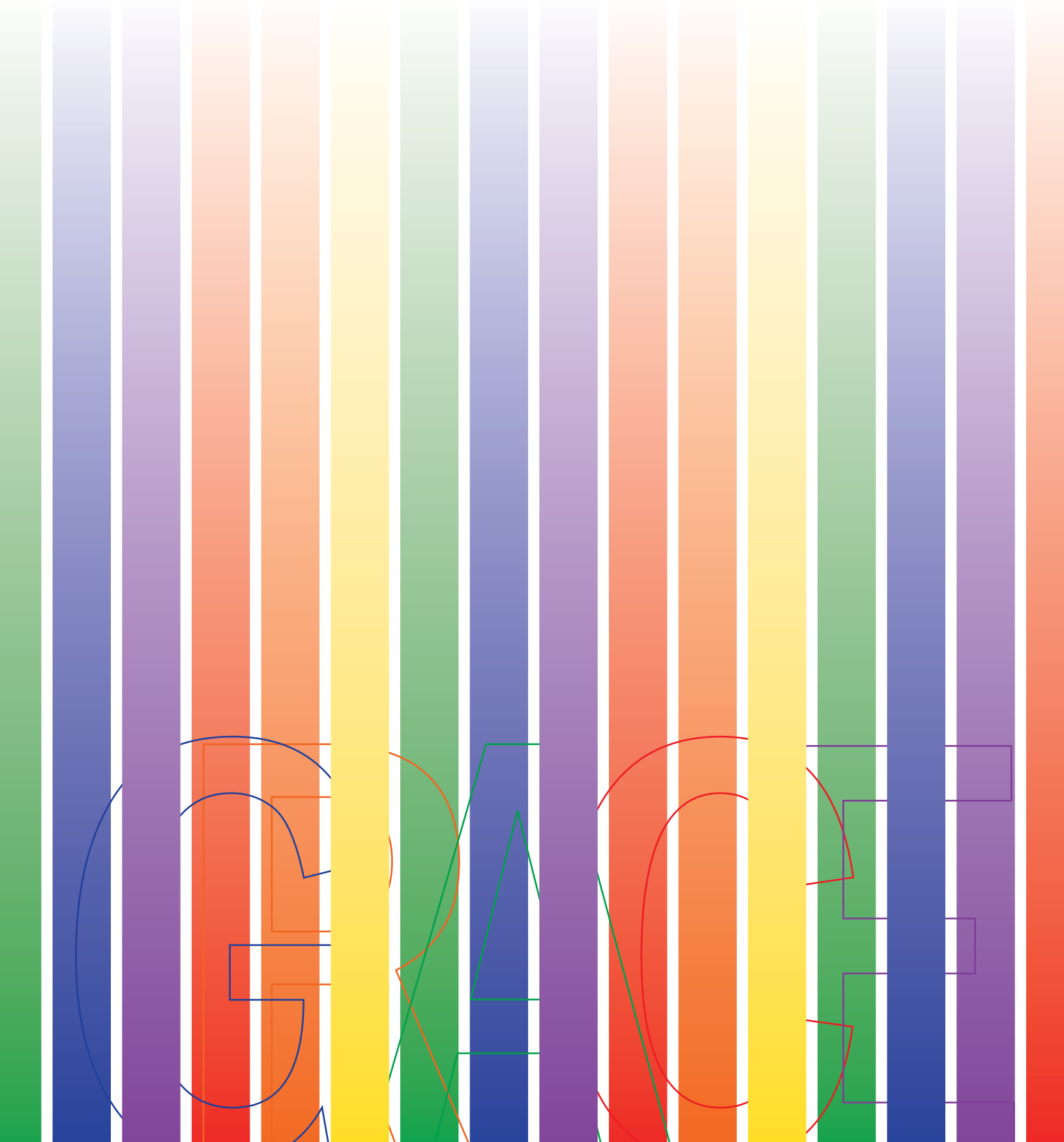


THE LUTHERAN 

MAY 2009

AMBASSADOR



We're



waiting

BY PASTOR HERB HOFF

Years ago, when my children were young, there was a children's musical that was focused around the fruits of the Spirit. I am certain many remember the musical called *The Music Machine*.

One of the songs from that musical was sung often around our home, primarily because it was an encouragement to me during times of my own impatience.

"Be patient, be patient, don't be in such a hurry
When you get impatient, you only start to worry
Remember, remember, that God is patient too
And think of all the times when others had to wait for you."

I don't know about you, but I am often reminded by God's Spirit that I still have a problem with patience. That fruit in particular is one the Holy Spirit seeks to bring to maturity in my life.

Patience is a difficult thing, especially to grow. The way God grows patience is never fun. God grows patience in us by testing, by stretching, by exercising what little and weak patience we already have. That is never a fun proposition.

It is easy for me to become impatient when I wait, and I have been doing a lot of waiting lately. Healing from spine surgery that I had a couple months ago has not been a quick process. My choice would be to be healed much quicker, apparently quicker than God has designed. This means I am not in the driver's seat while God is doing His work in my life. I have been finding myself in the passenger seat being chauffeured, waiting on the work of the Holy Spirit.

What are you waiting for?

Are you waiting for a change in the life of a family member or friend for whom you have been praying?

Are you waiting for a new, refreshed attitude and a better outlook in your own life?

Are you waiting for a visible sign that God is answering your prayers like you want them answered?

Are you waiting for God to show He is powerful and loving in your life?

Are you waiting for a change in your life so you can really believe that you are forgiven and acceptable to God?

As you read these words I would encourage you to believe the promise that God has already given you. "If we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9).

God has not forgotten you in your times of waiting. He will certainly prove Himself faithful. May His promise through the prophet Isaiah give you hope and courage today.

"They who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31).

Also consider the reminder from Peter, "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance" (II Peter 3:9).

Let's take our example from God and be patient in our times of waiting.

Hoff serves St. Ansgar's Free Lutheran, Salinas, Calif.

May 2009 >>

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR vol. 47, no. 5

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Many Christians seem to understand the concept of being saved by grace, but they have missed the concept of being sustained by grace.

—James D. Mallory, Jr.

Do not follow your reason, which will tell you that by preaching the Gospel to them you will make your hearers secure. It is not so, on the contrary, when the grace and glory of the Gospel are truly held out to men, this rouses them, makes them joyful and therefore willing to do good works and, as it were, kindles a heavenly fire in their hearts.

—C.F.W. Walther
Law and Gospel

Christ is no Moses, no exactor, no giver of laws, but a giver of grace, a Savior; he is infinite mercy and goodness, freely and bountifully given to us.

—Martin Luther

Grace is God's free and unmerited favor shown to guilty sinners who deserve only judgment. It is the love of God shown to the unlovely. It is God reaching downward to people who are in rebellion against Him.

—Jerry Bridges
Transforming Grace

GRACE

TCHAY XIONG WAS A HMONG REFUGEE FROM WAR-TORN LAOS. He, his wife, and child came to Ann Arbor, Mich., under a government repatriation program in the late 1970s. I was just starting out as the pastor of a small mission church there at the time. Partnering with a more established sister congregation across town, we volunteered to sponsor the Xiong family and to assist with their resettlement. We saw it as an opportunity to show our Christian love and to share the gospel.

Several church members worked very hard to help the Xiong family get their paperwork in order, find housing and furnishings for them, provide transportation to school for language training, and go shopping for food and clothing—basically anything to make the difficult transition of being forced to leave their homeland and to start over in a strange land as smooth as possible. Along the way we hoped to develop a relationship with them so that we could witness to them about Christ and teach them God's Word.

It was amazing to see the grace that was given us at work. Not without challenges, to be sure, but gradually a Hmong ministry was taking shape. One semi-retired

You have what people need

By Pastor Greg Lenz

couple, both professional educators, was able to begin simple Sunday school lessons with them. The Xiong family was learning about the grace of God in Jesus who moved Christians to serve others, even those who were not like them.

Then tragedy struck. While Tchay was walking home from his entry-level job along a city street, he was hit by a car. The driver apparently didn't see him in the twilight. Tchay died from his injuries. "Why, Lord?" we wondered, praying that the mourners wouldn't turn against us because of their bad luck in America.

I offered to provide a church funeral service for them, even though my seminary training may have advised against it—we were taught not to do funerals for non-Christians. However, I believed that God's grace is sufficient for us (II Corinthians 12:9). Based on the Scriptural promise, "Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17), I preached a

sermon for the survivors, extending the comfort that because Tchay Xiong had begun to learn about Jesus in the Bible, they could hope that he was in heaven.

I grieved with them, too. We don't know why God allows some people to be taken from this life in such a tragic, untimely manner. But as my text said: "Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." (I Timothy 1:15). A number of Hmong relatives and friends from the community were in the audience. An interpreter translated each sentence of the service, so my sermon was rather stilted. I could only pray that the Holy Spirit worked through the Word that day to accomplish His saving purpose.

That is the power of grace that works. Notice how the two, grace and works, are combined in Ephesians 2:8-10: "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one

can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." God saves us by grace through His gift of faith in Christ Jesus to do good works.

There are many Hmong in the Twin Cities and other metropolitan areas in the United States these days. Unfortunately, some have joined gangs to survive in the asphalt jungle of the "hoods." Others may have become cynical about the American dream with so much corruption, not unlike their places of origin. Nonetheless, as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we still have what they and all people need: God's amazing grace that works awesomely!

So "each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms" (I Peter 4:10). Grace that works.

Lenz serves Faith Free Lutheran, Minneapolis, Minn.



Grace defined

By Pastor Terry Olson

As a young boy in Winger, Minn., I remember walking on the gravel road to services at Dovre Lutheran Free Church. As I walked up those tall steps and finally into the sanctuary, I remember thinking that it was good to be there. That house of God has always been dear to me. It was there in that faithful congregation that God's grace became clear to me. God's Word was read and proclaimed. Again and again I heard of Jesus, the cross, and His forgiveness. And as I fell asleep each night, the message of God's grace would softly assure me that my God loved me and forgave me.

God's grace has had a profound affect upon me from the beginning. It has given me the assurance of my salvation. It has led me in life and in ministry, all of which have been anchored in God's Word. Grace was faithfully taught in that beautiful sanctuary.

Let me ask two questions regarding this grace. First, what is the biblical definition of grace? Second, what does grace do and how does it change our standing before our God?

What is grace? In Romans 5:20 Paul defines grace as an overflowing forgiveness for Jesus' sake. As a young boy I was well

aware of my sinfulness. The Holy Spirit had used God's law to trouble my soul. When I failed at cleansing my own heart, the message of Christ's sacrifice on the cross was the only word that brought peace. Grace was and is His forgiveness—a gift of God. In other words, grace is empty of man's work and will.

Christ's forgiveness is given to those who do not deserve nor merit it. In Galatians 1:3-5 Paul speaks of grace only in view of our Lord's work and will. He states, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen."

Grace is and must be devoid of anything in us (Romans 11:6). God's abounding love and forgiveness are of His very nature and originate in His mind in spite of us. Yes, His grace is defined as giving Himself for our sins. It is His overflowing forgiveness.

What does grace do and how does it change our standing before our God? As I sat in the lovely dwelling place at Dovre Lutheran Free Church, questions grew in

my heart and mind: Will the Lord accept me? Why? When nothing is left but the indescribable ache of a troubled heart, the music of His grace brings peace to the soul. As the prodigal son came to his father saying, "I am not worthy to be called your son" (Luke 15:21), the embrace of his father assured him of his grace.

As forgiven children, we are seen by God through Christ as if we had never sinned. The grace of Christ takes away our sin. Thus, the peace of God brightens, calms, and gladdens our hearts as we stand in the Father's presence. Grace takes away guilt as we stand justified in His eyes (Ephesians 2:1-9).

Since grace is full of God's will and work of salvation for us, all glory belongs to Him. In I Corinthians 15:10 Paul praises his God by saying, "But by the grace of God I am what I am." Grace is a divine matter and work of God and nothing but a heavenly gift that has a lasting influence upon the sin-laden soul. Grace is forgiveness for Jesus' sake, overflowing forgiveness. This is grace!

Olson serves Trinity Free Lutheran, Grand Forks, N.D.



Living in the shadow of sin,

GRACE

can we grasp the full meaning of grace?

By Alison Mellgren

The word grace is often misapplied in our culture. The meaning is diluted by more casual uses, but there is a reason harder to admit; one that forces my consideration inward. According to Scripture, my understanding of God and His works is darkened. I am fallen man. I live in the shadow of sin; sin from the outside world, sin from within. At times, my failure to grasp the truth of what grace is discourages me. I often feel the struggle to understand grace is one I should be able to conquer. This misguided desire only serves to emphasize my darkened understanding.

Isaiah says that our good works are like filthy rags. The first part of Isaiah 64:6 tells us, "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags." It is a simple statement and yet it forces within me an uncomfortable realization. There is nothing I can do to earn my salvation, for I am fallen man.

So many times I find myself pleased with my "good works," whether it is successfully treating a client at work or taking the lead in a ministry of the church. Many of these good works are outwardly commendable. Yet if there is any good in them, according to the Bible, it is the result of the Holy Spirit working within me. Then why is it so easy for me to take pride in these good works?

Darkened man acknowledges no Lord. Apart from Christ my good works are as filthy rags, the kind which have been used for such grease and grime that the more I try to clean myself with them, the filthier I become. This is how sin abounds. The more I struggle with sin on my own, the filthier I become.

The Christian walk is a struggle, not so

much against the world but against our very natures. Believer, if you must struggle, then by the grace of God struggle to the foot of the cross. Do not restlessly seek what you cannot earn. Instead, rest at the feet of the One who not only longs for you to be with Him, but to simply be. "And God is able to make all grace abound to you, that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed" (II Corinthians 9:8).

The simple act of being a child of God is a testimony to the One who dwells within you. As you put your relationship with your Lord first, every action becomes His good work in you. Good work does not mean that your every word or response is good—after all, you are sinful—but it does mean that the work He is doing within you is good. It will bear fruit, maybe fruit you will never see.

Grace. God's Riches At Christ's Expense. This acrostic clearly explains the concept I struggle with so often. I cannot pay for the blessings He showers on me. I cannot persuade Him to save me because of my good works and thereby earn my salvation. I cannot pull myself from the dark shadow of sin into the light. Yet by simply being His child and living in a state of repentance, He pays my penalty for sin. In exchange for my filthy rags I receive grace because He has accomplished the doing and in return, He only asks that I be His child.

Thank God! Believer, let grace abound.

Mellgren is a member of Trinity/Mt. Carmel Parish, McIntosh, Minn.

Shadowborn

Ever will the heart of man
Seek to guard the dark within
Crushing what the light would show
Denying freedom to the soul

Avarice, hate, deceit, and strife
... all lead to everlasting night
Oh can the darkened heart of man
Fulfill the law's demands?

There is a god inside of me
Thriving on dark apart from Thee
Shaping my hopeless destiny
Condemning my soul eternally

This endless struggle we endure
For we are not, what we were
Redemption waits, errant child
To pierce the dark, cleanse the vile

Oh son of man would you be saved?
One bled freely, death He gave
Immanuel and Prince of Peace
Sacrificed to grant release

There is a god inside of me
Thriving on dark apart from Thee
Shaping my hopeless destiny
Condemning my soul eternally

Hope lies not in strength of man
Where souls toil on in barren land
The heart of wrath can be remade
Sin atoned, judgment paid

Relinquish will, self and pride
The gods within, must all die
Embrace the death light demands
Claim redemption, fallen man

Now this God inside of me
Fulfilled the law on Calvary
Granting release from slavery
He shapes my life, my destiny

-a.m. mellgren

THE GOSPEL FOR THE UNGODLY

By C. O. Rosenius

An excerpt from 'A Faithful Guide to Peace with God'

THIS MUST BE ALL WRONG. THE BELIEVERS, THE GOOD PEOPLE, the godly people, the sincere and upright Christians who really walk in the Spirit and in newness of life—these are the people whom God can love. Not me, an ungodly wretch, frivolous, unstable, disobedient, a vile sinner against the Law of God, who knows to do good, but does the evil, insincere, unable even to repent of my sins, unable earnestly to watch and pray. God, is it possible that the Gospel is also for me? Can God love sinners such as I am? No, no. That is not possible.”

Such thoughts lie deep in the hearts of men. In fact, they cannot be entirely banished from any heart. When anyone speaks of “the Gospel for the ungodly,” it sounds like a strange and dangerous Gospel.

Hark, then, ye poor sinners, ye despised ones! Hear what the Lord God Himself has to say to you. For “the foolishness of God is wiser than men” (I Corinthians 1:25). God still speaks the Gospel of grace to all His fallen and lost children. “As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?” (Ezekiel 33:11). “Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem”—the most sin-stained spot on earth—“thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee. How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not” (Matthew 23:37). “I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins” (Isaiah 43:25). “Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her

warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of the Lord’s hand double for all her sins” (Isaiah 40:2). ...

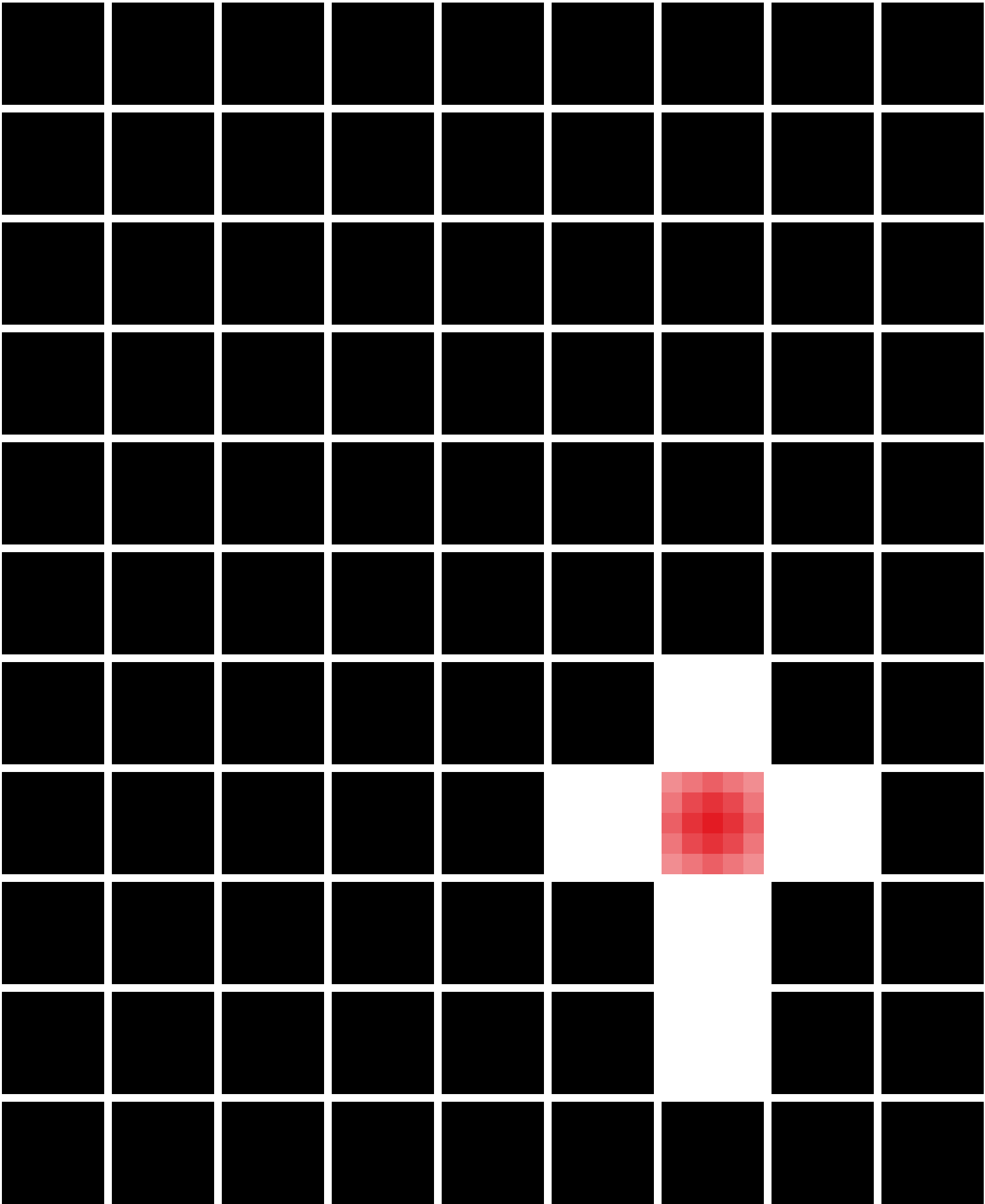
God forgives all our sins at once, not one today, a second tomorrow, and so on. No, they are all forgiven simultaneously and forever. ... “He will have compassion upon us. He will subdue our iniquities; and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea” (Micah 7:19). “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy sins; return unto me, for I have redeemed thee” (Isaiah 42:22). “As far as the East is from the West, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us” (Psalm 103:12). Through justification by grace, or by the remission of sins, God imputes the perfect righteousness of Christ to the believing sinner. Now, the merits of Christ cover every sin, past, present, and future, and are accounted to the believer for righteousness as long as he remains in the faith.

Thus a believer is continually justified. He has the daily and eternal remission of his sins. All his sins, deficiencies and shortcomings are and remain forgiven. “In whom we

have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (Ephesians 1:7). The mercy of God is as great and rich as God Himself is great and rich. For this reason the believer lives in the grace of God. Even with all his errors, he is still assured of his salvation. For he does not build his hope of salvation upon his good works, his fine character, his service of love to humanity, but rather upon the rich, free and abundant grace of God in Christ Jesus. Without this foundation for his faith, he would have no assurance of salvation, no genuine peace of heart, no ground for joy and hope. Yea, the believer could not for one moment feel assured of the blotting out of his sins, if he did not know that God requires absolutely nothing of him by way of merit or worthiness and only asks him to find refuge in the merits of Christ. For, as Luther says, “Where there is remission of sins, there is also life and salvation.”

Since the believer knows this, and lives solely in the pardoning grace of God, surrounded as it were by His forgiving love, he remains assured of salvation, with the peace of God in his heart.

This excerpt was taken from A Faithful Guide to Peace With God, written by Rosenius and published in 1923. It was re-printed by Ambassador Publications in 1990 and is available for \$7. Call (763) 545-5631 for more information.



rot269 Pastor

BY PASTOR JOHN RIETH

Whether serving as parish pastor or in an institution as a chaplain, the call to minister to people is the same

I AM A PASTOR. Whatever else I do as a chaplain draws its significance from that. That call from God came to me during my college years when I was asked by Pastor John Strand, then president of the AFLC, if I would consider serving two small country congregations. They only met every two weeks. It was just for a while. Well, that “little while” stretched out to three years. I thank God for His clear call to me then, and now. I was privileged to serve as a parish pas-

tor for more than 20 years. And I continue to love providing pastoral care in a hospital setting now for nearly 16 years.

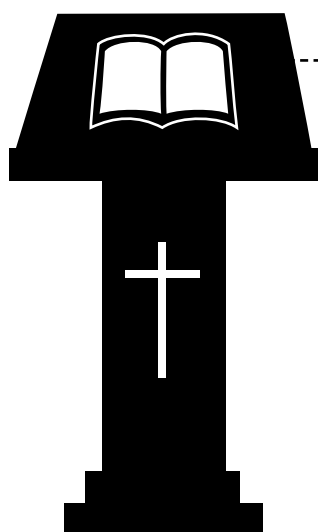
The call from God to pastor in a hospital or a nursing home is really no different than to a congregation. In each instance, you are the pastor. Each has its unique challenges and special blessings. In addition to my years in seminary, preparing me for life in the parish, I needed additional training to prepare me for God’s call to chaplaincy. My two years of residency in clinical pastoral education at Hennepin County Medical Center were at the heart of that. Both were spiritually rich and life-changing.

I have been at Altru Health System now nearly 13 years. Not infrequently people, some of them parish pastors, ask me, “Which do you like better?” I really don’t compare the two. I still get many opportunities to preach and function in much the same way as a parish pastor. I stay active in my congregation and love “filling in” for the brethren when needed. I see my call to chaplaincy as the next step in God’s plan for my life as a pastor. I love when my brother AFLC pastors stop by to visit, make referrals when a parishioner is in the hospital, or just want to talk. It’s great to pray with them, to provide spiritual care to their flock.

Pastoral care in a hospital can be intense and draining. It can also be rich and fulfilling. And sometimes the two happen at the same time. As manager of our department, I feel trusted and sought-out by staff. Our seven chaplains serve as pastors to more than 3,000 employees. We listen, we laugh, we cry, we pray with them. We offer one of the few places they can go and talk, given the strict rules governing confidentiality. And we are the only pastor many of them have, whether by chance or by choice.

Providing pastoral care in a spiritually pluralistic setting does not restrict our ability to express our faith. Along with the support we provide others whose beliefs vary from our own are the opportunities to share the good news of salvation to those who will hear. As you pray, please remember all those who serve in institutional chaplaincy in our AFLC.

Rieth serves as manager of chaplaincy at Altru Health System, Grand Forks, N.D.



2008 annual conference **WELCOME**

*Calvary Lutheran, Fergus Falls,
Minn., will host the AFLC's
annual conference June 16-19*

The time has arrived to go to the attic and bring down the suitcase and begin making ready to travel to the 47th annual conference of the AFLC. It might be fun and very interesting to find out if there is someone who has perfect attendance at the conferences, or at least if there is someone with near perfect attendance at this great event.

Pastors James R. Johnson and Eric Rasmussen, who serve Calvary Free Lutheran of Fergus Falls, Minn., along with their conference committee members, have done much already to prepare for our time in Fergus Falls June 16-19. We are grateful to them for the invitation and for their diligent preparation for the time when our God will be present to speak to and work in the hearts of His people.



Pastor Elden Nelson

What can we expect? There will be many opportunities. We gathered in Fergus Falls for our annual conference 10 years ago, and so for some it will afford an opportunity to renew an acquaintance with the beautiful city of Fergus Falls and with the wonderful people of Calvary. There will be an opportunity to meet AFLC friends from across our beloved land and hopefully even some from other countries. Good fellowship will abound; it always does.

The opportunity to participate in the work of the AFLC will be shared in committee and corporation meetings as well as the business sessions held Wednesday through Friday. Prayer times near mid-day on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday will give everyone opportunities to draw near to His throne of grace with praise and thanksgiving for all He has done and is doing, as well as making requests for specific needs and concerns. Evening services will provide opportunities to join our hearts and voices in worship of Him who has called and gathered us as a part of His family.

The theme for our 2009 conference is "My Word: a Fire and a Hammer," taken from Jeremiah 23:29: "Is not My word like fire" declares the Lord, "and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?" Herein is the greatest opportunity offered to us—His Word working in us, among us and through us is a great privilege and opportunity to hear Him and to draw near to Him as He speaks to us and to every need and situation we encounter.

So welcome in Jesus' name. It is my prayer that many will sense the importance of being a part of the many opportunities to participate in the work and fellowship of our AFLC as we meet in Fergus Falls, June 16-19. To Him be honor, glory and praise!

Nelson, who is a member of Grace Free Lutheran, Maple Grove, Minn., is the president of the AFLC.



forty-seventh annual conference **AGENDA**

• **SITE:** Bigwood Event Center, Fergus Falls, Minn.

• **HOST:** Calvary Free Lutheran, Fergus Falls

Tuesday, June 16

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.

Leader: Pastors Jim Johnson & Eric Rasmussen, Fergus Falls, Minn.

Speaker: Pastor Al Monson, Mesa, Ariz.

AFLC President Pastor Elden Nelson will open the conference and appoint necessary committees.

Wednesday, June 17

9:00 a.m.

Devotions: Seminarian Joe Faldet

Report of the Credentials Committee

Adoption of the Conference Agenda

Election of the Nominating Committee for the 2010 Conference

The President's Report

Report of the Chairman of the Coordinating Committee

Pastor Gary Jorgenson, East Grand Forks, Minn.

Report of the Chairman of the AFLC Foundation

Pastor Tonnes Pollestad, Andover, Minn.

Reports of Chaplaincy Ministries

Institutional: Pastor Kerwin Sletto, Grand Forks, N.D.

Military: Pastor Mark Antal, Park River, N.D.

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

Nathaniel Olson, Argusville, N.D.

Report of the Budget Analysis Review Committee

Cory Buck, New Hope, Minn.

Report of the Nominating Committee, always in order

Election of nominees for the Missions, Schools & ARC Corporations

11:30 a.m.

Prayer Hour — Pastor Tony Stockman, Brandon, Minn.

Noon

Builder's Fellowship Lunch

Chaplains Lunch

1:30 p.m.

Devotions: Seminarian Seth Forness

Report of Credentials Committee

Election Procedures

Elections (*all terms five years unless noted*)

• Vice President — one-year term

• Secretary — one-year term

Selection of nominees to the

• Home Missions Committee — one layman, one pastor;

• FLAPS Board of Managers — one pastor;

• World Missions Committee — one layman, one pastor;

• Board of Trustees — one layman;

• ARC Board — one layman

Report of Committee No. 1 (Administration)

Report of the Nominating Committee

Election of nominees to the Coordinating Committee —
one pastor and one layman (one-year term)

Election of Committee No. 1 for the 2010 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 Todd Schierkolk, Jerez, Mexico

Thursday June 18

7:00 a.m.

Mission Corporation Annual Meeting

9:00 a.m.

Devotions: Seminarian Patrick Lohse

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 Mark Johnson, Dalton, Minn.

Report of the President of the Free Lutheran Youth,

Daniel Keinanen, Onalaska, Wis.

Report of Youth Ministries Director,

Pastor Jason Holt, St. Michael, Minn.

Report of Committee No. 4

(Publications, Parish Education and Youth Work)

Report of Nominating Committee

Election of member to the Board of Publications
and Parish Education — one layman



Election of member to the Youth Board — one layman
Election of Committee No. 4 for the 2010 Conference

11:30 a.m.

Prayer Hour — Pastor Tony Stockman, Brandon, Minn.

Noon

The ARC Corporation Annual Meeting
Partners in Mission Outreach Annual Meeting

1:30 p.m.

Devotions: Seminarian Eric Swenson
Report of the Credentials Committee
Report of the Chairman of the Stewardship Board,
Pastor Greg Schram, Thief River Falls, Minn.
Report of the Chairman of the Board of Pensions,
Pastor Larry Haagenson, Loveland, Colo.
Report of Committee No. 5 (Stewardship & Pensions)
Report of Nominating Committee
Election of member to the Stewardship Board — one layman
Election of member to the Board of Pensions — one layman
Election of Committee No. 5 for the 2010 Conference
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)
Report of Nominating Committee
Election of Committee No. 2 for the 2010 Conference
Report of the Schools Corporation annual meeting

5:30 p.m.

Pastors Banquet
Speaker: Pastor Tim Skramstad, Eagan, Minn.

7:00 p.m.

Laymen Service
Leader: Vint Bruflat, Mesa, Ariz.
Speaker: Mike McCarlson, Webster, S.D.

Friday, June 19

9:00 a.m.

Devotions: Seminarian Sam Wellumson
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.

11:30 a.m.

Prayer Hour — Pastor Tony Stockman, Brandon, Minn.

Noon

Lunch

1:30 p.m.

Devotions: Pastor Jeremy Vance, Wadena, Minn.
Report of the Credentials Committee
Report of Committee No. 3 (Missions and Evangelism)
Report of Mission Corporation Annual Meeting
Report of the Nominating Committee
Election of member to the Commission on Evangelism
— one layman
Election of Committee No. 3 for the 2010 Conference
Report of the Chairman of the Colloquy Committee,
Pastor Lloyd Quanbeck, Glyndon, Minn.
Election of Colloquy Committee for the 2010 Conference
Report of special committees
Election of member to the Budget Analysis Committee
— one layman
Report of Committee No. 1 as the Committee on General
Resolutions
Other Reports

7:30 p.m.

Closing service with ordinations

Conference Committee
Pastor Elden Nelson, President
Pastor Brian Davidson, Secretary



Coordinating Committee

(One pastor, five-year term)
Pastor Tom Gilman, Lakeville, Minn.
Pastor Lyle Aadahl, Hayfield, Minn.

(One layman, two-year term)
Lowell Watt, Park River, N.D.
X

AFLC Schools Board of Trustees

Voted on by corporation members

(One layman, five-year term)
Mike McCarlson, Webster, S.D.
X

Board of Pensions

(One layman, five-year term)
Don Bullene, Bloomington, Minn.
X

World Missions Committee

Voted on by corporation members

(One pastor, five-year term)
* Pastor James Fugleberg, Moorhead, Minn.
X

(One layman, five-year term)
* Dr. Lyle Mattson, Greenbush, Minn.
Wayne Walker, Kenyon, Minn.

Home Missions Committee

Voted on by corporation members

(One pastor, five-year term)
* Pastor Tony Stockman, Brandon, Minn.
Pastor Joe Ocker, Frost, Minn.

(One layman, five-year term)
* Willis Kettelhut, Deshler, Neb.
X

ARC Board

Voted on by corporation members

(One layman, five-year term)
Steven Lehmann, Milford, Ill.
Denis Parsley, Pipestone, Minn.

Stewardship Board

(One layman, five-year term)
X
X

Youth Board

(One layman, five-year term)
Jordan Langness, Beulah, N.D.
Heather Olson, Warrenton, Ore.

(One pastor, five-year term)
Pastor Wade Mobley, Sioux Falls, S.D.
X

Board of Publications and Parish Education

(One layman, five-year term)
Andrea Christenson, Amery, Wis.
X

Commission on Evangelism

(One layman, five-year term)
Eldon Hesterberg, Gifford, Ill.
John DeYoung, Dassel, Minn.
Dan Ballmann, Hico, Texas

FLAPS Board of Managers

Voted on by corporation members

(One pastor, five-year term)
* Pastor Tom Tuura, St. James, Minn.
Pastor Tom Olson, Newark, Ohio

NOMINEES



Nominees to serve at the 2010 conference

Committee No. 1

(Administration)

Greg Olson, Dent, Minn.

X

X

X

X

Committee No. 2

(Schools)

Gary Erickson, Dalton, Minn.

Mary Seeba, Camarillo, Calif.

X

X

X

Committee No. 3

(Missions and Evangelism)

Pastor Karl Anderson, Bagley, Minn.

Pastor Ray Ballmann, Kopperl, Texas

Geri Graham, Camarillo, Calif.

Greg Seeba, Camarillo, Calif.

X

Committee No. 4

(Publications and Parish Education)

Loiell Dyrud, Thief River Falls, Minn.

Pastor Dennis Gray, Newfolden, Minn.

Gary Stegman, Crookston, Minn.

X

X

Committee No. 5

(Stewardship and Pensions)

Glenn Espe, Thief River Falls, Minn.

X

X

X

X

* Incumbents

** Must be re-elected to corporation to remain on committee or board

X Nominations not named by press deadline

Missions Corporation

(20 terms of five years each)

Pastor Ray Ballmann, Kopperl, Texas

** Tom Caouette, Maple Grove, Minn.

Linda Fugleberg, Moorhead, Minn.

Geri Graham, Camarillo, Calif.

Paul Handsaker, Radcliffe, Iowa

Pastor Marlin Harris, Woodbury, Minn.

Pastor Greg Lenz, Chanhassen, Minn.

James Marcusen, Taylor, N.D.

Brian Mickelsen, Tioga, N.D.

Ken Pederson, Fertile, Minn.

Daniel Rugroden, Hickson, N.D.

** James Taylor, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Irvin Schmitke, Thief River Falls, Minn.

Marvin Schoper, Beulah, N.D.

Paul Slaamot, Tioga, N.D.

Roger Tollefson, Crookston, Minn.

Marilyn Wagner, Ray, N.D.

** Pastor Craig Wentzel, Edmore, N.D.

Lyle Westrom, Crookston, Minn.

Sue Westrom, Crookston, Minn.

20 more nominees needed

ARC Corporation

(10 terms of five years each)

Allen Anderson, Clear Lake, Wis.

Dan Ballmann, Hico, Texas

Scott Bellefey, Wallace, S.D.

Pastor Leroy Flickinger, Thief River Falls, Minn.

Ernie Hilbert, Wheatland, Iowa

Pastor Rodney Johnson, Stanley, N.D.

Pastor Walter Johnson, Shakopee, Minn.

Greg Koch, Wilson, Wis.

Penny Nash, Lidgerwood, N.D.

Curtis Twedt, Oxbow, N.D.

Randy Walz, Ellsworth, Wis.

9 more nominees needed

Schools Corporation

(10 terms of five years each)

Steve Dahl, Plummer, Minn.

Paul Kylo, Byron, Minn.

Pastor Kent Sperry, DeKalb, Ill.

Dale Larson, Beltrami, Minn.

Pastor Peter Ward, Ottawa, Ill.

** Pastor Jon Wellumson, Williston, N.D.

14 more nominees needed

conference

REGISTRATION

June 16-19 in Fergus Falls, Minn.

HOST: Calvary Free Lutheran, Fergus Falls, Minn.

CONFERENCE SITE: Bigwood Event Center, 925 Western Ave., Fergus Falls, Minn.

For a downloadable form, and for more information, visit www.aflc.org and click on "conferences"

First name: _____ Spouse's first name: _____

Last name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Congregation: _____

(Circle) You are: Pastor Visiting Pastor Lay Member Lay Visitor

Your spouse is: Pastor Visiting Pastor Lay Member Lay Visitor

Name of person attending WMF Convention on June 16: _____

(Note: If you have children attending, please see childcare information printed on page 21.)

Meals: Breakfast and evening dinners are on your own, except as noted. A general lunch will be available at noon on site.

Special meals and banquets

Tuesday Conference Committee lunch	_____ X \$11	\$ _____
Tuesday WMF luncheon	_____ X \$11	\$ _____
Tuesday WMF banquet	_____ X \$15	\$ _____
Wednesday WMF advisory board breakfast	_____ X \$10	\$ _____
Wednesday general lunch	_____ X \$11	\$ _____
Wednesday Builder's Fellowship lunch	_____ X \$11	\$ _____
Wednesday Schools Corporation dinner	_____ X \$20	\$ _____
Thursday Mission Corporation breakfast	_____ X \$10	\$ _____
Thursday general lunch	_____ X \$11	\$ _____
Thursday ARC Corporation lunch	_____ X \$11	\$ _____
Thursday Pastors and Wives banquet	_____ X \$20	\$ _____
Friday FLAPS breakfast	_____ X \$10	\$ _____
Friday general lunch	_____ X \$11	\$ _____

Total lunches/special meals \$ _____

Conference registration fee (\$30 single/\$40 couple) \$ _____

WMF convention registration fee (\$7) \$ _____

Total registration and meals \$ _____

Make checks payable to: Calvary Free Lutheran

Mail to: Calvary Free Lutheran, Attn.: AFLC Conference Committee,
1416 County Highway 111, Fergus Falls, MN 56537

Using our gifts

BY ROBIN JAMESON

*Register now for the
WMF convention*

*June 16, 2009
Life Church,
Fergus Falls, Minn.*

Hello ladies. We are excited to invite you to the WMF convention at the AFLC Annual Conference again this year. We will meet together beginning at 9 a.m. on Tuesday, June 16, at Life Church, 901 County Highway 116 in Fergus Falls, Minn.

We are very excited to offer studies based on the theme: "WMF-Using Our Gifts." We will focus on Romans 12:6a, "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us let us use them." Please join us as we study God's Word, fellowship, and discuss how you can use the gifts God has given you.

The Tuesday morning Bible study leader is Faylin Myhre, who represents the WMF as the Woman's Outreach Coordinator. Faylin teaches about the AFLC and WMF and inspires the women in churches to develop their own Bible study groups and to reach out to others with God's love. In keeping with our theme, Faylin will arouse in us the desire to use our God-given gifts.

As usual, you will also be blessed by praise music, devotions, a memorial service, and prayer time. We will conclude the morning with a short business meeting. Elections will take place for the positions of president, third vice president, and communications secretary. Members of the national board will propose a constitutional change in regards to reducing the size of the board. They have developed a plan to help balance financial concerns with the large workload. If the board size is reduced, many volunteers would be needed for both short and long commitments in order to fill the voids. Please keep these items in prayer.

The luncheon program will include special music and a delightful skit. Ruth Antal will share with us about how God has been speaking to her this last year and teaching her how to discover and use her gift for Him. Following the luncheon we will break up into smaller groups for the following workshops:

- Power of Prayer – Speaker to be announced
- Let Your Light Shine – Pastor Jim Rasmussen



- Balancing Priorities – Jeanie Jorgenson
- Ministering Through Your Home – Rose Carlson

We also have two evening gatherings planned. Tuesday evening is the banquet with missionary Barb Schierkolk. Wednesday night, June 17, is the Mission Festival Service. Pastor Todd Schierkolk, missionary to Mexico, will be bringing the message. It will be so good to fellowship with them during this time that they are here from Mexico.

Please use the AFLC registration form to register for the WMF convention, the WMF luncheon, and the WMF banquet on Tuesday. There will also be the WMF leadership breakfast on Wednesday morning for those of you who are interested in women's ministries.

Please pray that God would teach and inspire each woman attending these events to use the gifts He has given her. We look forward to reuniting with old friends and meeting new ones this year in Fergus Falls. See you there.

Jameson, Earlville, Ill., is the communications secretary for the WMF.



Christ in me

BY BECKY ABEL

The beauty of Christ in me. That was the theme for our third annual women's conference of the Brazilian AFLC held March 14-15. One hundred and fifty women, plus 25 children, gathered for a wonderful time of fellowship and spiritual encouragement at the ARCA in Bateias.

The women in the Curitiba-area churches worked together for months to plan and pray for this special event, organizing fundraisers and donating money to sponsor the 68 women who came from long distances. Each of the participants received a handmade bag with literature and small gifts. Many also purchased T-shirts to help cover the expenses of the conference.

One of the highlights of our time together was the wonderful food prepared by a group of volunteer men from the area churches. Pastors Paul, Joel, Tom and Miguel, along with seminarian Edival, worked alongside other willing men, experiencing firsthand the joys and trials of preparing food for a multitude of hungry ladies.

Yara and I were responsible for the spiritual teaching. The morning session was dedicated to comparing external beauty with the internal beauty that Christ wants to develop in each one of His children.

Several of the churches presented special numbers, and three women shared their testimonies. During the afternoon, special workshops were offered, including ones on nutrition and sexuality. The women also had free time to enjoy the beautiful campgrounds, ride the flying fox, or cool off on the water slide. Some made use of the opportunities to do aerobic exercise, have free manicures or get their hair styled. The women always look forward to shopping at the bazaar of handmade goods in order to have something to give during the gift exchange.

It was a great opportunity to be pampered a bit, enjoy the fellowship of other Christian women, and receive encouragement from the Word of God, not to mention the wonderful singing of a church full of enthusiastic women. We pray that the beauty of Christ will be reflected in the lives of each one as they return to their families and home churches. The ladies from Londrina have offered to host the conference in 2010. Pray with us as we spread the good news of Jesus and seek to spiritually edify the women of the Free Lutheran churches in Brazil.

Becky and her husband, Pastor Paul Abel, serve as AFLC missionaries in Curitiba, Brazil.

Annual Conference housing options

Plans are under way at Calvary Free Lutheran, Fergus Falls, Minn., for the AFLC Annual Conference, scheduled for June 16-19 at the Bigwood Event Center. Below you will find the housing availability list. Make your reservations soon. The conference registration information is also available online at www.aflc.org (click on "conferences").

Hotels

Best Western*

800-293-2216
\$75.99/double,
\$69.99/single,
\$99.99/suites

AmericInn

866-736-5452
\$79.90/standard,
\$99.90/suite

Comfort Inn

218-736-5787
\$89.99/standard

Days Inn

218-739-3311
\$90.99/double,
\$70.99/single

Super 8

218-739-3261

Resorts

WesLake Resort

Underwood, Minn.
13 cabins/ no camping
800-258-9056
218-826-6523
www.weslakeresort.com

Swan Lake Resort

Fergus Falls, Minn.
5 cabins/camping available
800-697-4626
218-736-4626
www.swanlakeresort.com

Ten Mile Lake Resort

Dalton, Minn.
12 cabins/camping available
218-589-8845
www.tenmilelakeresort.com
schultz@prtcl.com

Bed & Breakfasts

Bakketopp Hus

Fergus Falls, Minn.
218-739-2915
ddn@prtcl.com

Prairie View Estates

Pelican Rapids, Minn.
218-863-4321
prairie@prtcl.com

Loghouse B&B

Vergas, Minn.
218-342-2318
www.loghousebb.com
loghouse@tekstar.com

* Site of the AFLC Annual Conference June 16-19

Programs for childcare, VBS and youth

The annual conference planning committee at Calvary Free Lutheran, Fergus Falls, Minn., has provided several options for children and youths throughout the week of June 16-19.

Nursery options

A nursery will be available for children ages 4 years and younger from 9 a.m. to noon, 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. and 7 to 8:30 p.m. Tuesday through Friday (with the exception of evening nursery on Friday). The committee is asking parents to fill out a registration form, which will provide caretakers with names, genders, ages of children as well as health issues if applicable. A registration form can be found on the AFLC's Web site at www.aflc.org (click on "conferences").

Young adult activities

Young adults with special needs, ages 16-25, will be given an opportunity to serve the conference as well as participate in recreational events each afternoon during the conference from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. The conference planning committee is asking parents of young adults with special needs to register for these events by providing their child's name, age, capabilities, likes

and dislikes as well as explaining their child's special needs. A registration form can be found at www.aflc.org.

Youth activities

Daily outreach events, Bible studies and recreational activities are planned for youths in grades 6-12, beginning Wednesday, June 17. Morning outreach events will include serving as nursery helpers, as well as participating in a canned food drive and volunteering with Kids Against Hunger. Afternoon recreational activities will include field trips to Thumper Pond Waterpark, Northern Aire Lanes bowling, and the YMCA. A registration form, which includes the cost of the recreational activities, is available at www.aflc.org.

Vacation Bible school

Vacation Bible school will be offered to children ages 5-10, from 9 a.m. to noon, and a day camp from 1:30 to 4 p.m. June 17-19 at Calvary Free Lutheran. Activities are currently being planned. Fees for the activities will be collected during conference registration, which will be used to offset the cost of the activities. For more information, visit www.aflc.org.

Bio: Darwin Paccha, G. Th.

Pacchas head to Ecuador after AFLTS graduation

I grew up in Zaruma, a little town in Ecuador. My parents, Florentino and Gloria, were not Christians at the time I was born. For many years they



tried to find a church, but they never felt comfortable at any of them. One day they decided that perhaps the best thing to do was to stop looking for a church and forget all about God. The

same day they "decided" to stop their search God placed in front of them a little Lutheran church, marking the beginning of our lives in the Lutheran faith.

When I graduated from high school, I studied composition and musical arrangements at Cuenca State University. During that time, God began to call me into the ministry and opened the door for me to be able to come to the United States to study first at the Bible school and then at AFLTS.

As one more chapter in my life comes to an end, I look back and see the faithfulness of God since the very day I was born physically and spiritually. This faithfulness has been manifested in many ways. Without a doubt seminary has been one of the ways God has shown His faithfulness. Standing always firm on the Word of God, this body of believers has been used by God to equip, convict, comfort and challenge me during all these years of studying. There is still much to be learned, I am sure, but I am glad and thankful that strong and firm foundations have been laid in me as I go to serve Him until He calls me home.

My wife, Kirsten (Olson) and I are excited to go back to Ecuador this year and work with my church (Peace of God) and a Lutheran high school in Cuenca. The Lord has opened the door for us to begin our ministry serving in these two places where the need is great. As we go back to preach the Word we are sure that His faithfulness and presence will be with us "even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20).

Rekindling the Fire for pastors, wives

AFLC pastors and their wives are invited to Rekindling the Fire on June 15, sponsored by the AFLC Commission on Evangelism. As an event connected with the annual conference in Fergus Falls, Minn., Rekindling the Fire is meant to encourage and challenge pastors. Pastor Dale Bartscher, director of pastoral ministries for the South Dakota Family Policy Council, is the guest speaker.

Registration begins at 2 p.m. and sessions with Bartscher begin at 2:30 p.m. An evening banquet at the Minnesota State Community and Technical College, Fergus Falls, begins at 6 p.m.

The cost for the event is underwritten by the Commission on Evangelism, however, an advanced reservation is preferred. Contact AFLC Evangelism by email (evangelism@aflc.org) or phone (763-545-5631).

Ballmann joins Home Missions staff



Christie Ballmann recently joined the AFLC headquarters staff as the administrative assistant for Home Missions. Ballmann, who works with both Home Missions Director Pastor Paul Nash and FLAPS Director Lavon Bohling, can be reached at (763) 545-5631 or email homemis@aflc.org.

Summer retreats at ARC

Fire Up youth camp

Grades 4-7

June 21-26

Cost: \$190

Speaker is Jared Langness, a parish builder at Good Shepherd Free Lutheran, Camarillo, Calif.

Kids Camp

Grades 1-3

June 26-28

Cost: \$75

Camp leaders are the four members of the ARC summer team from AFLBS.

Family Camp

July 26-August 1

Costs vary depending on family size and lodging choice. Maximum family rates range from \$465-\$675 for the week, including lodging and meals.

Come help us celebrate the ARC's 30th anniversary. Pastor Kevin Garner, Marseilles, Ill., will be the special speaker.

Ask your church for our brochures/bulletin inserts or for more information on these events, visit the ARC's Web site at www.arc-aflc.org, or call (800) 294-2877. Scholarships are available.

AFLBS seeks student development director

Positions also open for administrative assistant and resident head

The Association Free Lutheran Bible School is seeking a spiritually mature person to serve full time as student development director, whose primary focus of ministry will be to past, present and future students. AFLBS also has an opening for an administrative assistant/receptionist, and also a women's resident head. A detailed list of qualifications and job descriptions for these positions is posted on the AFLBS Web site at www.aflbs.org. Interested applicants should send an application and resume to AFLBS Dean, Pastor Joel Rolf, 3134 East Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441, or call 763-544-9501 for more information.

AFLC memorials: March

AFLBS

Harriet Foss
Alfred Haugen
Clarence Olson
Jeanette Larson
Bill Lackey
Esther Drew
Wayne Petsinger
Pastor Amos Dyrud (2)
Norm Backstrom
Maurice Myhre
Forest Benson
Rudy Dotzenrod
Clarence Olson

Evangelism

Pastor Amos Dyrud
Wayne Petsinger

Home Missions

Norman Backstrom
Gene Field
Annie Holen
Maurice Myhre
Viola Zietz
Alvin Schneider
Arnold Bakken

Miriam Infant Home

Pastor Amos Dyrud

Parish Education

Toini Hovland
Kristina Keinert
Pastor Amos Dyrud

Vision

Jeanette Larson
Pastor Amos Dyrud (2)

Harriet Foss
Norm Backstrom

World Missions

Pastor Amos Dyrud
Alfred Haugen
Norman Backstrom (2)
Alice Bang
Ruby Brekke
Virginia Eastvold
Emery Otnes
Wayne Petsinger
Perry Thompson
Lauren Sorenson

... in honor of

Evangelism

Art Twedt

World Missions

Nathan Minnich

AFLC BENEVOLENCES Jan. 1- March 31, 2009

FUND	TOTAL (subsidy)	REC'D IN MARCH	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$434,087	\$19,710	\$70,215	16
Evangelism	112,642	8,641	21,231	19
Youth Ministries	78,909	4,585	14,952	19
Parish Education	135,207	15,525	33,020	24
Seminary	244,110	14,316	46,461	19
Bible School	398,910	20,978	66,802	17
Home Missions	375,908	21,165	65,914	18
World Missions	327,017	16,998	54,124	17
Personal Support	435,500	31,098	96,933	22
TOTALS	\$2,542,290	\$153,017	\$469,651	18
TOTALS 2008	\$2,307,821	\$131,044	\$519,333	23

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.

Treating others with Grace

I enjoy our district family Bible camp every year, but one year was extra special. The spirit seemed even friendlier than usual. It was a relaxing and encouraging week. I believe what made the difference was that the theme for the camp was on God's grace.

Spending the mornings studying what

the Bible says about grace and worshiping and hearing about the grace of God in the evenings affected how we treated each other the rest of the day.



Pastor Craig Johnson

Often we turn to the law thinking

it holds the key to better relationships. We think about what we should do and we tell others what they should do. We try hard to make our relationships better, but at times it seems it just keeps getting harder.

We need God's grace if we are going to have closer relationships. The law with its instructions on what to do certainly has its place. It must be studied and listened to. But the strength and motivation for treating others better than they deserve comes from the grace of God.

In the second half of the book of Ephesians we are given much instruction on how to relate to people: "be patient, bearing with one another in love" (Ephesians 4:2, NIV). This comes after the grace of God has been described and declared in the first half of the letter. "But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ

even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved" (Ephesians 2:4). We are more likely to treat others with grace if we have spent time thinking about how God has treated us with grace.

Treating someone with grace is exemplified by the treatment a certain father gave his son when he returned home (Luke 15:11-32). The son had earlier told his dad he couldn't wait for him to die. He wanted his inheritance now. The father gave it to him, and the son squandered it on wild living. But then the son got desperate. He thought his dad might be gracious enough to give him a job if he went back home. That would have been grace, but the father was far more generous in the undeserved blessings he bestowed on his son.

He ran to meet him, gave him the best clothes to wear, and called for a celebration to commence.

The son who had stayed home thought all the grace that was being shown to his brother was inappropriate. It made him mad. He wanted his brother to get slammed by the law, not showered with grace. His focus was on what he thought his brother deserved. Dad was thinking about how great it was to have his son home. The son who stayed home thought more grace was being shown his brother than was ever offered to him. The father tried to point out that grace had been

available to him all along.

Grace can anger people who are like the son who stayed home. It doesn't make sense to our way of thinking.

Grace is giving a big meal to the son who wasted your money. It's serving the person who picked on you in school. It's letting someone go first who cut you off earlier. It's paying the bill for someone who ripped you off last month. It's doing things

We need God's grace if we are going to have closer relationships. ... the strength and motivation for treating others better than they deserve comes from the grace of God.

that might cause others to say, "You're letting them walk all over you." It's treating people differently than they will probably ever treat you. It's doing what Jesus said: "If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles" (Matthew 5:39-41).

Grace is Jesus giving His life for sinners like us. Grace is the heavenly Father welcoming us into His family. Grace is the way we treat others because it is how God treats us.

building the base

OUR REDEMPTION

BY PASTOR ALAN ARNESON

My sons make fun of me because I use coupons. If I can get something for cheaper than its regular cost—which may mean cutting coupons from a newspaper ad, downloading coupons from the internet or getting great deals from the local radio station—then I’m all for it. I love making every dollar stretch farther.

I think of coupons when I consider Christ’s redemption of me. The word “redeem” means to buy back or to set someone free by paying a ransom.

Christ’s redemption was based on His love for a fallen world. Since the Garden of Eden, when Adam and Eve fell from grace—and sin entered the world—God had a plan to redeem the world. Read Genesis 3:15 and you will see that Adam and Eve had not even exited the garden before a plan of redemption was in the works. God planned that every one of His creation could be brought back into a reconciled relationship with Him. He would pay the price for sin by coming in the flesh as our Redeemer. He would do this so that

we could experience forgiveness and be set free from the bondage of sin.

Isaiah 53 gives us a very graphic description of the intense suffering—spiritual, mental and physical—that the Son of God endured in order for redemption to take place. Romans 5:19 states, “For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.” This verse ties together the origin of sin with the One who would be the Redeemer of sin. It was not suffering alone that would bring redemption for sin, but death was necessary. A sacrifice must be made.

Hebrews 9:22 tells us that “without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.” Philippians 2:5-8 says that God’s Son Jesus Christ went willingly and obediently to His death on the cross for our sins.

Jesus Christ fulfilled the law. He bore the punishment you and I so deserve for our sin and satisfied all the demands of God’s justice. He made full and complete atonement for sin. He brought us back

into a saving relationship with God.

“Impute” is a word I did not fully understand for years when it was used in relation to Christ’s redemption for sin. But the word says volumes about Christ’s love for me. All that Christ has done for me and in my place is *imputed* to me by faith in Him as my substitute. In other words, His suffering and death on the cross for my sin is counted as if I myself had died on the cross! In this faith I am forgiven and justified in the sight of God and accepted as righteous in His sight!

When I go to the checkout counter at the store and pull out my coupons to pay my bill, I think of being redeemed. Because I have those coupons I pay less. Like those coupons, Jesus is my redemption. He is the Redeemer of the world, and He wants to be your Redeemer. He already paid the price with His death so that you could have life.

Arneson serves Calvary Free Lutheran, Fosston, Minn.