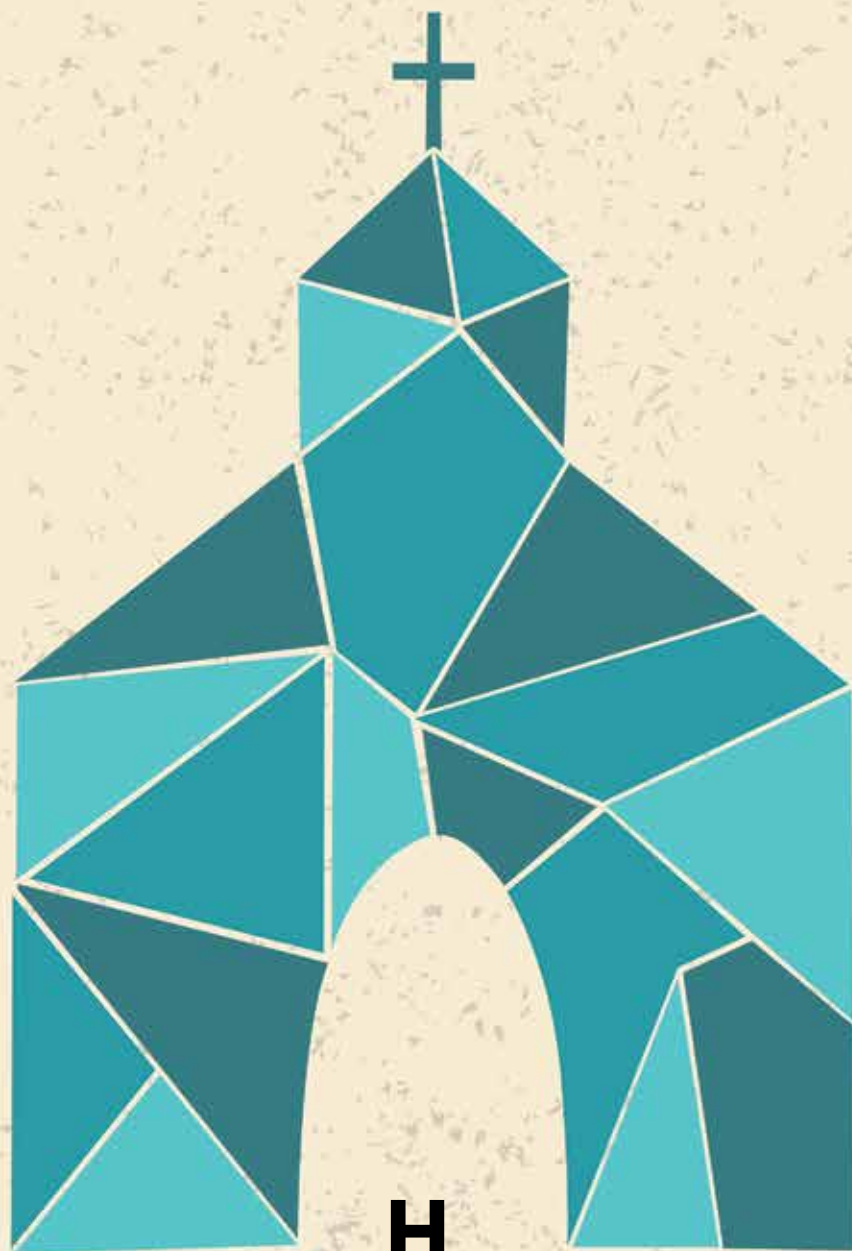


THE 

MAY 2016

LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR



C H U R C H O F G O D



THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

MAY 2016
VOL. 54 NO. 5

EDITOR

Pastor Robert L. Lee
rlee@aflc.org

MANAGING EDITOR

Ruth Gunderson
ruthg@aflc.org

CIRCULATION

Charlotte Fruehauf
charlotte@aflc.org

EDITORIAL BOARD

Oryen Benrud
Pastor Jerry Moan
Pastor James L. Johnson

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.

SUBSCRIPTION CHANGES AND INFORMATION

3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.,
Plymouth, MN 55441.
763-545-5631
luthamb@aflc.org

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

\$19 a year, Group, U.S.
\$20 a year, Individual, U.S.
\$22 a year, International
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.

THE LIFE-GIVING WORD

BY PASTOR STEVE SNIPSTEAD

I have been cleaning some of the stuff I've accumulated in my office over the last 30 years. So far I've found lots of junk and a few treasures. In a tall filing cabinet I rediscovered my notes from seminary, and in it is a file for every course I'd taken in my three years of classes. Since I was preaching on Nehemiah, I took a look at my notes from a class on the historical books of the Old Testament.

The amount of work that notebook contained was impressive—more than 70 pages of typed- and hand-written notes. I spent hundreds of hours putting this note book together, sitting in class, compiling handouts, finishing assignments, reading and rereading. But I hadn't looked this notebook in years. Now my dilemma was what to do with it.

The notebook represented a good chunk of my life, yet the actual content was not that helpful. I had more in-depth and up-to-date information on my computer and in my library than in all those bygone years of study. I could throw the notebook away and never miss it, but did that mean all my past effort was wasted?

Not at all. Here's why: All those hours of digging into God's Word, thinking about it, analyzing it, and ordering it in my mind changed me. The value was in the process of reading and studying—in learning—not the pages of records I'd amassed. This quote sums it up well: "The most important thing about you is not the things that you achieve; it is the person that you become" (Dallas Willard).

Jesus talked about something similar in a story He told about planting seeds. He used the image of a seed to describe how the Word of God

can work in us. In the parable of the sower, the seed is the Word of God. It may fall on different kinds of soil, but everything starts with the seed. The Word, like a seed, may produce life and tremendous change; it can save your soul. The sower represents God, and in this parable we have the drama of the ages retold: God loving the world, entering the world, dying and giving life, and God calling us through His powerful life-giving Word.

God's Word is always effective. The soil—our souls—is the variable. The seed is a little picture of God's desire and action to shape our souls. The different kinds of soil picture what keeps the Word from doing its work. Our souls live when they are opened up to the purposes of God and find life there instead of the fruitless pursuit of what we think will satisfy us. So much of our thinking, our experiences, and the advice we get from others tell us the way to be satisfied is to keep our souls to ourselves—hoard all you have and are. But Jesus shows us another way.

In a world that measures us by our success and achievement, the invitation of Jesus stands in hopeful contrast. God calls everyone. The farmer plants his seed recklessly. He spreads it on the good and the bad ground indiscriminately. This is a poor farming technique, but a beautiful picture of God's love. You don't have to wonder if the message of the gospel is for you. When we put aside our selfishness and in humility hear and follow the Word—the seed—it grows in our soul and God's life-giving power grows in us.

Snipstead serves Faith Free Lutheran, Kalispell, Mont.

According to the Word of God, the congregation is the right form of the kingdom of God on earth.

—AFLC Fundamental Principle No. 1

For, thank God, a child seven years old knows what the Church is, namely, the holy believers and lambs who hear the voice of their Shepherd.

—Martin Luther

One hundred religious persons knit into a unity by careful organization do not constitute a church any more than eleven dead men make a football team. The first requisite is life, always.

—A. W. Tozer

The perfect church service would be one we were almost unaware of. Our attention would have been on God.

—C.S. Lewis

The operation of the Church is entirely set up for the sinner; which creates much misunderstanding among the smug.

—Flannery O'Connor

Nobody can do as much damage to the church of God as the man who is within its walls, but not within its life.

—Charles H. Spurgeon



BY PASTOR JIM JOHNSON

“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice” (John 10:1-5, NASB).

When I think of church, I think about sheep. Which is a fascinating concept for me—a man who grew up in the suburbs, who has never owned or touched or fed a sheep in my life, never held a lamb in my arms, never sheered one. To be sure, I would be terrified to carry a sheep in my bosom, as Isaiah 40:11 describes it.

If it were not for the Minnesota State Fair or the 4-H Club’s annual competition in Ventura, Calif., or if I had never visited the Baker farm in Amery, Wis., one summer, or tried to borrow three of them for our church’s annual Christmas Eve in the Barn Event, I would have never come within 60 miles of a sheep. I did, once, borrow heavily from a book by W. Phillip Keller called, “A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23,” for a message I prepared. That one book is as far into a study of sheep as I have ever gone.

But I think about sheep when I think about church. Jesus steered me that way. When Jesus talks about His flock of sheep in John 10, and you are a pastor of a church called Good Shepherd, you can’t help but see the parallels. Jesus could have used so many other real-world parallels. He could have spoken of his congregation as a political party—one of his disciples, Simon the Zealot, belonged to one. He could have made the analogy of a religious organization—the Pharisees and Sadducees would have related. He could have made the parallel of a trade union—the Roman Empire hub of Ephesus had a great organization of silversmiths.

Instead, Jesus spoke of sheep in flocks.

In John 10, Jesus says the fold is a secure place with a legitimate Savior. A thief, Jesus says, “climbs in.” But the true shepherd “enters by the door” (vs. 2). The sheep belong to the shepherd, they “hear His voice” (vs. 3), and there is an individual connection and a personal relationship between the Savior and the saints. “He calls His own sheep by name” (vs. 3). The shepherd doesn’t drive his believers like steers. They are not his cattle herd. He “leads them out,” says verse 4. “He goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice” (vs. 5).

The flock of Jesus—the congregations Jesus pulls together and places in protective places with under-shepherds and flocks of like-minded believers standing,

feeding, and living with each other—this flock is known for following the Good Shepherd. He knows them individually, and speaks to them, and they follow Him. So it is with the church of Jesus. They gather and follow; they don’t run away from Jesus or ignore His voice. They stand close by. He leads them.

The analogy confused the disciples, John said. Maybe it was because they were fishermen from Galilee, or like Matthew, a former tax collector, or just because they were young men, still so new to the Lord. John writes in verse 6, “This figure of speech Jesus spoke to them, but they did not understand what those things were which He had been saying to them.”

So Jesus spoke up and explained it again, sticking with the analogy. “All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them,” Jesus said in verse 8. “I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture,” says verse 9. “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”

Those are parallels even I can understand, city dweller that I am. A Savior, a Good Shepherd, who speaks to His sheep and leads them to pasture. He does not use or abuse or take advantage of His sheep. He gives them life, and they love Him for it. They know Him.

You can huddle with that church, His “little flock.” That is what Jesus calls it in Luke 12. Little not because it’s so small, but because it is precious to the one who owns it—the Lamb of God, as John the Baptist called Jesus in John 1. He is the One who was slain like the perfect lamb of the Passover in Exodus 12. He is the One who will “separate the sheep on His right hand and the goats on His left,” in Matthew 25. He knows His own by name and says, “You are mine.” He gathers the vulnerable ones, the ignorant ones, the precious lambs who need the security of the fold, under the watch of a caring shepherd-pastor, and who are given “abundant life” (John 10:10).

When I think about church, I think about sheep. And you?

Johnson serves Good Shepherd Free Lutheran, Camarillo, Calif.

“Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone” (Colossians 4:5-6).

Last summer my family and I moved into the parsonage that is right next to Hope Lutheran Church in North Minneapolis, where I serve as associate pastor. We are grateful to be living in North Minneapolis and closer to the church. It has made family and ministry life much easier for us. Since moving in we have tried to be very intentional in getting to know our neighbors. We live in a culture in which people are extremely busy and many don't make time for relationships outside of family and close friends. Knowing this, we began praying as a family that God would show us how we can best reach out to our neighbors. God soon answered that prayer.

My wife, Amy, and I have been blessed with two energetic boys who are not shy about making new friends. This has given us the opportunity to get to know many of the children in our neighborhood as well as their parents. Many afternoons are spent with kids coming over to play in our sandbox or shoot hoops in our backyard. Sometimes those knocks at the door come at an inconvenient time, however, engaging with our neighbors in this way has proven to be one of our greatest opportunities for ministry.

Since moving to North Minneapolis, Amy and I have been reflecting on how easy it can be for us to spend the majority of our free time with other believers. As Christians, we need fellowship with one another. Hebrews 10:25 encourages us to gather with other believers for the sake of encouragement and the building up of our faith. However, I believe there needs to be a balance in our lives. Jesus also calls us to be salt and light (Matthew 5:13-16). We are to seek ways to engage with and build relationships with those who don't know Christ. Colossians 4 challenges us to “make the most of every opportunity.” We must be mindful about those opportunities that come our way to share Christ's love with others. Just recently we were given that opportunity as a family.

This past January we were just sitting down for dinner when we heard a knock at our door. It was one of those

cold, snowy winter nights. At first I hesitated to answer the door because I was looking forward to a quiet evening at home with my family. When I did, I found three neighbor boys standing in the cold, looking very hungry. Apparently they were unable to get into their house as their parents had not come home from work yet. We immediately invited them in, gave them some warm socks for their feet, and asked them to have dinner with us. We hadn't planned for our unexpected guests, so we threw a frozen pizza in the oven and invited them to stay as long as they needed.

It was a lively conversation around our table that evening as these young teenage boys told us many stories about their life, their home, and their families. Dinner time has a way of creating great conversations. Our hearts broke for these young teenage boys as they told us about many of the hardships their families face. That hour around the table provided us an opportunity to share Christ's love with these young men as we listened to them, ate a good meal, and spent some time praying together. That night also proved to be pivotal in seeking ways to share Christ with our neighbors as these three young men have started coming very consistently to our youth programs at church.

Amy and I want our home to be a place where not only believers gather but also where those who don't know Jesus feel comfortable. It takes intentionality on our part for that to happen. Yes, it is important that we surround ourselves with other Christians who encourage and spur us on in our faith, yet we also long to engage with those who need to know and experience the love of Jesus in their lives. It's tough to know how to balance building community with believers while at the same time seeking to engage and build relationships with nonbelievers. If we're honest, as a family we have not figured it all out. For us, it has begun by praying for our neighbors and being mindful about who is gathering around our table.

Solie, North Minneapolis, Minn., is the associate pastor at Hope Lutheran, Minneapolis.



T H E

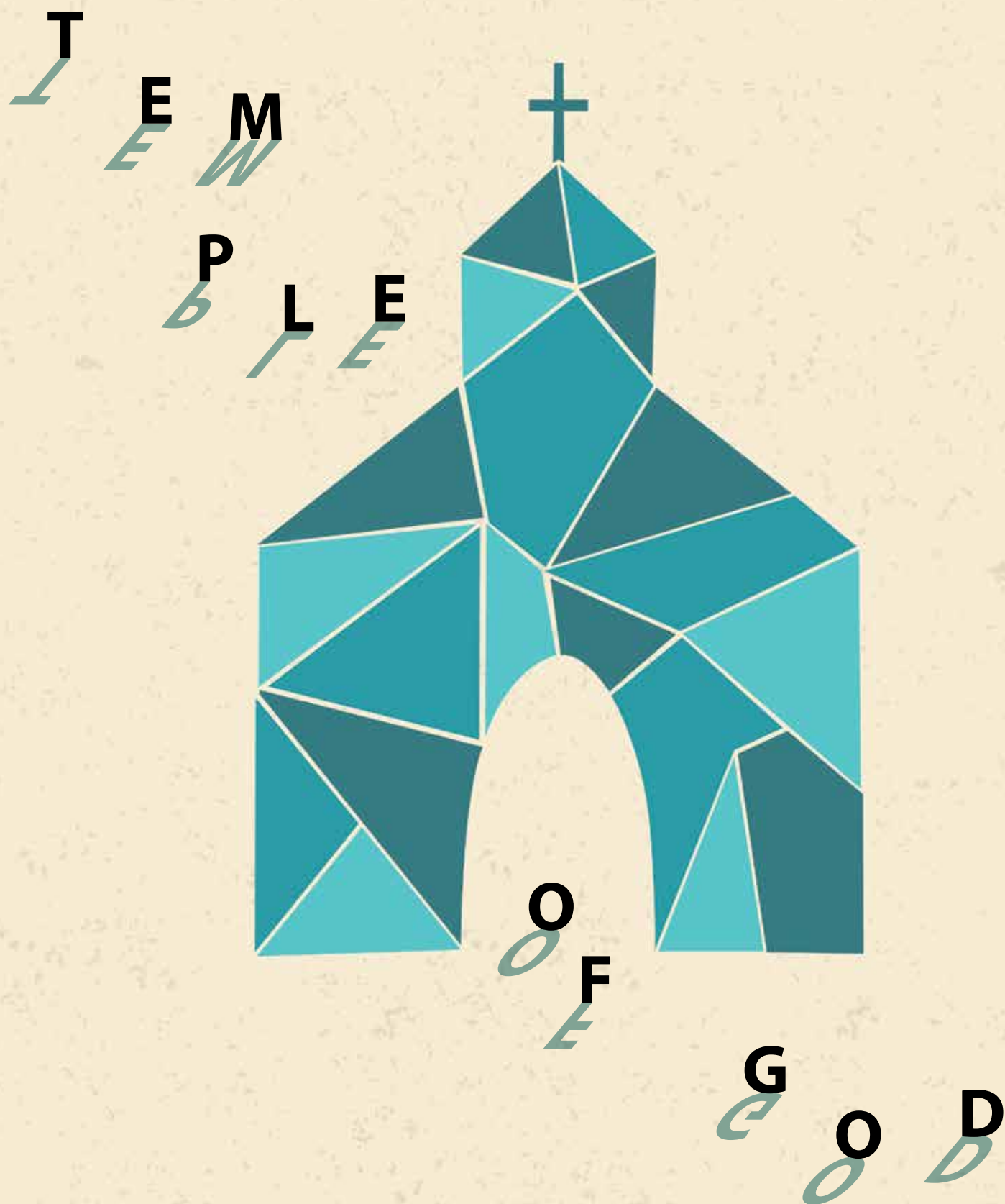
O F

T H E



E A R T H

BY BEN SOLIE



BY PASTOR DICK FREDERICK

“For we are co-workers in God’s service; you are God’s field, God’s building. By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. ... Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in your midst? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person; for God’s temple is sacred, and you together are that temple.”
(I Corinthians 3:9-17).

What is the church? The New Testament contains several vivid word-pictures that answer this question in part, but the one on which this article will focus is the church as the temple of God.

One of the key things Paul teaches us in this chapter is v. 11, “No one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.” So our primary reality must be that we can only be God’s temple if and when we recognize, realize, and report that Jesus Christ, the virgin-born, cross-suffering, buried, resurrected Son of God is our personal Savior and Lord of our lives. Those who deny or downplay the importance and truth of these realities are wrong and not submitted to the Word and its Author.

After establishing our cornerstone, Paul continues to teach us that we are God’s Temple. In II Corinthians 6:16 we read, “What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God; as God has said, ‘I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.’” So as His temple, we are required to resonate the reality of His presence through the way we live out our lives, our faith, and consistent commitment to Christian theology, principles, and practices that are all in faithful agreement with the teachings of Scripture, especially when modern heresies deny the truth and reliability of the Bible. As God’s temple, God, through His Holy Spirit, dwells in us, just as He dwelt in the tabernacle, temple, and priests in the Old Testament.

Next, Paul insists that we must be cleansed by the blood of Christ and sanctified by the continuing presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit. However, it is essential to realize that the Holy Spirit is a gentleman and will not force Himself upon anyone who refuses to submit to the authority and reality of the Trinity. Only by submission, study, prayer, and a truly conscious effort to open ourselves to

God’s ministry through His Holy Spirit will sanctification lead to the presence of God in His human temples.

Paul further states that we must exhibit the open door of a welcoming heart that encourages and even requires the residence of the Holy Spirit within us (vs. 21-23). The simple reality is that God won’t stay where He is not welcomed, wanted, revered, obeyed, and worshiped. If God is not in charge, then we are on a slippery slope to damnation and destruction. That’s what He’s teaching us in v. 17, “If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him; for God’s temple is sacred, and you are that temple.”

It is important to note that when idols or false priests entered the temple in Old Testament times, they were consumed by fire. The only things or persons destroyed were the godless and ungodly. Thus Jesus, in Matthew 21:12, was consistent with God’s law when he “went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money changers, and the seats of them that sold doves ...” Notice the Son of God cast out only the blatantly unrepentant. This is an important and wondrous reality about our God’s love and desire to save and not damn us. The only reason sinners will ever be consumed is if they refuse to repent and believe the reality of the Word.

In verse 23 we read, “... you are of Christ, and Christ is of God.” As long as we are of and in Christ, and walk in agreement with God’s Word, then we are God’s temple. “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God,” writes Paul in Romans 8:14. As that temple, we carry God’s love, grace, mercy, power, and glory. Hallelujah!

Frederick, a retired AFLC pastor, lives in Bryant, Ark.

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven”
(Matthew 5: 14-16).

Christ calls the Church to be the light of the world. But how do we accomplish this task? There are many ways in which the Church is able to be a light to the world. Mainly, it can be done through positive actions toward our neighbors, friends, coworkers, and families. Thinking up ways to be a light to the world is easy, but to actually live them out can be challenging. Some of these challenges may be that we are embarrassed, unsure of ourselves, afraid of persecution, or scared of making mistakes.

We should never be embarrassed about being a light in the world because when Jesus came down to earth, He humbled Himself and was mistreated by many people. Paul gives a great description of Christ's humility in Philippians 2: 5-11. It says, “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

It certainly mattered to Jesus that He would suffer here on earth. But His focus was on our salvation, and that meant that all the suffering that He had to endure was worth it. In the same way, we should not allow others to intimidate us about being a light. When challenges come, let us instead focus on Christ to help us get through the challenging times in the same way that Jesus did: He prayed and receive comfort from His Father.

It is important that as the Church we are shining brightly for the world to see and not being hidden. What a testimony it is when communities are able to see the light that a church is radiating from the love of Christ. We can

show this love of Christ through helping those who are hurting physically and emotionally, those who are in need, and those who feel alone and need comfort. This can be not only an encouragement to the people in the community, but hopefully would spur them on to find out more about what the church believes when they see the light of Christ.

We may not always see immediate results from being a light to the world, but planting the seed is an important place to start. In Matthew 13, Jesus used the parable of the sower and its explanation to teach a large crowd. The parable demonstrated that not every seed planted will be successful, but some will land on the fertile soil and produce and bear fruit. Some of the seeds—which landed on the path, stones, and thorns—will not produce fruit because of difficult times, worldly desires, and persecution. But just like the successful seed in the parable, the Church's goal as the light of the world is to produce fruit which will continue to grow and prosper.

To be a light to the world means that our actions are a reflection of Christ's love. Our actions should not lead to our glorification, but our actions should lead others to Christ and glorify Him. This is important because He is the only one who truly deserves honor and praise because of all that He has done for us.

Something to consider in reading this passage is that all that we do is because of what Christ has done for us. We are helpless to accomplish anything without Christ. Jesus came down to earth and died on the cross for us so that we can be saved. I Timothy 2:4 says that Christ “desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” He desires for all to be saved. If the church believes in this saving grace, it is important to radiate light as a beacon to others so that we will point them to Jesus and His wonderful gift of salvation.

Lee attends Faith Free Lutheran, Minneapolis. She is married to John Lee, a student at AFLTS.



L
I
G
H
T
O
F
T
H
E
W
O
R
L
D

BY HANNAH LEE

B R I D E O F

C H R I S T



BY BETH ANN DEARDORFF

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless”
(Ephesians 5:25-27).

At the end of a recent church service we sang, “The Church’s One Foundation.” The words to that hymn were written by Samuel J. Stone and he couldn’t have written anything better to explain Ephesians 5:25-33. This section of Paul’s letter to the Ephesians describes the relationship between a husband and wife, but at the end Paul turns the focus toward the Christ and the Church.

Traditional Jewish wedding customs differ greatly from our customs. The more I uncovered about marriage in biblical times, the more the idea of the Church as Christ’s bride made sense. I’ve always taken this passage for granted, thinking that it is more of an admonishment for husbands. But since digging into the Scripture, I’ve found that there is much more to the analogy.

In Christ’s time, when a bridegroom decided to pick a bride, he would travel from his parent’s home to the bride’s home to see her father. He would then negotiate with the bride’s father for the bride price—the price the bridegroom was willing to pay for the bride. When the price was agreed upon and paid, a covenant was established between the two. This covenant was legally binding, unlike our engagements today. The bride was meant only for that bridegroom; she could take no other offers.

The bride and bridegroom were considered married at this point, with one big exception—the marriage was not consummated. As long as a year could pass by in this stage as preparations for the wedding were being made. The bride was pampered and cleansed as she prepared herself to become a wife. The groom also prepared for the marriage by purchasing a home and getting it ready for his bride.

In the same way, Christ came down from heaven and paid the bride price for each of us by giving up His life for our sins. What a heavy price to pay! Jesus rose from the grave, and is now in heaven preparing a place for us. In John 14, Jesus says, “In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.”

In biblical times, the bridegroom returned for his

bride at an appointed time, usually beginning the procession at night. The bride didn’t know when this would happen; it was her job to be prepared. Mirroring this custom, Jesus told a parable about ten bridesmaids in Matthew 25. They were to be ready when the bridegroom came to take his bride. Because it was night, the bridesmaids needed to have oil lamps to light the way to the bride. One person in this party went ahead of the group and shouted, “Behold, the bridegroom! Come out and meet him!” The bridegroom followed along until they arrived at the bride’s parents’ home. He then took the bride and brought her back to his home, where a huge feast was held and the marriage consummated. Once the feast started, the doors were closed and locked. Remember the 10 bridesmaids? Five of them didn’t have enough oil for their lamps and had to go and buy more. They were late to the feast, and so were shut out of the festivities.

In a similar manner, the Church is preparing for Christ’s promised return. He will come back to get us and take us to His home in heaven where the marriage feast will be held. Revelation 19: 6-8 reads: “Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunderpeals, crying, ‘Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready!’ It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.”

I pray that we will all be ready for the marriage feast. Remember that the bride doesn’t know when the Bridegroom will come. Her job is to be ready.

Until then, we can sing songs to remind us to be ready, like the one we sang in church:

“... From heaven He came and sought her to be His holy bride; With His own blood He bought her And for her life He died.”

Deardorff, a member of St. Paul’s Evangelical Free Lutheran, Hagerstown, Md., writes for Lutheran Ladies Connection (lutheranladiesconnectionwordpress.wordpress.com).

WELCOME

THEME: "It is Written" (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10)

DATES: June 14-17

SITE/HOST: Association Retreat Center, Osceola, Wis.

This summer you are not invited to a political convention, but to a kingdom conference. By the grace of God, you will not hear arguing and interrupting of candidates, but reports of kingdom advances and perhaps some declines, all from the perspective of truth.



The prophet Daniel was given a vision, which is recorded in the Book of Daniel chapter two.

Verses 31-35 tell us that in his vision, Daniel saw a great statue. The text goes on to tell us the head was of fine gold, its breast and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, and its feet partly of clay. As he recounts his vision

to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, Daniel says he saw a stone being cut, not through human hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay, crushing them. The remains of the statue became like chaff from the summer threshing floor, and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. "But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth" (vs. 35).

It may seem rather insignificant that representatives from 270 Free Lutheran churches gather together to hear the Word of God preached and to pray that God would continue His work through us. Yet what seems insignificant to the world has the utmost significance in God's kingdom. The congregations of the AFLC are part of this stone kingdom that will last throughout eternity as others fall.

So let me encourage you to turn off the earthly news for a few days and come and fellowship with believers who love what God did for us at the cross. There He sacrificed His own Son so repentant sinners might be cleansed and declared "not guilty" before Him.

Our theme for the 53rd annual conference is, "It is Written," taken from Matthew 4:4, 7, and 10. When we meet together, we expect to be lifted up by God's promises which have never failed and never will. Lord willing, we will see you at the ARC, which is located two miles east of East Farmington, Wis., June 14-17.

~Pastor Lyndon Korhonen
AFLC president

ARC Corporation

(10 terms of five years each)

Shawn Adrian, Binford, N.D.

*Ivar Berge, Fargo, N.D.

*Kermit Berge, Larimore, N.D.

Stan Christenson, Fergus Falls, Minn.

Tami Demo, St. Michael, Minn.

Kevin Hooper, Ishpeming, Mich.

Cindy Lilly, Minneapolis, Minn.

Jim Lilly, Minneapolis, Minn.

*Susan Parsley, Flandreau, S.D.

John Rieschl, Minneapolis, Minn.

Bruce Rokala, Kimball, Minn.

Roger Seldal, DeKalb, Ill.

Alicia Smith, Ellendale, Minn.

*Pastor Jeremy Vance, Coon Rapids, Minn.

Six more nominees needed

Schools Corporation

(10 terms of five years each)

*Larry Behne, Lowden, Iowa

Angie Berg, Bemidji, Minn.

Pastor Terry Culler, Hagerstown, Md.

Jane Emerson, Wadena, Minn.

*Lyle Forde, Arlington, Wash.

*David Fugleberg, Lakeville, Minn.

Tom Fugleberg, Roseau, Minn.

Pastor Jarrod Hylden, Beresford, S.D.

*Pastor Earl Korhonen, Radcliffe, Iowa

Cheri Nelson, Fargo, N.D.

Karen Pederson, Tioga, N.D.

*Pastor Steve Snipstead, Kalispell, Mont.

*Doug Swanson, Burtrum, Minn.

*John Talley, Newark, Ill.

Six more nominees needed

Missions Corporation

(20 terms of five years each)

Pastor Ray Ballmann, Kopperl, Texas

*Don Berge, Fargo, N.D.

*Carl Busse, Humboldt, Tenn.

*Paul Christenson, Fergus Falls, Minn.

*Robert Christian, Newark, Ill.

*Pastor Jeremy Crowell, Naknek, Alaska

Mary Davidson, Tioga, N.D.

Ben Dahl, Camarillo, Calif.

*Bob Dietsche, Osceola, Wis.

Pastor Curt Emerson, Wadena, Minn.

Pastor Luke Emerson, Newark, Ill.

*Tim Erhardt, Lake Stevens, Wash.

*Scott Erickson, Badger, Minn.

*Glenn Espe, Thief River Falls, Minn.

*James Fugleberg, Moorhead, Minn.

*Lois Grothe, Astoria, Ore.

David Haugen, Edmore, N.D.

Iver Heier, Prairie City, S.D.

*Pastor Wayne Hjermstad, Bagley, Minn.

Susan Hughes, Bethel Park, Pa.

*Pastor Robert Lee, Naknek, Alaska

*Pastor Allen Monson, Mesa, Ariz.

*Glenn Mork, Buffalo, Minn.

*Pastor Gerald Peterson, Oklahoma City, Okla.

Shelly Raan, Tioga, N.D.

Nancy Staudinger, Tamarack, Minn.

Marilyn Wagner, Minot, N.D.

Eddi Walty, Everett, Wash.

*Jeremy Zeltinger, Valley City, N.D.

11 more nominees needed

NOMINEES

Coordinating Committee

(One layman, five-year term)

*Dr. Daniel Mundfrom, Richmond, Ky.

X

(One pastor, five-year term)

Pastor Timothy Skramstad, Eagan, Minn.

X

Schools Board of Trustees

Voted on by corporation members

(One pastor, five-year term)

*Pastor Martin Horn, Kenyon, Minn.

Pastor Alan Arneson, Fosston, Minn.

(One layman, five-year term)

X

X

Commission on Evangelism

(One pastor, five-year term)

Pastor Tom Olson, Golden Valley, N.D.

Pastor Rich Ramsbacher, Springfield, Mo.

Pastor Jarrod Hylden, Beresford, S.D.

Pastor Luke Emerson, Newark, Ill.

Youth Board

(One layman, five-year term)

*Sharon Rykhus, Sioux Falls, S.D.

Michelle Olson, Arlington, S.D.

World Missions Committee

Voted on by corporation members

(One layman, five-year term)

**Scott Erickson, Badger, Minn.

X

(One layman, four-year term)

*Dr. Lyle Mattson, Greenbush, Minn.

X

Benefits Board

(One pastor, five-year term)

*Pastor Karl Anderson, McIntosh, Minn.

Pastor Brad Putnam, Ontonagon, Mich.

Board of Publications & Parish Education

(One pastor, five-year term)

Pastor Dennis Norby, Enderlin, N.D.

X

Home Missions Committee

Voted on by corporation members

(One pastor, five-year term)

**Pastor Ray Ballmann, Kopperl, Texas

Pastor Matthew Ballmann, Sioux Falls, S.D.

Pastor Mark Richardson, Faith, S.D.

FLAPS Board of Managers

Voted on by corporation members

(One layman, five-year term)

**Ben Dahl, Camarillo, Calif.

**Tim Erhardt, Lake Stevens, Wash.

*Joel Forness, Wahpeton, N.D.

(One pastor, three-year term)

Pastor Tom Tuura, Stover, Mo.

Pastor Kris Nyman, Hagerstown, Md.

Bay Broadcasting

Voted on by corporation members

(One pastor, three-year term)

*Pastor Brian Davidson, Dickinson, N.D.

Pastor Henry Mohagen, Reva, S.D.

ARC Board

Voted on by corporation members

(One layman, five-year term)

**Bruce Rokala, Kimball, Minn.

Dr. Steve Johnson, Upsala, Minn.

* Incumbents

** Must be elected to corporation to remain on/be elected to committee or board

X Nominations not named by press deadline

Nominees to serve at the 2017 conference

Committee No. 1

(Administration)

Pastor Ray Ballmann, Kopperl, Texas

Amy Dalager, Argyle, Minn.

Pastor Jason Gudim, Golden Valley, Minn.

Pastor James Johnson, Fergus Falls, Minn.

Jordan Langness, Beulah, N.D.

Committee No. 2

(Schools)

Pastor Ron Brubakken, Argyle, Wis.

Scott Carmichael, St. Francis, Kan.

Harold Erickson, Wadena, Minn.

John Keranen, Menahga, Minn.

Pastor Barry Nelson, Tripp, S.D.

Pastor Adam Osier, Bethel Park, Pa.

Committee No. 3

(Missions)

Pastor John Amundson, New Leipzig, N.D.

Don Burmeister, Mount Vernon, S.D.

Doug Hertlein, Carroll, Ohio

Pastor Micah Hjermstad, Fargo, N.D.

Ken Pederson, Fertile, Minn.

Pastor David Tilney, Cloquet, Minn.

Pastor Craig Wentzel, Edmore, N.D.

Committee No. 4

(Publications and Parish Education)

Debra Burmeister, Mount Vernon, S.D.

Albert Engevik, Eden, S.D.

Joel Erickson, Oslo, Minn.

Pastor David Franz, Radcliffe, Iowa

Pastor Les Galland, Shakopee, Minn.

Betty Luebke, Parkston, S.D.

Carol Quern, Oslo, Minn.

Committee No. 5

(Evangelism and Benefits)

Wayne Gerlach, Mitchell, S.D.

Pastor David Johnson, Boyertown, Pa.

Richard Luebke, Parkston, S.D.

Edward VanScoten, Kalispell, Mont.

Vic Wiczorek, Mount Vernon, S.D.

CONFERENCE AGENDA

“It is written” (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10).

DATES: June 14-17

SITE/HOST: Association Retreat Center, Osceola, Wis.

TUESDAY, JUNE 14

9 a.m.

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

7 p.m.

The Opening Service of the conference, with Communion

Leader: Pastor Tom Gilman, Bloomington, Minn.

Speaker: Pastor Andy Coyle, Rapid City, S.D.

AFLC President Pastor Lyndon Korhonen will open the conference and appoint necessary committees.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 15

7 a.m.

ARC Corporation Breakfast

9 a.m.

Devotions: Aaron Olson, AFLTS graduate

Report of the Credentials Committee

Adoption of the Conference Agenda

Approval of 2015 Annual Conference Report

Selection of nominees for corporations:

Missions Corporation

Schools Corporation

ARC Corporations

The President's Report

Reports of AFLC ministries—General

Report of the Chairman of the Coordinating Committee

Report of the Director of Development

Report of the Chairman of the AFLC Foundation

Reports of Chaplaincy Ministries

• Institutional

• Military

Report of the Director of the ARC

Selection of nominees for corporation meetings:

• Home Missions Committee—one pastor;

• Bay Broadcasting Committee—one pastor (three-year term);

• FLAPS Board of Managers—one layman; one pastor

• World Missions Committee—one layman;

• Board of Trustees—one pastor, one layman;

• ARC Board—one layman

11:30 a.m.

Prayer Hour: Pastor Henry Mohagen, Reva, S.D.

Noon

Conference Lunch

Home Missions/Builders Fellowship Lunch

Chaplains Lunch

1:30 p.m.

Devotions: Jon Langness, AFLTS graduate

Report of the Credentials Committee

Reports of AFLC ministries—General, cont.

AFLC Financial Report

Report of the Family Bible Camps

• Lake Bronson

• Wilderness

Report of the Budget Analysis Committee

Reports of AFLC ministries—Evangelism and Benefits

Report of the Chairman of the Commission on Evangelism

Report of the Director of Evangelism

Report of the Chairman of the Benefits Board

Reports of AFLC ministries—AFLC Schools

Report of the President of AFLC Schools

Report of the Chairman of the Board of Trustees and Vision

Report of the Dean of the Seminary

Report of the Dean of the Bible School

Reports of AFLC ministries—Missions

Report of the Chairman and Director of the World Missions Committee

Report of the Chairman of the Home Missions Committee

Report of the Director of Home Missions

Report of Executive Director of FLAPS

Report of WMF President

Reports of AFLC ministries—Publications, Parish Education & Youth
Report of the Chairman of the Board of Publications
and Parish Education
Report of the Director of Parish Education
Report of the Chairman of the Youth Board
Report of the President of the Free Lutheran Youth
Report of Youth Ministries Director

5:30 p.m.

Conference Dinner
Schools Corporation Annual Meeting

7 p.m.

The Mission Festival Service conducted by the WMF
Leader: Pastor Sam Wellumson, East Grand Forks, Minn.
Speaker: Pastor Todd Schierkolk, Jerez, Mexico

THURSDAY, JUNE 16

7 a.m.

Mission Corporation Annual Meeting

9 a.m.

Devotions: Pastor David Tilney, Cloquet, Minn.
Report of the Credentials Committee
Report of the Nominating Committee
Election of the Nominating Committee for the 2017 Conference
Election Procedures
Elections: (all terms five years unless noted)
• President—three-year term
• Vice President—one-year term
• Secretary—one-year term
Report of Committee No. 1 (Administration)
Report of Nominating Committee
Selection of nominees to the Coordinating Committee—
one layman, one pastor
Election of Committee No. 1 for the 2017 Conference
Report of Committee No. 5 (Evangelism and Benefits)
Report of Nominating Committee
Selection of nominees to:
Commission on Evangelism—one pastor
Benefits Board—one pastor
Election of Committee No. 5 for the 2017 conference
Report of Committee No. 2 (Schools)
Report of the Nominating Committee
Election of Committee No. 2 for the 2017 Conference

11:35 a.m.

Prayer Hour: Pastor Henry Mohagen, Reva, S.D.

Noon

Conference Lunch
AFLBS Alumni Lunch
PIMO Lunch

1:30 p.m.

Devotions: Pastor Joel Kangas, Beltrami, Minn.
Report of the Credentials Committee
Report of Committee No. 3 (Missions and Evangelism)
Report of the Nominating Committee
Election of Committee No. 3 for the 2017 Conference

Report of Committee No. 4 (Publications, Parish Education & Youth)
Report of Nominating Committee
Selection of nominees to:
Board of Publications and Parish Education—one pastor
Youth Board—one layman
Election of Committee No. 4 for the 2017 Conference
Report of Corporations
Schools Corporation Annual Meeting
ARC Corporation Annual Meeting
Missions Corporation Annual Meeting

5:30 p.m.

Conference Dinner
Pastors' Banquet
Leader: Pastor Peter Franz, Maple Grove, Minn.
Speaker: Pastor Don Norr, Virginia, Minn.

7 p.m.

Laymen's Service
Leader: Gene Vukonich, Amery, Wis.
Speaker: Erling Langness, Ishpeming, Mich.

FRIDAY, JUNE 17

7 a.m.

FLAPS informational breakfast

9 a.m.

Devotions: Brandon Marschner, AFLTS graduate
Report of the Credentials Committee
Report of Special Committees
Report of the Colloquy Committee
Election of Colloquy Committee for the 2017 Conference
Election of Budget Analysis Committee:
two laymen (three-year terms)
Report of Committee No. 1 as the Committee on General
Resolutions
Other Reports

11:35 a.m.

Prayer Hour: Pastor Henry Mohagen, Reva, S.D.

Noon

Conference Lunch

1:30 p.m.

Devotions: Pastor Eric Christenson, Amery, Wis.
Report of Credentials Committee
Remaining conference business

5:30 p.m.

Conference Dinner

7 p.m.

Ordination/Closing Service
Leader: Pastor Steve Carlson, Bethel Park, Pa.
Speaker: Pastor Tom Schierkolk, Eben Junction, Mich.

Conference Committee
Pastor Lyndon Korhonen, President
Pastor Brian Davidson, Secretary

KNIT TOGETHER

in love through Christ

You are invited to attend the 54th annual WMF Day on June 14, which is held in conjunction with the AFLC annual conference at the Association Retreat Center located near Osceola, Wis. We are meeting under the theme, "Knit together in love through Christ," from Colossians 2:2-3.

Registration will begin at 8 a.m. and the program at 9 a.m. Jeanette Berntson,

author of the 2016 WMF Bible study, will be the morning speaker. Workshop leaders include: Mary Ann Ward, Linda Mohagen, Marian Christopherson and Bonnie Handsacker, and Ruth Gunderson with Jon and Heidi Nelson.

If your congregation has had members pass away this year, please email the funeral bulletin to Dawn Johnson at ctk@wwt.net or send to 2991 30th Ave., Wilson, WI 54027. The memorial service will be led by

Theresa Thayer.

Our Missions Festival speakers will be Pastor Todd and Barb Schierkolk, AFLC missionaries to Jerez, Mexico.

We will host a breakfast on June 15, featuring Liz McCarlson, AFLBS dean of women.

Lynn Wellumson, Williston, N.D., is the president of the WMF.

2016 WMF Convention • June 14 • Association Retreat Center, Osceola, Wis.

Please use this form to register for the WMF Convention and luncheon on Tuesday, June 14, and for the WMF breakfast on June 15.

Name: _____

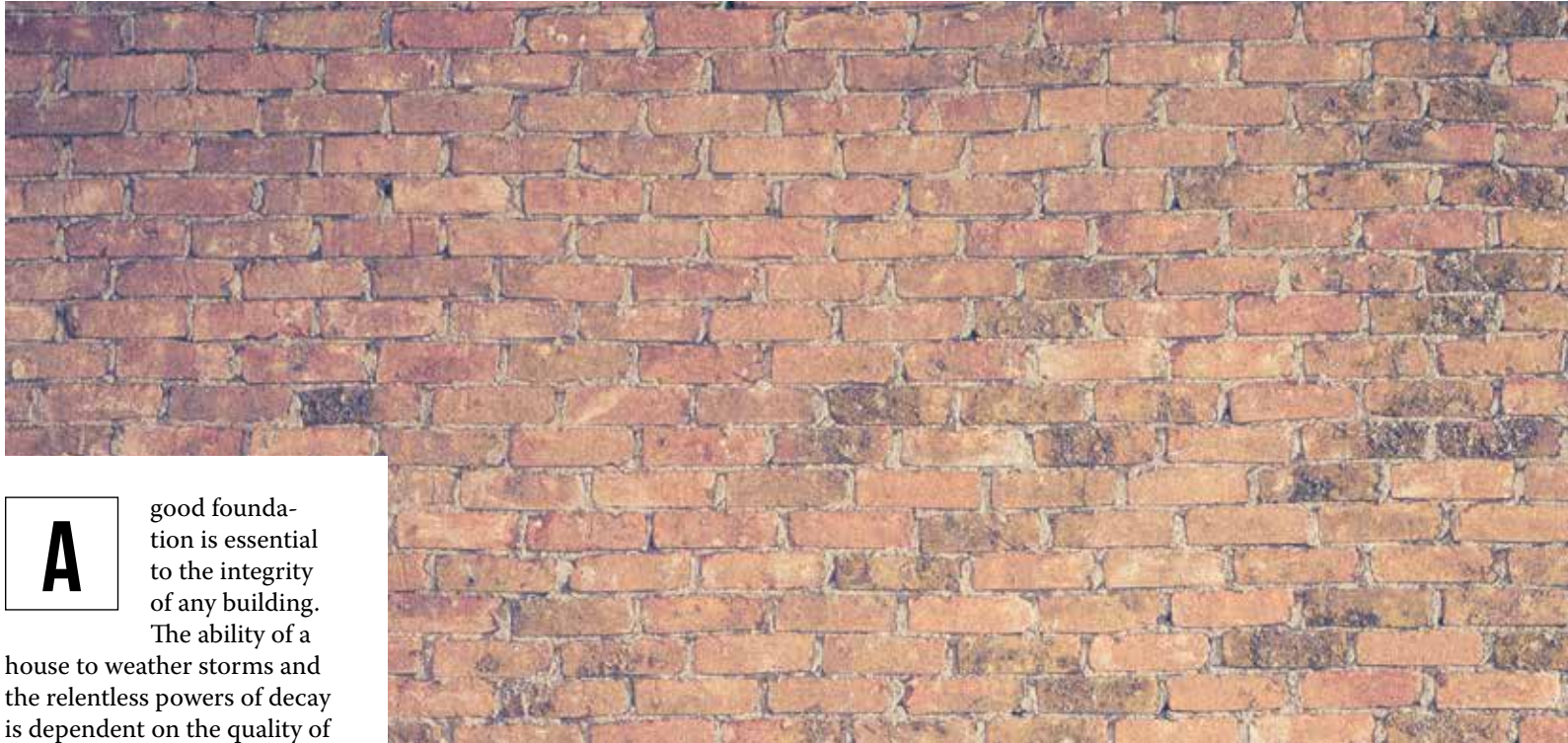
Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home congregation: _____

Item	Cost	#	Total
*Registration	\$13.25		\$
Tuesday luncheon	\$11.25		\$
Wednesday breakfast	\$10.50		\$
Gluten-free/Vegetarian/Vegan meal options (circle)	Add \$3/meal		
Dairy-free meal option	Add \$1/meal		
Total			\$

The registration fee is required for all attending the convention and is separate from the AFLC Annual Conference registration. **Make checks payable to "WMF of AFLC" and mail to: WMF Treasurer, Deb Benson, 39694 SD Hwy 44, Armour, SD 57313. Housing arrangements must be made through the ARC. A late fee of \$10 will be added to those registering after June 9.*



A good foundation is essential to the integrity of any building. The ability of a house to weather storms and the relentless powers of decay is dependent on the quality of its foundation. In the spiritual realm, Jesus Christ is the only foundation for His disciples. He is the only foundation that will stand the test of time and the eternal judgments of God.

I love watching DIY programs. One such showed a severely damaged cement floor as the result of a faulty foundation. Because the foundation had sunk on one of the corners, the wall corners also sank, causing very large and unsightly cracks in the cement work. The fixer-uppers met the challenge in the episode by replacing the footings and putting in a new cement floor. As Christ's disciples, we need to remember that the solid foundation of faith and hope lies in Jesus Christ. If we have a faulty spiritual foundation, our entire faith someday will sink, and we will fall into eternal separation from God.

It is important for us to take time to examine the foundation of our faith. As we see from Scripture, the only true foundation of a disciple's faith is the person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are three key attri-

A TRUE FOUNDATION

BY PASTOR MARLIN HARRIS

butes of the person of Jesus Christ that are essential ingredients for the foundation of the Christian faith: He is the virgin-born Son of God; He is truly is God and truly man; and He is perfectly holy and without sin. If we do not believe these attributes are true, we do not believe in the Jesus of the Bible. Any other belief is a faulty foundation.

The work of Jesus Christ for His disciples is the heart of what we believe to be the gospel. Jesus Christ suffered, died, was buried, and was resurrected to pay the price for our sins. The Apostle Paul wrote: "By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (I Corinthians 15:2-4).

We believe in the person and work of Jesus, Who suffered, bled, and died on the cross to pay our personal sin debt. We believe that Jesus was buried in a tomb, and raised again from the dead the third day for our justification. If not, we have a faulty foundation.

Dr. David Jeremiah in his Study Bible empha-

sizes the importance of having Christ as the foundation of a disciple's faith and work. He writes, "The first reason that churches fail is because they violate their commitment to Jesus Christ as their foundation. Churches must be built on Christ; then a community of believers can glorify Him through social justice or outreach or service. To establish a church on any other foundation—even one comprised of seemingly virtuous causes—will not succeed."

In our chaplaincy work and ministry, it is important to have Jesus Christ as the foundation. I am blessed to be a part of three groups that reach out into the community with that foundation. Besides being the pastor at True Vine Lutheran Church, there is Pilot Outreach (jail/prison ministry), and Celebrate Recovery (for those suffering from hurts, habits and hang-ups). May we be faithful to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in our calling to proclaim that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life.

Harris, Mora, Minn., is the director of Institutional Chaplaincy for the AFLC.

2016 SEMINARY GRADUATES

AARON OLSON

Brooklyn Park, Minn.

My name is Aaron Olson, and don't let the name fool you, I am not related to any of the other Olsons in the AFLC. My wife, Michelle (Satren), and I have been married for seven years and are the proud parents of 2.5 children: Edell, Jerome, and baby due in August.



I am the son of Jerome Olson of Madison, S.D., and Bette Brezny of Minneapolis. I was born in February 1981. I grew up with my father in Brooklyn Park, Minn., and have made Hope Lutheran Church in North Minneapolis my home congregation for nearly 20 years. I came to a saving relationship with Jesus when I was 15 years old and have tried to serve Jesus ever since. I am blessed to have a family that does the same.

I did my undergraduate studies at Barclay College in Haviland, Kan., and then attended the AFLC seminary in Plymouth. Seminary was a wonderfully difficult experience for our family. We grew through adversity in this time, and I believe that we were eternally blessed through it. My internship has been a huge blessing as well, and learning under Pastor Steve Carlson and serving with the congregation at Ruthfred Lutheran Church in Bethel Park, Pa., has been an indispensable part of our journey.

We are a very blessed family and cannot wait to see how God uses us at Calvary Free Lutheran in Arlington, S.D., where we have accepted a call to continue faithfully serving our Lord and Savior.

BRANDON MARSCHNER

South Heart, N.D.

I was born on April 4, 1986, in Minot, N.D. My parents are Todd and Tanis Marschner. I was brought to the Lord in baptism a few days after I was born, and He has been faithful to keep me in His hands. My family and I attended Bethel Free Lutheran Church of Minot until I was about 9 years old. At that time my family moved to South Heart, N.D., and began attending Our Saviour's Free Lutheran Church in Dickinson, N.D.



After graduating from high school I attended the Association Free Lutheran Bible School for two years. Next I attended North Hennepin Community College and Northwestern College in the Twin Cities, each for one year. I finally graduated with a bachelor of science in biblical studies. I started attending the Association Free Lutheran Seminary four years ago.

During my time at seminary I married Ashley Mundfrom. We have one son, Henry, who is a year old and we are expecting another child in September.

I am currently on internship in Stanley, N.D., with Pastor Rodney Johnson as my supervising pastor. On internship I have enjoyed coming to the realization that you always have more to learn about God's Word. It has been a joy for me to study God's Word in order to share it with others. I have accepted a call to serve Bethel and Faith Free Lutheran churches in Culbertson and Brockton, Mont.

NEWS

AFLBS to host 50th anniversary celebration July 28-31

AFLBS will host a weekend celebration as the school marks 50 years. The free event will take place July 28-31 on the campus of the AFLC Schools in Plymouth, Minn., and all are invited.

The weekend will feature Bible classes, workshops, worship services, class reunions, recreational outings, a 5K run/walk, and a 50th anniversary gala, featuring speaker Wayne Pederson.

Registration for the event is now open. To register, go to aflbs.org/50. For more information, email 50thAFLBS@gmail.com.

Thursday, July 28

7 p.m.: Welcome gathering with pizza

Friday, July 29

8 a.m.: Golf Scramble at Wild Marsh Golf
9:30 a.m.: Bible classes, workshops and VBS for kids, youth activities
10:30 a.m.: Bible classes, workshops
Noon: Lunch on campus; disc golf tournament at Blue Ribbon Pines in Buffalo
2 p.m.: Sporting clays event at Wild Marsh in Clear Lake
1-4 p.m.: Afternoon recreation for all ages
5-7 p.m.: Dinner on campus
7-9 p.m.: Testimony service in chapel
9:30-10:30 p.m.: Praise and worship

Saturday, July 30

7:30 a.m.: 5K run/walk
9:30 a.m.: Bible classes, workshops and VBS for kids, youth activities
10:30 a.m.: Bible classes, workshops, choir
Noon: Lunch
1-4 p.m.: Afternoon activities: athletic competitions, class reunions, silent auction
5-7:30 p.m.: Gala featuring dinner and program
8 p.m.: Coffeehouse and live music at Heritage Hall

Sunday, July 31

10:30 a.m.: Chapel service with communion with Pastor Josh Skogerboe speaking
11:30 a.m.: Brunch on campus



F

rom cover to cover, the Bible is full of faithful people who were minding their own business

when they were called upon by God to step out of their comfort zone and reach their world for Him. We can think of Esther, Abraham, and Joseph in the Old Testament. The New Testament includes Peter, Paul, John, and of course Jesus.

This list can include many from our day, as well. One of those is Augusto Fiuri, a man born and raised in Brazil. His parents came to the Lord under the missionary ministry of John Abel. Eventually, Augusto's grandparents, and Augusto himself came to faith. As he walked with the Lord, he became a lay pastor with the AFLC of Brazil.

Sensing a need to better provide for his family, Augusto immigrated to Switzerland, found work, and moved his family to Geneva. There they worshiped and found fellowship in a Portuguese-speaking Brazilian congregation.

The congregation had spiritual life and a desire for outreach, and Augusto was soon

SEEKING DIRECTION

BY PASTOR DEL PALMER

asked to help minister to the congregation. When the congregation's pastor returned to Brazil, he was asked to lead the congregation. He explained to them that he was Free Lutheran. They replied, "We have observed your life and your family, and we want to be what you are." Augusto became the pastor, while continuing to work full-time at his secular job. Because he was serving the congregation, the AFLC of Brazil ordained him.

Pastor Fiuri senses that God has placed him in Europe for such a time as this. Switzerland and greater Europe is in great need of the gospel, and Augusto feels called to bring it to them. With that in mind, he and his congregation have requested affiliation with the AFLC in Brazil and the US through the World Missions Committee. Their vision is to reach out from Switzerland into Europe.

Members of the World Missions Committee have been very interested in the work in Switzerland, with the possibility of reaching Europe anew with the gospel. Above all else, committee members desire to make sure that this is God's will for the AFLC before proceeding. The Scriptures are littered with people who thought

they were doing the right thing, but they were not patient enough to make sure they were doing God's will. Therefore, the committee is bringing this opportunity before the AFLC for prayer and guidance through this year's annual conference.

As you pray for wisdom and seek God's will, it may be helpful to have more information. A brief history of this situation and possible plans for the future can be found on the AFLC World Missions website (aflcworldmissions.org). Click on the link in the center of the page labeled "Switzerland/Europe Information."

Will you download information, examine it, pray, and come to the conference prepared to help us determine God's will? Our committee members are not looking for a blanket endorsement of this opportunity, but the wisdom of knowing the will of God.

Palmer, who attends Faith Free Lutheran, Minneapolis, is the director of AFLC World Missions. Pictured at center are Deise and Augusto Fiuri.

MARCH MEMORIALS

AFLBS

Larry Johnson
Ruth Claus
Marvin Ness
Percy Strand (11)
Dorothy Nelson (2)
Judith Strand (6)
Emmy Rodvold
Florence Hiepler
Barb Hagen
Kevin Anderson
Anita Hort

AFLT

Marvin Undseth
Sylvia Molstre
Pastor Erling Huglen
Percy Strand (2)
Dorothy Nelson

General Fund

Sylvia Molstre
Percy Strand

Evangelism

Roland Klammer
Myrtle Lee
Jean Gran
Marlo Pasamio

Home Missions

Agnes Rolf (2)
Sylvia Molstre (2)
Junnell Remme

Parish Ed

Agnes Rolf
Anita Hort
Percy Strand

World Missions

Tim Fennern
Allen Aamodt

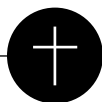
WMF

Betty Rustad
Lyle Fox
Lyla Johnson

2016 Annual Conference information

The 2016 Annual Conference will be held June 14-17 at the Association Retreat Center, near Osceola, Wis., under the theme, "It Is Written," taken from Matthew 4:4, 7, 10. The Women's Missionary Federation Day will be held at the same site on June 14 under the theme, "Knit Together in Love Through Christ," from Colossians 2:2-3.

Separate registration forms for these events can be found online at the AFLC's website (aflc.org/conferences). Both forms can be printed, filled out, and mailed to the appropriate address and are payable with cash or check. The conference form is also available as an interactive online form, payable via either a PayPal account (\$5 fee), or check.

**In Memoriam**

Pastor Gene Sundby, 75, of Outlook, Saskatchewan, died April 6 at the Outlook and District Health Centre. He was born July 10, 1940 in Swift Current, Saskatchewan. The founding and longtime president of AFLC-Canada, Sundby served parishes at Newfoldena and Greenbush, Minn., and Culbertson and Brockton, Mont. Surviving are his wife, Sylvia; three daughters, Heather (Ron) Haaland, Carren (Stephen) Blosky, and Michele (Martin) Rude; one son, Geoffrey Sundby; one brother, Erland Sundby; nine grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren. The service was held April 10 at Outlook Alliance Church, Outlook, with Pastor Al Pinno officiating. Burial was in Hawarden Bethlehem Lutheran Cemetery.

Kenneth Rolf, 92, of Erskine, Minn., died March 31 at Altru Hospital, Grand Forks, N.D. Rolf served for 14 years on the AFLC Schools Board of Trustees. Surviving are his wife, Harriet; four sons, James (Mary) Rolf, Moorhead, Minn., John Rolf, Fosston, Pastor Joel (Mary-Ann) Rolf, Plymouth, Minn., and Paul (Darlene) Rolf, McIntosh; two daughters, Mary (Pastor Lyle) Aadahl, Sioux Falls, S.D., and Naomi (Wayne) Peterson, Thief River Falls, Minn.; one brother, Wallace (Lillian) Rolf, Havre, Mont.; 12 grandchildren; and 13 great-grandchildren. The service was April 9 at Trinity Free Lutheran, McIntosh, Minn., with Pastor Karl Anderson officiating. Burial was in Trinity Free Lutheran cemetery.

PEOPLE & PLACES

Graduating interns from the Free Lutheran Seminary have accepted calls from local congregations.

- **Brandon Marschner** has accepted a call to serve Bethel and Faith Free Lutheran, Brockton and Culbertson, Mont.

- **Aaron Olson** has accepted a call to serve Calvary Free Lutheran, Arlington, S.D.

- **Jon Langness** has accepted a call to serve Abiding Word Lutheran, Deshler, Neb.

Kyle Smith, a 2012 graduate of AFLBS, has accepted a call as full-time youth worker at First Lutheran, Ellendale, Minn.

AFLC Home Missions has hired **Michelle Alverson**, a 2013 graduate of AFLBS, as a part-time assistant in charge of Parish Building recruitment.

Tom Abel and Brady Arneson, both 2013 graduates of AFLBS, will work at the KAKN radio station in Naknek, Alaska, this summer as Home Mission Parish Builders. The two will work for seven weeks at both the radio station and also helping out at The Net coffee house.

Kyle and Marlie Arneson, both 2014 graduates of AFLBS will be joined by **Amelia Olson**, Sioux Falls, S.D., as they form a traveling VBS summer team in Alaska this summer.

AFLC BENEVOLENCES January 1-March 31, 2016

FUND	REC'D IN MARCH	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$34,724	\$95,510	\$88,146
Evangelism	8,066	29,903	29,236
Youth Ministries	7,468	21,915	24,337
Parish Education	10,968	30,141	31,823
Seminary	16,497	58,797	71,117
Bible School	32,311	96,492	90,254
Home Missions	33,853	128,168	119,840
World Missions	43,628	137,359	89,497
Personal Support	53,924	149,981	119,971
TOTALS	\$241,439	\$748,265	\$664,221

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

WHY CHURCH MEMBERSHIP?

“What’s the point of joining a church? It’s only a formality, isn’t it? I don’t see anything about church membership in the Bible.” I recall the first time that someone said this to me, and my struggle to answer a question to which I had never given any serious thought. My generation seemed to simply take church membership for granted. If you were at least some sort of believer, you belonged to a church, period.

But church membership is no longer something that is taken for granted in our current individualistic culture. People may speak of being “spiritual” but not “religious,”

often relating the latter to involvement in a local congregation, as in “I love Jesus, but I have a problem with the church.” One might even still hear a few of the old excuses: “Too many hypocrites,” “They only want your money,” or, “I was forced to go when I was a child.”



Pastor Robert Lee

So what is the point? Are we able to make a 21st century case for church membership?

Let’s begin with a foundational statement: **Following Jesus includes connecting with a local congregation.** You won’t find a command in the Bible to join a church, but that does not mean that it is not an important step in discipleship. One of the early church fathers famously wrote that you cannot have God as your Father unless you have the church as your Mother. To become a Christian is to become part of a family, and the form that this family takes is a local congregation. The Christian life is church life.

It’s an enlightening word study to search out all of the instances where the Greek word *ekklesia* is found in the New Testament. There are a few cases when

the word seems to include all Christians everywhere, what is called the universal church, or, as we confess in the Apostles’ Creed, the Holy Christian Church. This is also known as the invisible church.

Yet in the vast majority of instances the word clearly indicates a local assembly of believers (for example, I Corinthians 1:1, Galatians 1:2, I Thessalonians 1:1).

Biblical evidence of the local congregation abounds. Acts 2 speaks of numerical growth, and in both verse 41 and 47 the word “added” is used, obviously meaning added to the congregation there in Jerusalem. In Acts 6 elections took place, addressing a specific problem. Paul gives Timothy directions on how to deal with widows in the congregation (I Timothy 6), and the writer of Hebrews (13:17) speaks of leaders. Church discipline would not make any sense at all if a local congregation was not involved, for when Matthew 18:17 says, “tell it to the church,” it certainly does not mean to all Christians everywhere! One might also suggest that spiritual gifts do not make much sense, either, if they are not given for the upbuilding of the congregation. (The most insightful comment on spiritual gifts that I ever heard was from a physician friend in North Dakota who said, “In other words, the spiritual gift that does me the most good is the one that someone else has.”)

Yes, it’s true that there are legal aspects to church organization and membership today that were not present in the first century congregations, but the same

principles hold true. The concept of a “lone ranger” Christian, a detached believer, is blatantly unscriptural. Membership in a congregation identifies us true believers, for it is our love for “one another” that proves to the world that we are disciples of Jesus Christ (John 13:35). One writer calls the local congregation a classroom for learning how to get along in God’s family, a lab for learning to love one another. “Biblical fellowship is being as committed to each other as we are to Jesus Christ,” and another great word study is to search out and ponder all of the “one another” references in the New Testament.

We need a congregation to be all that God is calling us to be, and a local congregation needs us, through which

You won’t find a command in the Bible to join a church, but that does not mean that it is not an important step in discipleship.

we are called to serve in whatever ways are appropriate for our spiritual gifts and season in life. This issue of *The Lutheran Ambassador* contains several articles on scriptural metaphors for the church, and it is in the life of a local congregation that believers experience the spiritual fullness of all that they mean.

P.S. If you happen to find a perfect congregation, don’t join it, because then it wouldn’t be perfect anymore. Amen?

building the base

THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL

BY PASTOR JEREMY VANCE

During World War II, a Norwegian man named Johannes Herset was under orders from Nazi occupiers to construct the bunkers which would house large guns to fend off an invasion by Allied forces. Secretly a member of the Norwegian Resistance, this man introduced dirt into the concrete mixture and finished his construction. Once winter came, the bunkers cracked open in the cold due to the improper materials used, causing the Nazi guns to tumble into the waters below. Improper materials used for a good purpose brought destruction.

While this story had a good result, such an analogy applied to our spiritual lives would be most unfortunate.

There are people who spend their days building their spiritual lives upon the instruction of self-help books, the wisdom of gurus, or the writings of other religions. Though they search for answers outside of the Word of God, what they are really seeking is the salvation of their souls, and some way to deal with their sins and the

attendant guilt. They may have a good purpose in mind, but in using something apart from the Word of God, it will only lead to their destruction.

In Romans 1:16 Paul tells us, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.” This gospel is the good news that God sent His Son to die for our sins, paying the penalty of God’s wrath in our place. His death atoned for our sins so that if we believe in Him, God will wash us clean of all our guilt and the stains of our sins. Such a gospel we will not find in any self-help book or any other supposed holy writing. They preach what *we* must do, whereas the gospel proclaims what Christ *has* done. Even the good things that we do cannot expunge our guilt before God, only Christ has done that.

Notice that Paul says this gospel is the power of God. The word for power in the Greek is the same word from which we derive “dynamite.” This gospel of Christ has God’s power to effect salvation within our hearts. They are not simply words on a

page, but they possess the saving power of God. If we are looking for salvation from our sins, or looking for some way to deal with our guilt, we must turn to the gospel.

Richard Lenski, in his commentary on Romans, says, “God’s grace produced the gospel as the one means by which to reach the sinner’s heart in order to bestow salvation upon Him.” This is the reason why the gospel must be preached in our churches, why it must be held out to us every Sunday. God, through the gospel, works salvation within us, delivering us from our sins and guilt through His power. Let us not be diverted onto something that cannot save us but instead turn to the gospel and its life-changing message of salvation in Christ. May its effective power work within us, bringing the salvation of our souls.

Vance serves Sunnyside Lutheran, Stacy, Minn.