included. There is also a beautiful two-volume spiral organist edition.

In honor of the various ethnic backgrounds of the AFLC and our mission fields, the following hymns were included with a verse in those languages: Norwegian/Danish: “I Am So Glad Each Christmas Eve,” Swedish: “Children of the Heavenly Father,” Finnish: “Lord, as a Pilgrim,” German: “Silent Night,” Spanish: “Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross,” and Portuguese: “Standing on the Promises.”

Augsburg Publishing House was very cooperative, but they told us that we were crazy to take on a hymnal project as amateurs, since *the Lutheran Book of Worship* took a decade to be developed by experts at the cost of hundreds of thousands of dollars. By God’s grace, our novices completed it in six years at a cost of about \$3,000 for committee travel, \$12,000 for editing, and \$6,000 for copyright permissions. The total cost of the project, including typesetting and printing, was about \$260,000. With about \$30,000 in donations and \$425,000 in sales of the books at \$12 to \$18 per book, the net profit of the project has been almost \$200,000 for the AFLC.

People tell me that the *Ambassador Hymnal* has been a blessing. Some of the strongest proponents of the project who spoke up when we needed it over the years include Don Rodvold, Barb Moland, Pastor John Strand, Pastor Richard Snipstead, Pastor David Barnhart, Pastor Orville Hiepler, and Pastor Mel Meyer. Serving as the chairman for the project was one of the greatest experiences of my life.

There is one thing that I hesitate mentioning. The hymnal can be improved, and I have ideas. Therefore, after 20 years, it may be time to form a new committee to edit and revise the *Ambassador Hymnal*. Are there any other volunteers?

*Olson serves St. John’s Lutheran, Newark, Ohio. A copy of Pastor Olson’s paper is available from AFLC Parish Education, or by contacting him directly at [pastortomolson@gmail.com](mailto:pastortomolson@gmail.com).*



JUNE 2

# WATERS IN THE WILDERNESS

"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death" (1 John 3:14).

Christ died for us in order that we might live. He also declared Himself to be the way, the truth, and the life. We note here a pattern that Christ has set for us. The way leads to truth, and the truth to everlasting life in Him. Thus we, too, can know that we have everlasting life.

When Jesus was born into this world He knew no sin. As He began His preaching and teaching, many rejected Him and scoffed at Him. Yet He loved these people, too. It is so easy for us to become angry with a neighbor, and to let this anger grow into a grudge; the grudge grows more and more into hate. Jesus said that if we do not love our brother we abide in death.

As the people nailed Jesus to the cross, He could so easily have hated them. He could have hated Judas who betrayed Him, Pilate who sentenced Him to death, and all the people who took part in the awful deed of crucifying Him. But instead of hating them He prayed this remarkable prayer for them, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." This is possibly more than any of us could do; but the same spirit of forgiveness ought to be in our hearts toward them who spitefully use us. By this we can know if we have passed over from death unto life. Christ alone can give us grace to do so.

*John Arlen Johnson, Sacred Heart, Minn.*

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



# Christ's ambassadors

BY LYNN WELLUMSON

In Peter's first letter, God's elect are referred to as "strangers and aliens in the world" (1:1, 17; 2:11). Jesus makes this clear in His High Priestly Prayer when He says of His disciples, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of it" (John 17:16). It is clear from God's Word that He sends believers into the world to make disciples (Matthew 28:18-20); to be His witnesses (Acts 1:8); and to be His ambassadors with the message of reconciliation (II Corinthians 5:18-21).

So God has placed us here. We are sent by Him into a hostile world to call those from that world to repent and believe in Jesus, the One who accomplished all that is necessary for them to be reconciled to God. When Jesus sent out the 12 to proclaim the kingdom of God, He instructed them, "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves" (Matthew 10:16).

On April 5, a group of pastors and laypeople gathered at Zion Free Lutheran Church in Tioga, N.D., with John Talley, a lawyer from Illinois, who also serves on the AFLC Schools Board of Trustees. This was the most recent of eight meetings held in various churches throughout the Western North Dakota/Eastern Montana district of the AFLC. For what purpose did they meet? To learn and discuss how they might be "as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves" as they serve as ambassadors for Christ.

Anyone who is paying attention to the news today is aware of the attempts and the successes to silence Christians. What is going on in the courts today? What can be said and when can it be said legally? When should Christians speak up despite the legal consequences and when should they tread lightly? What should be in a church's constitution and by-laws? How can Christians best prepare to keep a lawsuit from damaging the congregation and its ministry? What care should be taken in selecting volunteers who will work with youth or children from both within and without the congregation? What policy manuals should be produced for



use of property or for council members, ministers, employees, and volunteers at a church? Is it important to follow the constitution, bylaws, and manuals of a church? What policies should there be to prevent false accusations or to prevent temptations in counseling situations?

These and many other questions were dealt with at the Saturday meetings. The information and the task may seem overwhelming. But as Christ's ambassadors, Christians should take care that they never carelessly bring dishonor to His name. Most importantly, share the gospel, which is God's power for the salvation of all who believe.

Thanks, John Talley, for encouraging us to remember why we are here and the care we need to take that no unnecessary shame come to the One who loved us so much. Thanks for encouraging us to love Him in all we do.

*Wellumson, a member of Emmanuel Free Lutheran, Williston, N.D., is the president of the Women's Missionary Federation.*





## AFLC Schools wraps up 2013-14 year

The AFLC Schools, Plymouth, Minn., held the final chapel service on May 8 with Pastor Robert Lee, interim dean for the Free Lutheran Seminary (right) speaking. Members of the Concert Choir, Proclaim Choir and Wind Ensemble provided special music. Graduation services for the Bible school and seminary were held May 17 on the campus of the schools.



## People and places

**Joshua Skogerboe**, a 2014 graduate of the Free Lutheran Seminary, has accepted a call to serve St. Olaf Lutheran, Montgomery, Ill.

**Dr. James Lamb**, executive director of Lutherans For Life, has announced his desire to retire from this position at the end of December 2015. A search committee has been formulated and will be accepting names for application to this position.

**Pastor Michael Peterson**, Alexandria, Minn., was installed as chaplain for the Knute Nelson Hospice in the care center chapel on March 27. Pastor Todd Klemme, Starbuck, Minn., preached the message and co-presided at the installation, along with leaders of other corporation member congregations.

Members of the AFLC Coordinating Committee recently accepted two pastors to the AFLC's Fellowship Clergy Roster: **Pastor David Olson**, Sioux Falls, S.D., serves as pastor of Care Ministry at Abiding Savior Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls; and **Dr. Karnig Kazanjian**, who serves Zion Lutheran, Silverhill, Ala.

**Matthew Ballmann** has been called to serve Abiding Savior Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D., as pastor of discipleship ministry. Ballmann, who served his pastoral internship at Abiding Savior, will be ordained at the AFLC Annual Conference on June 13 in Valley City, N.D.

**Pastor Tim Jones** has resigned without a call from Community Lutheran, Oceanside, Calif.

**Licensed Pastor Gerald Steele** will be ordained June 13 at the AFLC Annual Conference in Valley City, N.D. Steele recently completed coursework through AFLTS' Summer Institute.

**Pastor Brett Boe** was installed May 18 at King of Glory Lutheran, Shakopee, Minn., with AFLC President Pastor Lyndon Korhonen officiating.

**Jesse Kneeland**, a 2014 graduate of the Free Lutheran Seminary, was ordained May 18 at Solid Rock Free Lutheran, Anoka, Minn., with Pastor Lyndon Korhonen officiating.

**Lee Kuhns** has accepted a call to serve Faith Lutheran, El Campo, Texas. He has been approved for the Fellowship Roster and awaits ordination.



# A most beautiful thing

BY PASTOR JONATHAN ABEL

**T**his year marks a presidential election year in Brazil. Soon we will see posters of candidates all over the place. Some years ago I noticed that of the many hundreds of candidates, only those who had been involved for some time with local social activities in their communities got elected. In other words, they were involved before getting involved.

This brought to my mind something about the ministry to our Lord. Many students come to me saying they want to be pastors or missionaries, or develop a great ministry and the like. But the first question I have for them is: What are you doing for the Lord right now? It is my observation that most people who are called by God into full-time Christian service are already serving the Lord in their local congregation long before God calls them into full-time ministry.

The work starts in our “Jerusalem,” the area where we live, and moves out from there. Along with this thinking is the idea that if we are to have workers for the Kingdom of God, we need to be getting people involved on the local level. This is exactly what I try to do as I work with young people and our church members.

I am often reminded of this as I trim the Birds of Paradise—very beautiful semitropical flowers—in my back yard. We have quite a few of them growing here in Maringá, Brazil. The ones in my yard are so beautiful, but hardly anyone sees them because they are surrounded by a big wall, causing them to be hidden from view. Yet there they continue to bloom, and the one who always sees them is God, their creator. He knows that they are doing just what He created them to do. They bloom where they are planted, though there is no glory in it. The glory they bring is to their creator, and He rejoices in their beauty.

So, too, we must bloom for Him where we are planted. He may choose to uproot us and transplant us to another place—and He often does. Sometimes He takes us to places we never could have imagined going. Until then we are to be doing three things for the Lord.



First, witness. Acts 1.8 says, “and you shall be witnesses unto me [Jesus], both in Jerusalem [where you are planted] and in Judea [your local garden or forest] and on to ...” (emphasis of author).

Second, serve the Lord with gladness. Colossians 3:23-24 says, “Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.” You may be asked to teach Bible studies, Sunday school or VBS, or clean the church, or even take food to the poor, minister in a jail or half-way house, or give financially to God’s work. Whatever we do, be it great or small, may it be unto the Lord.

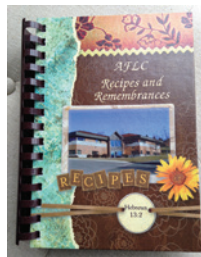
Third, walk with others. That is, disciple or teach someone younger in the faith what you have learned in your walk with Jesus. This will bring you great joy and will prepare you for whatever ministry you sense God is calling you to do.

So bloom where you are planted and it will be a most beautiful thing to the glory of God.

*Abel is a missionary with the AFLC serving in Maringá, Brazil.*

## Additional copies of cookbook available

AFLC World and Home Missions would like to thank Wendy Kupser and Kathy Bandy for their hard work to produce the AFLC Cookbook last fall to raise funds for missions. Home Missions has ordered another 200 copies of the AFLC Cookbook to meet additional requests.



The cost for each book is \$20, with \$4 for shipping. Please email your orders or questions to [aflc.cookbook@gmail.com](mailto:aflc.cookbook@gmail.com).

## Quist chaired AFLC's Evangelism Commission

Herman "Gene" Quist, 92, of Minneapolis, died March 25. He was a longtime member and chairman of the AFLC Commission on Evangelism.

He was born in 1921 in Minneapolis. He married Doris Marsh in 1942. She preceded him in death on October 2, 2013.

He graduated from South High School in 1939. He joined the National Guard and earned a Bronze Star while serving in Europe during WWII. After the war, he graduated from the University of Minnesota as a civil engineer and worked at Minnegasco, Minneapolis, for 35 years. He was called to active duty during the Korean War and served as a company commander, building the Freedom Gate Bridge. He was a Lt. Col. when he retired from the Guard after 26 years of service. He returned home and joined Emmaus Lutheran, Bloomington, Minn. He committed his life to Christ and left Minnegasco, where he was the senior vice president of operations, to join Campus Crusade for Christ in 1978. He worked on staff with Doris for 20 years, retiring in 1998. He was also a member of the Gideons.

Surviving are two sons, Michael Quist and Jonathan Quist; one daughter, Marsha (Ron) Navamanie; and two grandchildren.

The service was held March 31 at Emmaus Lutheran, Bloomington, and interment at Fort Snelling Cemetery.



## New members installed at Webster, S.D.

New members were installed in March at Tabor Free Lutheran, Webster, S.D. Seated (from left) are Walter and Beverly Johnson, Dileen and Emil Ninke, Dorothy and Vern Rydberg. Standing (from left) are Wayne, Kendra, Nancy, and Andy Johnson, LeRoy Schlotte, Marion Sigdestad, Bev Schlotte, Richard Sigdestad, Mandy, Shyanne, and Hayden McCarlson, Mark, Dylan, Kim, and Morgan Hanson, and Pastor Mike McCarlson.

## New members installed at McIntosh, Minn.

New members were installed March 2 at Mt. Carmel Free Lutheran, McIntosh, Minn. The congregation is served by interim Pastor Ray Klug. Pictured are (back row, from left): Karen Olson, Robert Olson, Braden Sander, Melissa Sander, Haley Sander, Brad Sander, Sandy Jore, and Paul Jore, (front row, from left): Bridget Landsverk, Calvin Schow, Karlie Schow, Annie Schow, Nicholas Schow, Carlie Sander, and Sam Olson.



## Grace Free Lutheran to celebrate 50 years

Members of Grace Free Lutheran, Maple Grove, Minn., will celebrate the congregation's 50th anniversary on Aug. 17, with a celebration service at 9:30 a.m. All are invited to the service and dinner following.

The congregation was founded in 1964 as Medicine Lake Lutheran. At the first annual meeting of the congregation in January 1966, Pastor George Soberg addressed the congregation by saying, "It seems now that the acorn that was planted in the fall of 1964

has not only sent down a strong root but now has started a strong upward shoot that can and will under God's guidance through His Holy Spirit grow into a sturdy tree that will be able to withstand the pressures from within and the storms from without that seek to destroy it. Let us stand firmly on the Word of God, for it is the only sure foundation upon which to build. Here is the heart of our work. Herein lies our strength."





# Rise up & reach out

BY PASTOR JASON HOLT

**T**he theme for our AFLC Annual Conference meeting this month is from Nehemiah 2:18, “Let us rise up and build.” It provides a significant call to Kingdom activity. Rooted in God’s Word and led by God’s Spirit, we are a fellowship prioritizing Jesus Christ and Him crucified. We want to see souls saved and lives changed.

It is the context in Nehemiah 2 that also encourages us in AFLC Youth Ministries. Nehemiah saw great challenges (2:3), he stayed prayerful (2:4), he sought support (2:5), and he recognized that all ground gained was by God’s gracious hand (2:8). This approach led Nehemiah to research the situation (2:13-16), to recruit others to the task (2:17), and to report to them how the Lord was at work (2:18a).

What was the response of the people? “So they began this good work” (2:18).

We recognize like Nehemiah that the challenges in front of us are great, but the gracious hand of God is always greater. AFLC Youth Ministries exists as a department under the AFLC Coordinating Committee Corporation to win teenagers to Jesus, to build them in God’s Word and God’s love, and to equip them to live out their faith and to share their faith, which results in multiplying maturing teen disciples of Jesus Christ.

In his article for StickyFaith.org entitled “Helping Kids Keep the Faith: Four Research Insights,” Curtis Miller sets out these bullets for us to respond to:

- Family influence transfers.
- Bland faith does not transfer faith.
- The power of a close relationship has strong impact.
- The love for the prodigal prevails.

We note the Lord’s clear call to the family and to the congregation to pass on the faith to the next generation (Deuteronomy 6:1-9; Psalm 78:1-8). The research echoes

Scripture’s call by explaining that no matter what your family influence is—for Christ or not for Christ—it is passed on. The study stresses that the rise in American teens leaving the Church is not as much a product of ineffective ministry of the local congregation, but the blandness of faith passing on at a multiplying rate. The finger of fault is on all of us: our homes and our congregations. Lord Jesus, revive us.

These findings also highlight that close relationships with parents, with caring adult believers, and with maturing peers are cementing the urgency of faith in Jesus. In addition, when a child strays from the faith, it is the steady compassion of those same people that nurtures the wandering to return to the Lord.

One more item to consider: Grandparents have a significant influence! The multi-generational link provides stability in the faith that young people readily respond to.

What does this information suggest for us as an AFLC? We need to live in the tension of communicating that Christ is the priority for the family and the priority for the congregation.

We need to live in the tension that we are precise and personal.

We need to be precise: Communicate the authority of the Word of God, theology that is consistent with the Word, and understanding that reflects our Lutheran confessions. We need to be personal: Express guidance by the Spirit of God, salvation that is experienced by God’s grace, and activity of a free and living congregation, which is God’s people being God’s people to one another and communicating Jesus to a lost world.

Let us rise up and reach out.

*Holt, a member of Living Hope, St. Michael, Minn., is the director of AFLC Youth Ministries. The July issue of The Lutheran Ambassador will focus on many of these topics as we take a look at forming faith within generations.*

## AFLC memorials: April

### AFLBS

Reggie Olson (2)  
Ida Benson  
Ruth Claus  
Edsel Anderson  
Pastor John Mundfrom (8)  
Phyllis Davidson  
Norma Pederson  
Laurie Hartsoch  
Dedre Grosz

### AFLTS

Tom Stockeland  
Vernon Seablom  
Larry Erickson  
Carley Olson  
Sterling Ingwalson  
Pastor John Mundfrom (2)  
Norma Pederson (2)  
Phyllis Davidson (3)  
Joyce Flickinger  
Dr. Francis Monseth

### General Fund

Eric Timat

### Evangelism

Gene Quist  
Norma Pederson  
Phyllis Davidson  
Brett Stroud

### Home Missions

Pat Angus  
Phyllis Davidson  
Allan Forness

### Parish Education

Pastor John Mundfrom  
Phyllis Davidson

### World Missions

Carley Olson  
Clarence Thompson  
Kenneth Williams  
Kenneth Nash  
Gene Quist  
... in honor of  
Kyle Arneson (Evangelism,  
Home Missions, World  
Missions, Youth Ministries)

## Williams served on WM Committee

Kenneth Williams, 91, of Ishpeming, Mich., died March 27 at the Marquette County Medical Care Facility.

Born April 11, 1922, in Ishpeming, he was the son of William and Evelyn (Linna) Williams. He married Viola Pennala April 19, 1947, in North Lake, Mich.

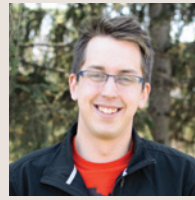
He graduated from Ishpeming High School in 1941 and was a veteran, serving his country in the United States Army in Germany during World War II. Ken was employed by Lake Shore, Inc. in Marquette, Mich., where he worked as a metal fabricator. He was a founding member of and attended Hope Free Evangelical Lutheran Church in Ishpeming and was a past member and chairman of the World Mission Board of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations based in Minneapolis. In that capacity he traveled to Mexico several times with the group, Partners in Mission Outreach, to help construct and restore churches and share his faith. With that desire, Ken spent many hours studying the Bible using that knowledge as a lay preacher.

Surviving are his wife; one son, Scott (Mary) Williams of Carbondale, Colo.; three daughters, Nancy (Gerald) Anderson, Ishpeming, Vicki Williams, Albuquerque, N.M., and Lisa (Jim) MacDonald, Carbondale, Colo.; one grandson; and two great-grandchildren; and two step-grandchildren.

Funeral services were held April 10, 2014, at the Hope Free Evangelical Lutheran Church, Ishpeming, with Pastor Micah Hjermstad officiating. Interment was in Ishpeming Cemetery.

## AFLC World Missions news

### AFLC World Mission Trips



Jon Nelson

Throughout the years people of the AFLC have had a desire to travel to our mission fields, learn what God is doing on the field, and participate in the ministry while there. World Missions has recognized a need to facilitate and organize mission trips for a number of years. The 2013 AFLC Annual Conference encouraged World Missions to add additional staff to coordinate short-term mission trips. This past year plans were developed and Jon Nelson was hired to head a ministry called AFLC World Mission Trips. Nelson started working with World Missions on May 1.

### Ben and Adela Jore

The World Missions Committee has sent a letter of call to mission candidates Ben and Adela Jore. The Jores have accepted the call and will be placed on loan to Distant Shores Media. Ben served as an AFLC Short Term Assistant in Tanzania for four years.

Distant Shores Media is a world missions organization using 21st century technology to help equip the global church with open discipleship resources. Our AFLC Ambassador Institute training material is one example of the resources used by DSM to equip the global church.

Ben will be ordained at the 2014 AFLC Annual Conference. The Jores will also be commissioned at the Mission Festival service of the conference.

### Micah Berger

Micah Berger has accepted a call to serve as a full-time AFLC missionary in Uganda. Micah has been serving in Uganda as a Short Term Assistant under the supervision of missionary Nate Jore since 2011. His primary duties have been to train pastors and leaders with the Ambassador Institute. Micah will be commissioned at the Mission Festival of this year's AFLC Annual Conference.

## AFLC BENEVOLENCES Jan. 1-April 30, 2014

FUND	REC'D IN APRIL	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$31,332	\$114,967	\$120,023
Evangelism	17,942	52,775	56,655
Youth Ministries	6,635	51,009	43,306
Parish Education	12,052	42,291	39,400
Seminary	17,748	82,276	95,202
Bible School	59,459	146,865	162,599
Home Missions	35,663	138,691	151,083
World Missions	47,095	151,443	160,262
Personal Support	45,268	151,689	153,854
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$273,195</b>	<b>\$932,006</b>	<b>\$982,384</b>

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



# Decisions

Several years ago someone pointed me to an internet discussion on Lutheran hymnals, and our AFLC *Ambassador Hymnal* was strongly criticized. One of the harshest accusations dealt with the inclusion of such songs as “I Have Decided to Follow Jesus,” an old campfire favorite. The criticism did not address its musical quality, however, but its theology, and the writer accused the song of



Pastor Robert Lee

“synergism,” or the teaching that one contributes something to our salvation.

Is the criticism a just one? It depends. It depends on the side of conversion

to which the song relates.

There is something about our old natures that wants to assert almost anything as our part in conversion. Not content to come with empty hands, the Old Adam wants to claim that God does His part and I do my part, and it's a deal. The most blatant form of this lie is simple works righteousness, the notion that in the end God will weigh my good deeds against my bad ones, and so it all depends on me.

But there is a more subtle error that professes salvation as the work of God, yet puts the emphasis on *my* response, *my* decision. What does God say to this? “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins ... dead in our transgressions” (Ephesians 2:1, 5). What part of “dead” don't we understand? Remember our confirmation days when we memorized the meaning to the third article of the creed which declares that “I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to Him.” Whether blatant or subtle, both errors seek to claim a share in the glory that belongs to God alone.

There is a right place for so-called “decision theology,” however, and that is on what one might call “the hallelujah side” of conversion. In other words, our Christian lives are filled with daily decisions to follow Jesus or not, and in these decisions we surely cooperate.

Once again the deception into which some fall victim has two opposite extremes. One is what the theologians call “antinomianism,” or, against the law. This may seem on the surface to be an emphasis on grace, while in practice it snubs the commands of Scripture as a faithful guide to the lives of believers, reminding us of Paul's concern for the Galatians who were turning their freedom into an opportunity for the flesh (5:13).

The other extreme may be called passive sanctification. Yes, there is a life to be lived, a walk to be walked, yet I really have no part in it at all, but it is all Christ within me. The believer may be compared, write the advocates of this teaching, to an empty glove that is filled with the hand of Jesus. Thus, the glove is doing nothing; it is not capable of doing anything. It is all Him. Though this purports to give glory to God, it fails to do justice to what the Spirit of God accomplishes in the believer.

There is a true scriptural balance on this issue to be found in the Lutheran confessions. Find a copy of the Book of Concord, if you don't have one, and read the Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord, Article II. Yes, we cannot cooperate in our conversion, for we are by nature

dead. Yet we can and must cooperate after conversion in the works that the Holy Spirit performs through us. Even so, we still do so in great weakness. This cooperation is not from our carnal and natural powers, but from the new powers and gifts which the Holy Spirit has begun in us in conversion, and so our reborn wills are not idle. It is the identical balance of truth that

Yes, we cannot cooperate in our conversion, for we are by nature dead. Yet we can and must cooperate after conversion in the works that the Holy Spirit performs through us. Even so, we still do so in great weakness.

we find in God's Word when it commands us “to work out your salvation with fear and trembling,” and then continues, “for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:12-13).

So it is good to sing, as reborn children of God, “I have decided to follow Jesus,” today and every day. This is not an easy decision, not one to be taken lightly or to be sung casually. Our flesh will fight against it, and the world will mock. Yet we sing, “the world behind me, the cross before me, no turning back, no turning back.” All in His strength and to His glory.

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

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Periodicals

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

*something to share*

# Fill your mind with truth

BY JULIE TWEDT

Sitting by the side of my grandmother's hospital bed, I recited as many Bible verses as I could recall. She was mostly unresponsive, but would occasionally hum an approving "mmm hmm" in response. When I reached the end of my memory, I looked to my 4-year-old son who sat across the room and asked if he could think of any more verses.

"How about Psalm 55:22? Did you remember that one?" he asked. "Cast your cares on the Lord, and He will sustain you."

I smiled a huge smile, and from the corner of my eye, I first heard Grandma's breathing change and then saw her grinning from ear to ear. Oh it was good to see her smile again! That was just the verse she needed to hear.

That precious moment reiterated how important it is to fill our children's minds with the good stuff. Honestly, there can be days that go by when I wonder if my kids are hearing or processing anything worthwhile, but that moment was such a great reminder to me to keep filling their minds with the truths found in the Bible. Someday, they just might bubble over with streams of living water for someone else who is thirsty. Of course this doesn't only apply to the kids. The information we allow into our heads is what takes up residence in our own hearts.

Luke 6:45 says, "The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil

treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart."

I never tire of telling about instances when I've seen the Lord's perfect timing at work in my life. So turn back the clock one month prior to our hospital visit. As a music leader for our Sunday school, I had been looking for some new songs to teach the kids. Though the music portion of each Sunday school hour isn't long, kids can certainly learn a lot during that time. I'm always looking for a balance between singing the fun, catchy tunes and making sure they're also being taught valuable truths through the songs they learn.

Bible verses put to music are some of my favorite songs for the kids, and "Cast your cares on the Lord" was a new one I had picked out to teach them. Little did I know that my grandma would need the encouragement of that verse a month later from her 4-year-old great-grandson. God knew. He was working out all the details for that one little moment in my life to happen, and I'll cherish it as long as I live.

So keep filling your minds and hearts with truths that really matter until you, too, bubble over.

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