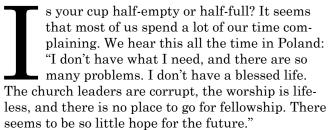
THE LUTHERAN SE

IF YOU'RE A MEMBER OF A CHURCH, THEN CHANCES ARE YOU'VE GONE THROUGH THE PROCESS OF CALLING A LEADER.

Drink

BY PASTOR TIM HINRICHS



So many feel dried up spiritually and blame the circumstances around them. Not only is the cup half empty, but often there isn't even a cup! Many of us feel the same way. We need to be reminded of the promise of God from Psalm 23:5 — I have a full cup! God promises that He will provide for my needs no matter what the outward situation.

We have no idea how blessed we are because we take so much for granted. God has provided for each of His children in amazing ways, and yet we don't even notice. The cup is not just a little sip or even a gulp. It's totally full! God promises that He will always provide. And not just from time to time, but every day of our lives He will meet our needs – both physical and spiritual.

Often, the Lord provides His "cup" and we just decide not to drink from it. We decide to leave that cup on the table and look at it and say — "I'm not worthy to drink it," or, "That cup isn't for me," or blindly say, "There is no cup!" And so it sits there and waits.

God wants to provide His love, mercy, grace, encouragement, and spiritual blessing, but often we never reach out to receive what He wants to give us — we simply don't recognize it. That cup can come in the form of people whom



God sends to bless us or the Word of God which sits at home on the shelf.

What is amazing about the Lord's cup is that it is not only full, but every day it's overflowing. God actually gives us too much! "What a waste!" we might say. Why does God give us too much? Why doesn't He

give us just enough to meet our needs? It's through that overflowing cup that He wants to bless others.

We say, "I don't have anything to give!" or, "I don't have any way to bless someone!" Are you doubting God's promise? Do you think your cup is the only one that is not overflowing? God promises in Scripture that He provides more than we need.

We need to have our eyes open to the ways God wants to use us to bless the people around us. What does He want me to say that can bless someone? How does He want me to pray to bless someone? The basic principle is this: The more I give away, the more I get to bless others — the cup keeps overflowing. As you flow out to others, more will flow into you! That's the miracle of service — receiving and giving.

So what are God's two promises to us in this little verse? You have a full cup, so drink from it continually! And your cup is overflowing, so overflow into the lives of those around you.

Hinrichs, a missionary in Poland, is an AFLC pastor on loan to the East European Missions Network.

May 2007 >>

Editor Pastor Craig Johnson

craigi@teleport.com

Managing Editor Ruth Gunderson

ruthg@aflc.org

Editorial Board

Oryen Benrud Pastor Jerry Moan Pastor James L. Johnson

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR vol. 45, no. 5

The Lutheran Ambassador (USPS 588-620 ISSN 0746-3413) is published monthly by the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations. AFLC headquarters and publications office is at 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441. Phone (763) 545-5631; fax 763-545-0079

For subscription changes and information: 5631 or e-mail at luthamb@aflc.org.

Subscription rates:

\$17 a year, Group Rate, U.S. Periodicals postage paid at Minneapolis, MN, and additional mailing office.

Postmaster: Send address changes to The Lutheran Ambassador, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441.

Perhaps the most central characteristic of authentic leadership is the relinquishing of the impulse to dominate others.

— David Cooper

We offer perilous advice when we urge people to "find Christ" anywhere but in a local congregation. Can you imagine Paul arriving in a city, finding the local congregation not to his taste and simply staying away?

— Tim Stafford

There's nobody who doesn't have problems with the church, because there's sin in the church. But there's no other place to be a Christian except the church.

— Eugene Peterson

The church does not exist to supply comfort, ease and convenient services to religious consumers. And God is not a commodity that exists to make you feel better.

— Skye Jethani



PASTOR WANTED: Applicants must preach exactly 15 minutes, love teaching confirmation and spend countless hours with senior citizens. Twenty-five years experience necessary. Applicants under 30 years of age highly encouraged to apply. Office responsibilities include 15 calls daily to families in the parish, shut-ins, and hospital patients. Office hours are 8 a.m. until midnight. Some light janitorial work included. If handsome, a plus. Family (especially children) must leave no room for criticism. To apply, contact . . .

ound a bit unrealistic? If you've ever been involved in a congregation, then you've more than likely had to go through a call process. While sometimes frustrating and painful, it's also a good time to focus on God's calling for your congregation and its leaders.

I have experienced the call process from several different sides. My late husband, Chris Oswood, was a parish pastor for 25 years, which meant we were on the receiving end of calls many times. And having worked as the administrative assistant to AFLC President Robert Lee for 12 years, I have observed the processes our congregations have gone through as call committees contact our AFLC office for guidance. I also served on the call committee as my home congregation searched for a new pastor.

In each situation, I have seen God work as congregations and pastors seek His leading. In Jeremiah 3:15 the Lord says, "And I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will lead (feed) you with knowledge and understanding." The most important preparation committees can make is to wait on the Lord and pray for His leading in the call process. The congregation needs to be encouraged to pray for and with the call committee.

Our family once moved to a community without visiting the congregation in advance. The call letter came in the mail, we prayed about it, and felt led to accept it. It was a venture in faith that turned out to be a blessing — probably our most enjoyable call in the ministry. If the Lord is in control and the Holy Spirit is at work, a pastor should be able, by the grace of God, to go to almost any congregation and serve.

There are several issues, however, that both congregations and pastors need to discuss before considering a call. Are there areas of your congregation's ministry that are weak and could benefit from a pastor who has strengths in those areas? List them! What are the priorities for your congregation? Is it preaching? Or having a pastor who enjoys leading Bible studies, working with the youths, or visiting shut-ins and visitors? These are good questions to ask in your committee before an interview. A pastor's priorities include all of the above, but it is rare to find a pastor who is



strong in all areas of the ministry.

God's picture of the ideal pastor is a shepherd after His own heart who loves the Lord and loves people. He should have as his goal preparing "God's people for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Ephesians 4:12). He needs to be well grounded in the Word so that he can feed his flock. He should have a pastor's heart with a passion for the lost.

Keep your expectations for potential pastors within reason. For example, if a pastor or his wife are musical, that is a plus. But don't expect it. The pastor should be aware of your expectations and vice versa to avoid conflict and disappointment. Let potential pastors know if you expect them to be active in community organizations, attend local schools' sporting events, or fellowship with other pastors in your community.

Another area to consider is the order of service or worship that your congregation practices. A pastor may prefer a traditional service rather than contemporary worship, or vice versa, so it is important to determine if your congregation and pastor agree on worship style. Flexibility is important. But if your congregation is set on a certain style, be sure that a prospective pastor is willing to adapt to it.

Think about the financial resources of your congregation, as well. How much can you afford? Congregations often think they can get by cheaper if they call a new graduate from seminary. He, and his family if he has one, also needs a living wage as well as an experienced pastor nearby as a mentor. He may be starting a family, buying a home, and/or paying off school loans. The cost of health insurance and housing in your area are major considerations.

Once you have discussed these issues and have potential pastors to contact, interviews can be arranged. A prospective pastor may be invited to your congregation to preach and meet with the congregation for questions. To avoid competition, it is wise to consider one pastor at a time. The recommendation to call a pastor usually comes from the call committee, and then the congregation votes whether or not to call the pastor. The process continues until a pastor is secured. It may take a very short time, several months or even years. But one thing is key — communicate with pastors you have interviewed so that they are not left in limbo.

What shepherd does the Lord desire for your congregation? Seek the Lord's will and wait on the Holy Spirit for His leading. May you be led to a shepherd who is equipped to help you "reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13).

Fruehauf, secretary to AFLC President Pastor Robert Lee, is a member of Faith Free Lutheran, Minneapolis.



S

ooner or later every congregation is going to be without a pastor. Their pastor may move, retire, change vocations or expire. When that happens, what does a congregation do for pastoral leadership?

Several questions will need to be answered. Among those questions are: Who will preach on Sunday? Who will teach confirmation classes? Who will visit the hospital and minister to the sick? Who will marry our couples and bury our dead? To whom will we go for personal counseling? The questions can go on and on.

For 13 churches over a period of 15 years I was the answer to those questions. I was an interim pastor. Those were 15 of the most enjoyable years of my entire ministry. The shortest period of time in one place was three months and the longest was more than three years. And to those wonderful people in those 13 churches who might be reading this, may I express my gratitude and the gratitude of my wife, Marilyn. We think of you often and thank God for each of you.

Every congregation, whether they have a pastor or not, needs spiritual leadership. A congregation with spiritual maturity may find some of that leadership within its own church family. However, there are various times when someone who has advanced training beyond normal lay training is needed. In fact, sometimes there are events where state laws require credentials that pastors have and your average layman does not.

There are three general areas where there is an experience of mutual purpose both on the part of the interim pastor and the congregation he is serving.

First, he offers stability. In Matthew 9:36 we read that when Jesus saw the multitudes, "He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd." The reason for Jesus' compassion in understandable. While an interim pastor's role is primarily sharing the Word and counsel of our loving God, he can also bring stability and cohesiveness to a congregation.

Second, he listens. A listening ear is an absolute necessity for an interim pastor. People are not always looking for advice when coming to a pastor with hurts or challenges in their lives. They may just be needing a listening ear. There

may be personal things or internal tensions within the congregation that have never been resolved. There may be hope and joy that needs sharing. An interim ministry is a great time to reflect together and rejoice together.

Third, he offers encouragement. We are counseled in I Thessalonians 5:11 to "encourage one another and build each other up." In Acts 20:2 we read that Paul "spoke many words of encouragement to the people." I have never found a congregation which was without a permanent pastor that couldn't use some encouragement. An interim pastor is in a remarkable position to give that encouragement with the love and power of God's Word.

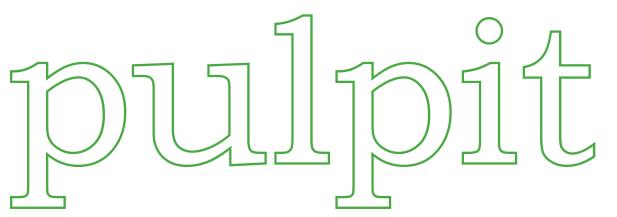
Every congregation in our AFLC is unique. Every congregation has its own personality. Each has its own style of worship and ministry. Every congregation has its own pastoral and membership heritage. Each has its own strengths and weaknesses — physically and spiritually. That is part of what makes an interim ministry exciting and challenging. For a short period of time an interim pastor is immersed in a collage of new and interesting spiritual experiences. Thank you, churches, for who you are.

Being an interim pastor calls for flexibility. Not flexibility in his character or doctrine but in his understanding of the habits and traditions of the congregation he is serving. He must not come into a congregation with the idea of reshaping it according to his own likes and dislikes, nor should a congregation expect it. However, if the membership sees his presence as a time to make some changes they have been wanting to make, then he should be willing to give objective counsel in a spirit of congregational harmony.

The interim pastor and the congregation must always understand his purpose and role. I have heard many times, "Can't you stay with us?" "Can we offer you a call?" I think those kinds of questions should be prayerfully and carefully addressed before an interim pastor signs a contract.

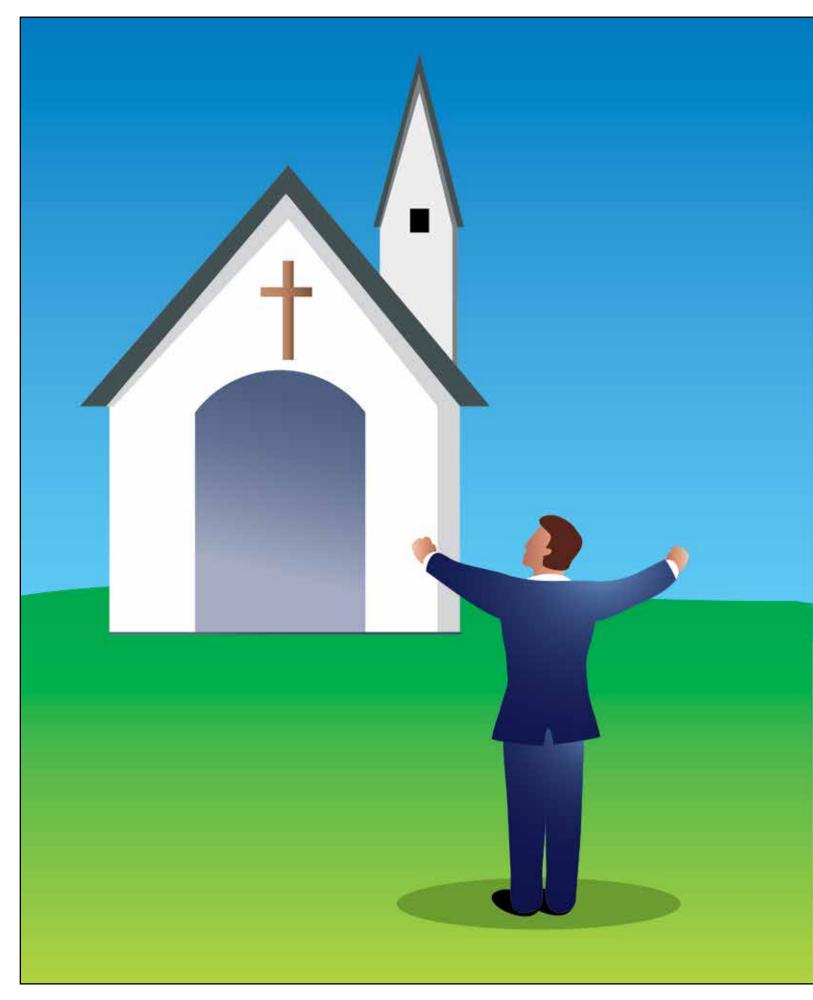
It is important that a congregation sees the pastor for who he is: an interim pastor. He is serving the congregation during an interim period. It is unwise for him to propose sweeping changes and long-range goals for the future; neither should the congregation request it, since he will not be there to implement the goals.

The interim pastor is generally not under the usual



"call" but on contract. That, however, should not change the relationship between pastor and congregation, which can be a blessing from our Lord.

Johnson is a member of Faith Lutheran, Shakopee, Minn.





n the gospel of Mark, chapter 8, Jesus was confronted by Pharisees, the religious leaders of the day. They wanted to test Jesus by having Him give a sign from heaven, hoping to entrap Him and overcome His authority. Hours before, some of these same men could have been a part of the crowd of 4,000 people whom Jesus fed with seven loaves of bread and a few fish. They saw that miracle and still did not believe. They lived in the darkness of their own leaven, their own way of thinking and believing, as did their followers. Jesus cautioned His disciples regarding the Pharisees, saying to them, "Reject their leaven. I have leaven which I desire you to consume and follow."

Following Jesus is not dependent upon Him doing things the way we think they should be done. He does not have to yield to our demands, no matter how important or necessary we believe them to be. His ministry is about the leaven of heaven — feeding His people in His time. It's His people receiving His bread with thankfulness. His way and His timing are perfect.

In November 1998, we experienced the elation of starting Calvary Free Lutheran in Mesa, Ariz. Since then, parttime and full-time pastors have faithfully preached and taught us God's Word. In 2003, we purchased buildings and land, and a church home was secured. During the years of our existence, the leaven of the Pharisees — the temptation to build God's kingdom man's way — has caused us to create and do some things in our own strength. That doesn't work.

We have sought God's guidance for our future, coming together every Saturday morning to pray. God has honored those prayers — and the individual prayers of the congregation and of the whole AFLC — and has given us a more certain future. Time and again He directs us to be patient.

He does not want our decisions to usurp His authority. He invites us to feast on His leaven.

In times of pastoral vacancy, the church council has taken appropriate action to meet the day-to-day needs of people. Church deacons, coordinating with AFLC Home Missions, have assisted with Bible studies and have on occasion filled the pulpit. Home Missions helped find available pastors who provided a weekend ministry. The congregants of Calvary Free Lutheran endured, kept praying and ministered. Enduring those times together helped bring about a spirit of cooperation that molds us together today.

Calvary Free Lutheran has a hope and a future because God's promises are always right and true and fulfilled perfectly in His time. We take nourishment from the leaven of Jesus. Knowing Him through His Word and then experiencing Him walking beside us — yes, even carrying us — is a miracle of Christian life. Making Him known is paramount in our faith walk. Jeremiah 15:16 says, "Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart; for I am called by Your name, O Lord of hosts."

Jesus' first disciples "ate" God's Word. They made it the central part of their lives. At Calvary Free Lutheran we want to do the same. As we take in God's Word and then share it with others, we see lives changed into His likeness. We're blessed to see people become a new creation. We want to follow the example of the first disciples — and stand alongside our fellow AFLC congregations — in trusting in the teaching of Jesus.

Bruflat is a member of Calvary Free Lutheran, Mexa, Ariz. The congregation, which depended on lay leadership for a time, is now served by Pastor Allen Monson.

practical LEADERSHIP

As we approach the annual conference of our church body and the election of a new president, it is good to remember what makes us unique and our reason for existence.

As a help in doing that we share part of the report of the AFLC's first president, Pastor John Strand, to the 1965 Annual Conference.

BY PASTOR JOHN STRAND

he church, [Georg] Sverdrup went on to say, is not an assembly of people which men may compel by the exercise of worldly or superstitious power to maintain a priestly caste; nor is a church a gathering of ignorant, perhaps even immoral, people among whom the clergymen are to be teachers or masters, for the purpose of restraining them and thus strengthening civil order or the power of rulers. Nay, a Christian congregation is an assembly of volunteer men and women, brought together and united by the Spirit of God through the Word of the Lord and the Sacraments, one body with the Lord, Who lives in them and in Whom they live, the household of God and the dwelling-place of the vineyard of the Lord; they should all show forth the excellencies of Him Who called them out of darkness into His own marvelous light; they should all be priests of God, and there should be no "gracious sir" among them, nor should any even be referred to as such.

... Very little is written or taught of the Christian congregation in our day. There is much concern of Christian fellowship, evangelism, doctrines of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, missions, ecumenism, denominations, the Word, history, eschatology, Christian education, youth work, liturgy, stewardship, etc., but little real concern for the congregation as such. This seems strange for the Christian congregation is so central in the New Testament. It was for the sake of the congregation, Paul suffered and labored; it was to strengthen, lead and build up congregations, he wrote his epistles; it was the congregations that he expected to carry the gospel, to be God's house on earth, the pillar and foundation of truth. It was the congregation he considered to be Christ's body, Christ's bride. We stand in awe as we consider Christ and the congregation. Should we not be more concerned with the congregation than we are? Truly much more attention needs to be given this great subject. Living congregations are the life-giving stream for our society, for the world.

It is easy to become so concerned with Christian doctrine, apart from the congregation, that we forget the congregation. I am a firm believer in a good emphasis on correct doctrine. This is so necessary in our day. But we must not forget the congregation. It was for the sake of the right concept of the congregation that the Association was formed. Let us never forget that. And people are generally more interested in the congregation, their congregation, than any other phase of the kingdom. When we help them build the congregation we will have their support. If we get side-tracked, much more than the Association will die. I believe that the one main task of our Association is to hold up the Scriptural pattern of the congregation. God grant that we be faithful. Not all evangelical Lutherans agree with us. Many simply do not understand our position. To be evangelistic is not always the same as being of free church mind and spirit.

The congregations are to be free. Freedom is the key word in so much of our founding fathers' writings. The congregations are to be free from ecclesiastical domination of all kinds, whether from the church body and/or official bodies, or the local pastor. The only authority above the congregation is the Word and the Spirit of God. If they do not recognize the authority of the Word and the Spirit of God, they are not a congregation. Here, too, they are free to interpret the Scriptures, interpreting Scripture with Scripture, not being bound by the interpretations of others. The larger church body is to be the servant of the congregation, not its master. The pastor is to be the servant of the congregation, not its overlord.

... The common task of the congregations are given guidance by the congregations through boards and committees elected by the annual conference or by corporations elected or nominated by the conferences. The conference itself, and various boards and corporations, have no authority over the local congregations. They can only recommend to the congregations. The conferences, institutions, and corporations are to serve the congregations and to work on their behalf. Certainly the theological seminary supported by Free Congregations must train pastors with the right understanding of the congregation.

Is a free church practical today? Will it really work? We believe it is most practical, and the biblical way of church work. It is dependent on Spiritual life in the congregation. Without it, it will not succeed.

resources

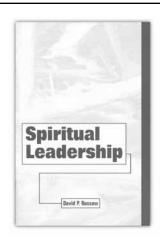
Calling Leaders

For more information on these resources or to place an order, contact Parish Education by calling (763) 545-5631 or email parished@aflc.org.



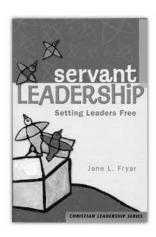
Do You Really Want the Congregation?

John Stensvaag presents a picture of the biblical New Testament congregation through the eyes of Georg Sverdrup — a living congregation where lay leadership is encouraged and all believers have opportunity to use the various spiritual gifts God has given. \$1



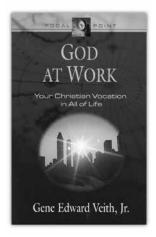
Spiritual Leadership

The author reminds parents of the extraordinary privilege God has given them to be spiritual leaders for their families. This 23-page booklet includes discussion questions at the end of each chapter and emphasizes spiritual character and an attitude of servitude — qualities applicable to other leadership opportunities. \$3



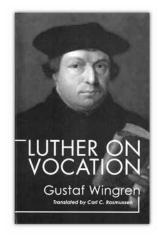
Servant Leadership

This book explores leadership from a biblical perspective and draws on current research, helping pastors and lay people to better understand God's design for His children as they accomplish daily tasks and serve Him through the ministry of the congregation. \$10.95



God at Work

How can I know what God is calling me to do? How can I serve Him through leadership at home, work, church, and in society? The author helps the reader discover how God is daily at work through the various gifts and service opportunities He gives. \$12



Luther on Vocation

Discover God's purpose and calling in seemingly ordinary and even mundane tasks. All Christians, whatever their office or status in church or world, are called to be "ministers" and live out their lives under God's call in service to their neighbor and thus to God. Gustav Wingren, a 20th century Swedish theologian, explains Luther's insights on vocation and applies them in the context of contemporary thought. \$25

2007 annual conference WELCOME

BY BRAD & DELAYNE SEVERSON



he congregations of Abiding
Savior Free Lutheran and Living
Word Free Lutheran together welcome you to Sioux Falls, S.D., for the
2007 AFLC Annual Conference. This year's
conference holds the promise of great worship and fellowship opportunities and the chance to hear about the
work of the AFLC throughout the world.

All registration and information can be found in the following pages and by visiting our web site (www.2007aflc.org). While visiting this site you can register for the conference and the WMF convention, register for meals, and see information on the vast children's programming planned for this year.

The conference will be held jointly between the facilities of Abiding Savior and the newly constructed Sioux Falls Christian School. The WMF convention and pre-conference committee meetings will all be held at Abiding Savior. But starting with Tuesday evening's opening worship service, all activities will move to Sioux Falls Christian, an entirely air-conditioned facility with many amenities to accommodate a large conference.

Because there are only a few eating establishments located within a few minutes of Sioux Falls Christian, you are encouraged to register for noon meals on your registration form. If your children are attending the daily activities, they will be transported to the school

each day for lunch. You are responsible for your children from noon until 1:30 p.m. each day. For detailed information on and to register for the childcare and children's activities, please visit the web site. For those in need of financial scholarships for the daily activities (several field trips are planned), please contact Abiding Savior. Financial assistance is readily available.

Hotel information — including maps — is located on the web site (also on www.aflc.org) along with nearby campsites. There are no hotel accommodations located in close proximity to either Abiding Savior or Sioux Falls Christian. The hotels chosen represent many benefits to conference attendees, and we encourage using those hotels.

Our collective hope is that someone from each congregation will attend this year's conference. Many special activities are being planned. Please check back at the web site for details as they are announced. We are especially looking forward to the childcare programming that we are planning; we promise your children will not be bored!

Come and worship. Come and fellowship. Come and hear. You will be blessed!

The Seversons, members of Abiding Savior Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D., are the 2007 AFLC Conference site hosts.



- * Incumbents
- ** Must be re-elected to corporation to remain on committee or board X Nominations not named by press deadline

Coordinating Committee

(One layman, five-year term) * Wayne Floan, Plymouth, Minn. Mel Fischer, Shakopee, Minn.

(One layman, five-year term) Art Wilson, Pittsburgh, Pa. Lyle Lillehaugen, Camarillo, Calif.

AFLC Schools Board of Trustees

Voted on by corporation members (One layman, five-year term) Χ

χ

(One layman, to complete two years of five-year term) Tim Johnson, Mentor, Minn. χ

World Missions Committee

Voted on by corporation members

(One pastor, five-year term)

* Pastor Richard Gunderson, Cambridge, Minn. Pastor Tom Olson, Mineral Point, Wis.

Home Missions Committee

Voted on by corporation members

(One layman, five-year term) * Loren Tungseth, Fergus Falls, Minn. Carl Busse, Humboldt, Tenn.

ARC Board

Voted on by corporation members

(One pastor, five-year term) * Pastor Tim Carlson, Grafton, N.D. Pastor Earl Korhonen, Radcliffe, Iowa

Stewardship Board

(One layman, five-year term) Steve Jankord, Sioux Falls, S.D.

(One layman, to complete four years of a five-year term)

χ

χ

Youth Board

(One pastor, five-year term) Pastor Mark Johnson, Dalton, Minn. Pastor Jim Ritter, Shakopee, Minn.

Board of Publications and Parish Education

(One layman, five-year term) Joel Erickson, Oslo, Minn. Candice Johnson, Stanley, N.D.

Board of Pensions

(One layman, five-year term) * Gerald Kuster, Reynolds, N.D. Jordan Volk, Brandon, S.D.

Commission on Evangelism

(One layman, five-year term) * Dwight Kiefert, Valley City, N.D. Dan Ballmann, Hico, Texas

FLAPS Board of Managers

Voted on by corporation members (One pastor, five-year term)

* Pastor Tom Schierkolk, Eben Junction, Mich.

χ

χ

(One layman, five-year term) * Bob Dietsche, Osceola, Wis.

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

Missions Corporation

(20 terms of five years each)
Pastor Ray Ballmann, Kopperl, Texas
Pastor Michael Burke, Ishpeming, Mich.
Pastor Steve Carlson, Dalton, Minn.
Joel Forness, Wahpeton, N.D.

- ** Kenneth Graham, Camarillo, Calif. Barb Gustafson, Beulah, N.D.
- ** Pastor Richard Gunderson, Cambridge, Minn.

Don Hanson, Williston, N.D.

- * Kevin Hoops, Byron, Neb. Arnold Johnson, Larimore, N.D. Pastor Jim Johnson, Fergus Falls, Minn.
- * Pastor Tim Johnson, Northwood, N.D.
- ** Jim Keller, Osceola, Wis.
- * Dr. Robert Kohl, Brookings, S.D. Steve Jameson, Earlville, III. Lowell Larson, Ottawa, III. Pastor Rick Larson, Fairbury, Neb. George Lautner, Bethel Park, Pa. Pastor Greg Lenz, Chanhassen, Minn.
- * Pastor Steve Lombardo, Morris, III.
- * Pastor Jerry Moan, Hamel, Minn.
- * Pastor Henry Mohagen, Reva, S.D.
- * Marlow Nash, Colfax, N.D.

Lee Olson, Tioga, N.D.

- ** Pastor Tom Olson, Mineral Point, Wis. Pastor Mark Richardson, Wallace, S.D.
- * Timothy Rolf, McIntosh, Minn. Daniel Rugroden, Hickson, N.D.
- * Vernon Russum, Grafton, N.D. Marvin Schaper, Beulah, N.D.
- * Pastor David Skordahl, St. Michael, Minn.
- * Ron Spooner, Camarillo, Calif.
- ** Pastor Tony Stockman, Brandon, Minn. Steve Stull, Ottawa, III. Dennis Torkelson, Foxhome, Minn. George Lautner, Bethel Park, Pa.

Four more nominees needed

Schools Corporation

(10 terms of five years each)
David Borg, Maple Grove, Minn.

- * Pastor Dana Coyle, Ottawa, III. Gary Erickson, Dalton, Minn.
- * Darrell Haugen, Binford, N.D. Jake Hoefler, Crookston, Minn.
- * Pastor Martin Horn, Kenyon, Minn. Wanda Jacobson, Brooklyn Park, Minn. John Larson, St. Louis Park, Minn.
- ** Dr. Daniel Mundfrom, Greeley, Colo. Betsy O'Neil, Golden Valley, Minn.
- ** Pastor Mark Olson, Farmington, Minn.
- *Matthew Olson, Crystal, Minn.

Jacob Parsley, Maple Grove, Minn.

- * John Presteng, Grafton, N.D. Mark Presteng, Grafton, N.D. Eric Rasmussen, Plymouth, Minn.
- * James Rolf, Brandon, Minn. Walter Rolf, Lisbon, N.D. John Talley, Newark, III. Ron Thorson, Yorkville, III.

ARC Corporation

(10 terms of five years each)

- * Dennis Jacobson, Tioga, N.D.
- * Phil Johnson, Esko, Minn.
- ** Pastor Earl Korhonen, Radcliffe, Iowa
- * Erling Langness, Ishpeming, Mich. Jared Langness, Plymouth, Minn.
- * Steve Lehmann, Milford, III.
- * Glenn Mork, Bloomington, Minn. Kevin O'Neil, Golden Valley, Minn.
- * Bob Rudebusch, Lakeville, Minn. Scott Schauer, Oklahoma City, Okla. Kyle Mackey, Champion, Mich. Pastor Cal Willard, Roseau, Minn. Alan Behm, Lowry, Minn.

Seven more nominees needed

Nominees to serve at the 2008 Annual Conference

Committee No. 1

(Administration)

Carl Busse, Humboldt, Tenn. Charles Gray, Oklahoma City, Okla. David Van Hoveln, Milford, Ill. Pastor James Johnson, Camarillo, Calif. Pastor Wade Mobley, Sioux Falls, S.D.

Committee No. 2

(Schools)

Charles Allen, Calera, Okla. Pastor Rodney Johnson, Stanley, N.D. Pastor John Kent, Lakeside, Calif. Ken Sletten, Duluth, Minn.

Committee No. 3

(Missions and Evangelism)

Pastor Ray Ballmann, Kopperl, Texas Myron Compton, Spearfish, S.D. Pastor Herb Hoff, Salinas, Calif. Lauren Osteroos, Burlington, N.D. Greg Seeba, Camarillo, Calif.

Committee No. 4

(Publications and Parish Education)
Nadine Compton, Spearfish, S.D.
Jill Gordon, Durant, Okla.
Geri Graham, Camarillo, Calif.
Carol Gray, Oklahoma City, Okla.
Mary Seeba, Camarillo, Calif.

Committee No. 5

(Stewardship and Pensions)

Dave Berg, St. Louis, Mo. Ken Blood, Oklahoma City, Okla. Jack Harper, Calera, Okla. Steve Hauptman, Camarillo, Calif. Bob Softing, Hawley, Minn.



Sioux Falls Christian Schools, Sioux Falls, S.D.

Tuesday, June 12

9:00 a.m.

The conference committees meet for devotions, instructions and room assignments.

7:30 p.m.

The opening service of the conference with Communion.

Speaker: Pastor Robert Lee

AFLC President Pastor Robert Lee will open the conference

and appoint necessary committees.

Wednesday, June 13

9:00 a.m.

Devotions

Report of the Credentials Committee

Adoption of the Conference Agenda

Election of the Nominating Committee for the 2008 Conference

The President's Report

Report of the Chairman of the Coordinating Committee

Pastor Kenneth Moland, Kirkland, Wash.

Report of the Chairman of the AFLC Foundation

Kevin Olson, Eden Prairie, Minn.

Reports of Chaplaincy Ministries

Institutional: Pastor Kerwin Sletto, Ottawa, III.

Military: Pastor Tim Skramstad, Eagan, Minn.

Report of the Director of the ARC

Pat Flanders, Osceola, Wis.

AFLC Financial Report

Cory Buck, New Hope, Minn.

Report of the Family Bible Camps

* Lake Bronson — Treasurer, Sonia Balmer, Thief River Falls, Minn.

* Wilderness — Treasurer, Jon Dryburgh, Grafton, N.D.

Report of the Budget Analysis Committee

Nathan Dalager, Argyle, Minn.

Report of the Nominating Committee, always in order

Election of nominees for the Missions, Schools

& ARC Corporations

11:30 a.m.

Prayer Hour

Noon

Builders Fellowship Lunch Chaplains Lunch

1:30 p.m.

Devotions

Report of Credentials Committee

Election Procedures

Elections

- * President three-year term
- * Vice President one-year term
- * Secretary one-year term

Selection of nominees to the

Home Missions Committee — one layman;

FLAPS Board of Managers — one pastor and one layman;

World Missions Committee — one pastor;

Board of Trustees — two laymen;

ARC Board — one pastor

Report of Committee No. 1 (Administration)

Election of nominees to the Coordinating Committee — two laymen

Election of Committee No. 1 for the 2008 Conference

5:30 p.m.

Schools Corporation Annual Meeting

7:00 p.m.

The Mission Festival Service conducted

by the Women's Missionary Federation Speaker: Pastor Kevin Olson, Savage, Minn.

Thursday June 14

7:00 a.m.

Missions Corporation Annual Meeting

9:00 a.m.

Devotions

Report of the Credentials Committee

Report of the Chairman of the Board of Trustees,

Dr. Dan Mundfrom, Greeley, Colo.

Report of the Dean of the Seminary,

Dr. Francis Monseth, Rogers, Minn.

Report of the Dean of the Bible School,
Pastor Joel Rolf, Plymouth, Minn.

Report of Committee No. 2 (Schools)

Election of Committee No. 2 for the 2008 Conference
Report of the Schools' Corporation annual meeting

11:30 a.m.

Prayer Hour

Noon

The ARC Corporation Annual Meeting
Partners in Mission Outreach Annual Meeting

1:30 p.m.

Devotions

Report of the Credentials Committee

Report of the Chairman of the World Missions Committee, Tom Caouette, Brooklyn Park, Minn.

Report of the Director of World Missions, Pastor Del Palmer, Shakopee, Minn.

Report of Partners in Mission Outreach Board President, Kenneth Sletten, Duluth, Minn.

Report of the Chairman of the Home Missions Committee, Pastor Richard Long, Arlington, Wash.

Report of the Director of Home Missions,

Pastor Paul Nash, Brooklyn Park, Minn.

Report of FLAPS Executive Director,

Lavon Bohling, Golden Valley, Minn.

Report of WMF President,

Lorilee Mundfrom, Eugene, Ore.

Report of the Chairman of the Commission on Evangelism, Gene Quist, Bloomington, Minn.

Report of the Director of Evangelism,

Pastor James Rasmussen, Maple Grove, Minn.

Report of Committee No. 3 (Missions and Evangelism)

Report of Missions Corporation Annual Meeting

Election of member to the Commission on Evangelism

— one lavman

Election of Committee No. 3 for the 2008 Conference

5:30 p.m.

Pastors' Banquet

7:00 p.m.

Laymen's Service

Friday, June 15

9:00 a.m.

Devotions

Report of the Credentials Committee

Report of the Chairman of the Board of Publications

and Parish Education, Pastor John Mundfrom, Eugene, Ore.

Report of the Director of Parish Education,

Marian Christopherson, Crystal, Minn.

Report of the Chairman of the Youth Board,

Pastor Alan Arneson, Fosston, Minn.

rasion man mineson, rossion, minn.

Report of the President of the Free Lutheran Youth,

Paul Kneeland, Sioux Falls, S.D.

Report of Youth Ministries Director,

Pastor Kevin Olson, Savage, Minn.

Report of Committee No. 4

(Publications, Parish Education and Youth Work)

Election of member to the Board of Publications

and Parish Education — one layman

Election of member to the Youth Board — one pastor

Election of Committee No. 4 for the 2008 Conference

11:30 a.m.

Prayer Hour

Noon

AFLC Foundation Lunch

1:30 p.m.

Devotions

Report of the Credentials Committee

Report of the Chairman of the Stewardship Board,

Jeremy Zeltinger, Litchfield, N.D.

Report of the Chairman of the Board of Pensions,

Larry Haagenson, Loveland, Colo.

Report of Committee No. 5 (Stewardship & Pensions)

Election of members to the Stewardship Board — two layman

Election of member to the Board of Pensions — one layman

Election of Committee No. 5 for the 2008 Conference

Report of the Chairman of the Colloquy Committee,

Pastor Steve Carlson, Dalton, Minn.

Election of Colloguy Committee for the 2008 Conference

Report of special committees

Election of two members to the Budget Analysis Committee

Report of Committee No. 1 as the Committee on General

Resolutions

Other Reports

7:30 p.m.

Closing service with ordinations
Abiding Savior Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D.

Conference Committee

Pastor Robert Lee, President

Pastor Brian Davidson, Secretary

an UNDIWDERD heart

Psalm 86:11

BY ROBIN JAMESON

salm
86:11
says
"Teach
me your
way, O Lord, and
I will walk in your
truth; give me an
undivided heart,
that I may fear

your name." Take a moment to consider the four sections of this verse. Each one is rich in meaning and application. One of the many benefits of gathering together as Christian women is to dig into God's Word, see what He wants to teach us, and learn how to apply it to our lives.

That is precisely what we have planned for WMF Convention on June 12 at Abiding Savior Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D., as we delve into the topics related to the theme of an undivided heart. The program begins at 9 a.m. with the Grace Alone praise team and Bible study writer Jane Emerson. A short business meeting will be held, including elections for first vice president and recording secretary.

During the luncheon there will be a delightful skit as well as inspiring stories from former missionary Clara Gunderson. In the afternoon, women will be able to choose two of the following three workshops: "The Role of Women," led by Laurie Nash; "An Undivided Heart: Your Devotional Life," led by Linda Korhonen; and "Fear," led by Pastor Paul Nash. These workshops are designed to teach and inspire so that you can more effectively carry out your calling. "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for

us to do" (Ephesians 2:10).

The evening banquet will begin at 4:30. We look forward to hearing again from our Bible study writer, Jane Emerson, who will touch your heart during an inti-

mate time of music and testimony.

A special event is planned this year for June 13 (Wednesday). A leadership breakfast will be held to provide ideas and inspiration for those who have been (or will be) leaders in their women's groups. If you are interested in attending, sign up for the WMF Advisory Breakfast on the registration form (page 19).

The WMF will host the Mission Festival at 7 p.m. that evening. Men, women, and children will join together to praise the Lord, fellowship, and hear greetings from our missionaries. Our special speaker for the evening will be Pastor Kevin Olson, currently the AFLC Youth Ministries Director. Olson will leave that position later this summer to begin a new AFLC ministry focusing on distance education.

Plan to join us in Sioux Falls! Registration forms (at right) are also available at www.2007aflc.org or www.aflc. org. There also will be activities available for all the kids.

Come. Spend a day with an undivided heart.

Jameson, Earlville, Ill., is the communication secretary for the AFLC's national Women's Missionary Federation.



June 12-15 at Sioux Falls Christian Schools, Sioux Falls, S.D.

Hosts: Abiding Savior Free Lutheran & Living Word Free Lutheran

Spouse's first name:

Address:				
City:		Zip:		
Phone:				
Congregation:				
(Circle) You are:		Visiting Pastor	Lay Member	Lay Visitor
Your spouse is:	Pastor	Visiting Pastor	Lay Member	Lay Visitor
Name of person a	ttending WMF Co	nvention on June 12:		
Meals Breakfast and eve	ning dinners are	on your own, except as no	oted. A general lunch wil	l be available at noon on site.
Special meals a	nd banquets			
Tuesday WMI	Fluncheon		X \$8.50	\$
			X \$11	\$
, ,			X \$6	\$
, i			X \$8.50	\$
			X \$8.50	\$
•	Schools Corporat		X \$11	\$
	ssion Corporation		X \$6	\$
Thursday ge			X \$8.50	\$
Thursday AN	C Corporation lu		X \$8.50 X \$8.50	\$
•			X \$17.50	\$
· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·			X \$17.50 X \$6	\$ \$
•			X \$8.50	\$
Friday Found			X \$8.50	\$
Total lunches/s	\$			
Conference regi	\$			
WMF Convention	\$			
Total registration	\$			

Make checks payable to:

Abiding Savior Free Lutheran Church

Mail to:

First name:

Abiding Savior Free Lutheran Church, Attn.: AFLC Conference Committee,

4100 S. Bahnson Ave., Sioux Falls, SD 57103



Where did all these people come from? Hey, watch where you're walking, your tangling up my net! What is going on here? Quick, get the nets back into the boat!

Look here comes the leader of the mob. Can you believe it? He's climbing into my boat. What did he say? "Rocky, paddle your boat out into the water?" Isn't he the one Andrew said was the Messiah? They guy who nicknamed me Rocky.

I thought we were going somewhere, but now he says stop. We're only 20 feet from shore. What is he saying to the crowd? No one talks like this; his words have a ring of truth. Somehow I feel an allegiance to this man. It just feels right to do what he says.

How can he know about fishing? Why does he ask us to go back out and put down our nets? Doesn't he know we've been out all night and the fish aren't biting? My arms and my back are killing me. Because it's him asking, I'll go out and put my nets back down.

The boats are starting to sink.

Who is this man? He is the Messiah! Who am I next to Him? I'm nothing but a dirty, wet fisherman. What I am on the outside is clean compared to the rot in my soul. Surely He can see and smell that as well. His purity is so overwhelming that it brings me to my knees. What

can I say to Him? My only desire is to get out of His presence and hide.

What is He saying? "Don't be afraid." Does He know me and still love me? Could He be the lamb of God that

me and still love me? Could He be the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world? Yes, He is!

He says to me, "From now on you will catch men."

Let's go with Him. Someone else can have my fish and our boats.

Peter (Rocky) knew he was unworthy to even be in the presence of the Lord. But Jesus accepted him, encouraged him and called him. That was enough for Peter to drop everything and follow. Jesus accepts you, redeemed you and calls you to be a winner of souls as well. Don't let anything hold you back.

Palmer, Shakopee, Minn., is director of the AFLC's World Missions Department.

pull our boats up on shore,

take care of the nets and lay down on the sand. Getting

these nets cleaned and folded is the last step before we can

rest.

riendliness

BY PASTOR KERWIN SLETTO

teacher told her 12th graders to think of someone they considered a leader and write an essay about the individual. Most of the kids wrote about famous people, but a student named Julius turned in one titled, "Benny: The Man on the Bus." Here's what he wrote:

I've been taking a public bus to school for years. Almost no one ever talked to anyone else. About a year ago, an elderly man got on the bus and said loudly to the driver, "Good morning!" Most of the people looked up, annoyed. The bus driver just grunted.

The next day, the man got on at the same stop and again said loudly to the driver, "Good morning!" By the fifth day, the driver greeted the man with his own "Good morning." The man answered, "My name's Benny. What's yours?" The driver replied, "I'm Ralph."

That was the first time any of us had heard the driver's name. The next day, Benny extended his "Good morning!" to the whole bus. Within a few days, others were saying it to Ralph when they got on the bus, and Benny's regular "Good morning!" was returned by a whole bunch of "Good morning!" responses.

People began to talk to each other. The bus was friendlier. If a leader is someone who makes something happen, Benny was our leader in friendliness.

A month ago, he didn't get on the bus anymore. Some of us thought he died. No one knew what to do. The bus got awful quiet again. So I started to act like Benny and said, "Good morning!" to everyone, and they cheered up again. I guess now I'm the leader.

(From the YMCA's Character Counts magazine)

As Christians, we have a call to be a shining light to the glory of God. We are called to be leaders and reach out to others with the gospel. So often we don't know how to go about serving our Lord in this way.

One way to begin is to take

the time to greet people wherever we may be. Then it's important to remember a person's name. When you do, it means that the other person is important and not just someone who also attends the same class or happens to be on the same bus as you are. This outreach can happen at a café or the doctor's office. It can even happen as you walk down the street. It will surprise you how many people will

I suspect that we all have heard the story about the guy on his way to commit suicide. He decided that if no one spoke to him as he traveled to the bridge, then he would jump. It's amazing how such a simple thing as saying "Good morning!" can change a person's life and perspective.

respond.

Being friendly opens doors. As time passes, people will begin to open up to you and it will give you the opportunity to testify what Jesus Christ has done for you and how He can help them, too. Opportunities will come for you to pray for and with people. It all begins with saying "Hello!" to someone and remembering a name.

You, too, can be a leader and make a difference. Stand up for the Lord by reaching out with a friendly greeting. It's amazing what God can do through a willing leader. God is simply searching for a willing servant. Here I am Lord; send me.

Sletto is chaplain at the Pleasant View Luther Home, Ottawa, Ill.

Emails tell a story of hope

Pastor's family wants book to minister to those experiencing loss

very family has a story.
Every family has faced
a hardship. Losing a
loved one — losing a job.
Financial pains — physical pains. Feuding families — broken
families. Our family is no different.

Two years ago, we lost our mom. Our dad, Pastor Michael Brandt, lost his wife. It was a hardship that snuck up on us and took our breath away. How could our 58-year-old mother be diagnosed with cancer and die four short months later? Why would God send this terrible chapter of pain and loss into our family's story?

To share our trials and prayer needs with our congregation and lifelong friends, Dad sent emails — 26 emails that looked honestly at what our family was dealing with, what we needed prayer for, and what God was

teaching us. They were meant to inform, but they ended up being much more than that. They gave hope! Dad couldn't help including the glorious gospel message in as many of the emails as possible ... and those who received them shared that message with others.

March 18, 2005

In the midst of it all, Jeannie and I are experiencing many blessings. Closeness to one another, closeness with you, our family and friends, and most



of all a greater closeness to Jesus. His nearness keeps us from despair. Strange as it may seem to those who have not surrendered to Christ, trials draw a child of God deeper into His eternal, loving embrace. As the hymn writer declared, "Every day with Jesus is sweeter than the day before!"

— Pastor Michael Brandt

After encouragement and prompting from many, those emails turned into a book. To help readers understand them, our sister Kayla filled in our family story between the emails Dad had written. We hope "Sent and Received: This Mourning's Emails" will minister to many going through their own hardships. Available for a suggested donation of \$10 (soft cover) or \$20 (hardcover), all proceeds will be

given to the Pastors Brandt Legacy of Faith Foundation to help fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus Christ.

Please visit Abiding Savior Free Lutheran's home page at www.knowingthesavior.org and click the book picture to order your copy of "Sent and Received," or send an email to bookinfo@knowingthesavior.org for assistance. You may also mail your request with donation to Sent and Received, 4100 S. Bahnson Ave., Sioux Falls, SD 57103.

Yes, every family has a story. This is ours.

Erika DeWitt

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Pastor Dale Finstrom, who currently serves Maranatha Free Lutheran, Glyndon, Minn., has accepted a call to serve Resurrection Free Lutheran, Beltrami, Minn.

Pastor Cal Willard, who currently serves Messiah Lutheran, Champaign, Ill., has accepted a call to serve the Roseau, Minn., Parish: Free Lutheran Church of Roseau and Norland Free Lutheran.

Pastor Scott Guhl, who currently serves Vision of Glory Lutheran, Plymouth, Minn., has accepted a call to serve St. Olaf Evangelical Lutheran, Montgomery, Ill. He will begin his ministry there on June 1.

Members of the Coordinating Committee accepted a resolution of affiliation from **Joy Christian Community Church**, Fountain Hills, Ariz., during their February meeting.

AFLC_BENEVOLENCES Jan. 1- March 31, 2007

FUND	TOTAL (Subsidy)	REC'D IN MARCH	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% Total
General Fund	\$361,225	\$33,194	\$110,003	30
Youth Ministries	73,114	3,623	12,736	17
Evangelism	108,236	10,076	25,830	24
Parish Education	107,052	6,119	19,955	19
Seminary	216,097	13,933	48,107	22
Bible School	343,545	20,318	68,376	20
Home Missions	316,413	18,714	67,372	21
World Missions	287,808	16,492	57,084	20
Personal Support	407,198	35,126	136,783	34
TOTALS	\$2,220,688	\$157,596	\$546,247	25
TOTALS 2006	\$1,994,798	\$154,615	\$447,324	22

Goal 25%

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.

LC Wleadership

e have not men fit for the times. We are deficient in genius, education, in travel, fortune — in everything. I feel unutterable anxiety." John Adams wrote those words in 1776

as the colonies prepared to declare their independence from England. We look back on the founding fathers of our nation as incredibly wise and gifted individuals. But as he looked at the group, Adams saw all kinds of deficiencies.

The AFLC will elect a new president at our annual conference in June. We have only had three presidents during our 45-year history, so this is obviously not a common event.

Some may be tempted to feel like Adams did: "We have not men fit for the times." Some may feel anxiety during

> this time of transition and worry about what will come with new leadership.

Whoever is elected president will be, like the rest of us, a sinner in great need of God's grace. He will fall short in many ways. He will lack many things. He will hopefully have the attitude of Adams, who said, "I cannot but wish I were better qualified." Apart from Christ our new



president will be unable to do anything (John 15:5).

We need to have a realistic view of our leaders. They haven't somehow arrived at a superhuman level of spirituality where temptations and trials can no longer touch them. We also need to have a proper perspective on the office of president.

Our current president, Pastor Robert Lee, did not view going from being a pastor in Illinois to AFLC president as any kind of a promotion. He does not look at this upcoming change in how he serves the body of Christ as "stepping down." That kind of thinking is in accord with the first Fundamental Principle of the AFLC: "According to the Word of God, the congregation is the right form of the Kingdom on earth."

The heartbeat of the AFLC is not in the headquarters office, but in the local congregations. The pastor of the local congregation is in no way below anyone in an administrative or faculty position. The local congregation is the frontline of ministry. Those in administrative positions,

including the president, do not rule over the congregations. They are servants of the congregations.

After serving in a ministry where he traveled to various congregations as a guest teacher, a writer was going to once again pastor a local congregation. He wrote about how in his travels he would get treated as a special guest. After services people would thank him and say kind things to

The heartbeat of the AFLC is not in the headquarters office, but in the local congregations.

him. But it was their pastor with whom they would spend quality time. They would share with their pastor about the struggles going on in their families or the answers to prayer they had received. They'd ask him to stop by that week or thank him for visiting their grandmother the week before. Special treatment was given to the guest, but the local pastor got "the longer handshake."

After a couple years of being on the road, the writer realized how much he missed the longer handshake. He would no longer get the attention that is often given to the special guest, but he was much more interested in developing relationships and impacting lives for Christ over the long term, like a local pastor.

As we elect a new president, let us not intimidate whoever will serve in the position by elevating it beyond where it should be. The new president, like past presidents, can certainly be used by Christ to impact lives. A chief part of his work will be to build up those of us who receive the longer handshake. The position is important, but the whole future of the church body will not rest on his shoulders. He will be just part of the body of Christ and will be in need of support from the rest of the body.

The AFLC is God's work. We are a spiritual movement. dependent on God's grace. Our emphasis is on the local congregation. Our future is bright because of our Leader. Jesus said, "I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it" (Matthew 16:18). Our hope is in the Lord.

building the base

BY LARRY WALKER

Think

"Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: ... the one who leads, with zeal ..." (Romans 12:6-8, ESV).

knew a pastor once, in a different church body, who was a "workaholic," richly gifted in church growth. His parish added numbers quickly. But he wasn't gifted in grooming leaders. He'd ask people to do things, but his instructions would be so vague that the people weren't sure what he meant. Often they ended up doing nothing. The pastor would sigh and say, "I just can't get people to take responsibility." Then he'd do the job himself.

The result was a congregation unprepared to run its own affairs when he retired.

This is one of the dangers the founders of the Lutheran Free Church (the AFLC's predecessor) wanted to avoid from the very beginning. They saw a pattern in congregations, one that went back to the Middle Ages. We still see it today. The pastor did pretty much all the work and made all the decisions, while the congregation members sat meekly in their pews, their contribution limited to giving money — "pray, pay and obey."

The Free Church founders read their Bibles, where they saw a very different state of affairs. In the New Testament church there was work for everyone. Each member had a gift (or more than one gift) to contribute to the congregation's ministry. They cooperated just as the parts of our bodies cooperate, the "foot" doing a job differ-



BIG!

ent from (but just as important as) the work of the "hand."

This was hard for some people to accept back then, and it's still hard now. It means congregation members need to step up and share responsibility with their pastors. Immigrants

from Norway in the 19th century, used to the state church they'd grown up in, were afraid to do that. That's easy to understand. But even today we often find it hard, partly because we (properly) respect our pastors' education and experience, but also partly because we're worried about the responsibility and time investment involved.

A few verses prior to Romans 12:6, the apostle Paul wrote, "I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned" (v. 3). A "sober judgment" about ourselves sometimes means admitting that we've "gotten too big for our britches." But quite often, I think, it can mean accepting that God has gifted us for bigger things and more ambitious goals than the ones we've tried so far.

The lazy servant in the parable (Matthew 25:14-30) may have told himself he was being decently humble and modest when he buried his talent in the ground instead of investing it. But he wasn't. He was being disobedient, and he was holding back his Master's work.

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