

THE 

MAY 2017

# LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

*PARENTING*

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## THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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# THE CALL AND THE PASSION

BY PASTOR STEVE LOMBARDO

"Most sermon listeners are Epicureans: they like preaching that helps them live easily, whereas challenging preaching is not always welcome," said Martin Luther.

(Steven J. Lawson, *The Heroic Boldness of Martin Luther*)

**M**artin Luther would take his *konzept* (the outline of his sermon), into the pulpit and preach. He knew the gospel was the target of the devil and all the forces of evil. For Luther, the sermon was not a playground but a battleground for souls.

But in the battle it is not unusual for preachers to have days when they want to quit. Luther himself not only wanted to quit, he *did* quit for a time—in discouragement. He was angry and disillusioned. He told the Wittenberg congregation in 1529 that he would stop preaching if there was not a fruitful response to the gospel. And, in 1530 he abstained for several months from preaching there.

"In letters, he mentioned their [the congregation's] ingratitude, lack of any self-discipline, firing of guns under his window, hardheadedness, shameless dress, adultery, profiteering, and thievery. And the ones who didn't do those things just laughed at the ones who did! Worst of all was their drunkenness ... There was even 'swilling and yelling in the taverns at the very time of the worship services.' Wittenberg was full of the gospel, but only a minority received it. If they didn't want to hear God, they would have to hear the devil," writes Fred W. Meuser in *Luther the Preacher*.

To pastors meeting at Augsburg in 1530, he wrote: "No message would be more pleasing to my ears than the one deposing me from the office

of preaching. I suppose I am so tired of it because of the great ingratitude of the people, but much more because of the intolerable hardships which the devil and the world mete out to me. But the poor souls will not let me rest. Then, too, there is a man whose name is Jesus Christ. He says no. Him I justly follow as one who has deserved more of me" (Meuser).

Luther's call to preach reignited his passion to preach. Pastors today would do well to remember that preaching the Word of God is never easy. Sometimes the only encouragement a pastor has in the midst of ministry is the reality of God's call. At any cost, the King's message must go through.

In January of 1930, King George's speech to the London Naval Conference was to be broadcast. Walter Vivian, an official of the Columbia Broadcasting Co., discovered a wire connection had been severed. There was not enough time to make the repair. To meet the crisis, he gripped the broken wire, one end in each hand, and restored the current. In so doing, his hand was burned by the 250 volt charge. At any cost—the King's message must go through (Lloyd Perry, *Biblical Preaching for Today's World*).

*Lombardo, retired AFLC pastor living in Yorkville, Ill., spoke on "Luther As Preacher" during the fall Revival Conference at the AFLC Schools.*

You don't choose your family. They are God's gift to you, as you are to them.

—Desmond Tutu

Family isn't always blood. It's the people in your life who want you in theirs. The ones who accept you for who you are. The ones who would do anything to see you smile, and who love you no matter what.

—Author Unknown

Train up a child in the way he should go—but be sure you go that way yourself.

—Charles Spurgeon

What you do in your house is worth as much as if you did it up in heaven for our Lord God. We should accustom ourselves to think of our position and work as sacred and well-pleasing to God, not on account of the position and work, but on account of the word and faith from which the obedience and the work flow.

—Martin Luther

The most important thing a father can do for his children is to love their mother.

—Henry Ward Beecher



# DEVOTIONS

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By Pastor Rick and Barb Long

**D**ue to the wonderful encouragement and example of many, gathering around the Word has been a fairly consistent part of our family life for many years. A fun memory is of an occasion when we had company over at our home and prepared to have a family devotion. We were a family of only six at that time and always sat on our couch for the devotion time. So when mention was made of having all who were present gather, one of our children asked with all seriousness, “How are we all going to fit on the couch?”

## *WHY? PRECIOUS SOULS.*

The busy lives we all seem to live nowadays can easily crowd out most opportunities for families to spend meaningful time together, let alone making time for family devotional life. What is the motivation for capturing time in God’s Word together? At its root must be our concern for each family member’s eternal soul. Each individual comes into this world as an enemy of God, separated from God by our sin. Fellowship with God is restored only as a person is brought to sincere

recognition of sin and a confident trust in Jesus as Savior.

How does that precious work in the heart take place? It happens only as the Holy Spirit is given opportunity to work. It is for that reason that we bring our children to baptism, through which God begins a work in their hearts. But God has given us His Word as a means through which He continues to nurture and strengthen our faith.

Where is the greatest opportunity for that ongoing nurturing? Church and Sunday school are wonderful settings for worship and hearing God’s Word. But verses like Deuteronomy 4:9, Psalm 78:5-8, and Ephesians 6:4 make clear that parents have the primary responsibility for the spiritual training of their children. We like to say that God’s Plan A for evangelism is parents leading their own children to Christ. Certainly, husbands and wives also have a need to be brought back day after day to the truths of God’s Word and will want to have a loving concern for each other’s ongoing spiritual nurturing. Together they bear responsibility for pointing their children to Jesus as Savior and establishing them in the wisdom of God for life.

## *WHAT? THE WORD.*

This preeminently important work can only take place in our hearts and our children’s hearts and lives by the power of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God, so the Bible must be the centerpiece of family devotional life. But what does a family devotional time look like?

It has been our desire to incorporate family singing, reading of Scripture, Scripture memorization, and prayer. Singing is not only a

means of glorifying God with our praises, but of affirming the truths of God’s Word together. Is it possible that proclamation of God’s truth in Word and song also drives back the powers of darkness?

We have seen value in using a good Bible story book with young children as a means of introducing them to the characters of the Bible and the flow of Bible history. This has provided them with a framework of understanding when later they are able to read from the Bible itself. Because our goal has been to see our children grasp not only the need for Jesus as their Savior but also the wisdom of God’s ways for daily life, we have made the reading of a chapter from Psalms and Proverbs a regular part of devotion







time. Of course, as we read God's Word, we will also want to explain and apply its truths to the best of our ability. All can be encouraged in the discipline of Scripture memorization by taking even a couple minutes to go over a verse or section of verses together. Then finish with prayer—whether prayed by one family member on behalf of all or every member having opportunity.

#### HOW? CONSISTENCY.

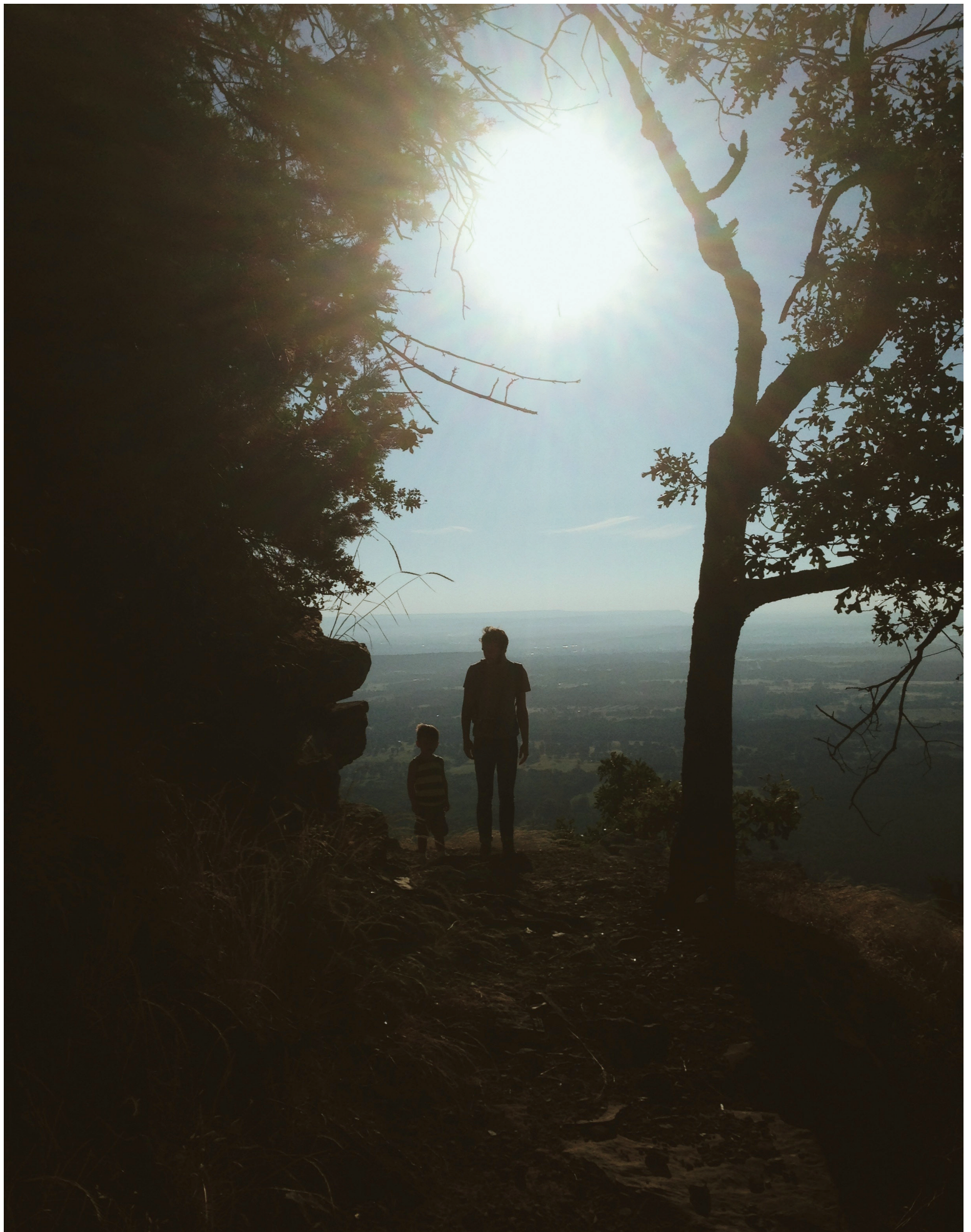
We would never wish to give the impression that we rarely missed family devotional times or that we were ever a model family. The truth is, we are humans seeking to be faithful with the

responsibilities entrusted to us. What we have sought to do is be reasonably consistent. And we believe that you dads, if you are in the home, are pivotal to making this happen. After all, God has called you to be the spiritual leaders in your home. You don't have to be an expert, need to know all the answers, or be without nervousness. But as you step out, taking the initiative to gather your family, and lead them in worship and the Word, God will honor and bless your efforts. And wives, recognize your husband is entering into spiritual battle when he steps out to lead the family. Your encouragement, cooperation, and expression of gratefulness goes a long way toward helping "build your house" (Proverbs 14:1).

God grant that all of our homes be dwellings where not only Jesus is known as Savior, but where the household gathers regularly to worship our great God and to grow in faith and wisdom through time in His Word.

*The Longs live in Arlington, Wash., where Pastor Long serves Atonement Free Lutheran Church.*







# FATHERS

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By Suzanne Johnson

“Any man can become a father, but it takes a special man to be a dad.” This well-known statement rings true for me because it describes my dad. Biology did not allow him to become a father, but God had a plan before time began that he would be a dad. He fulfilled that plan by creating a family through adoption. One reason my dad was special is because he adopted me, the last of four. When I was brought home at four weeks, he accepted me as his own. He called me his daughter, and I called him Dad. I was an heir, and a joint heir with my siblings.

Just as I was adopted into my earthly family, through adoption I also became a member of God’s family, an heir and joint heir with Jesus. God calls me His child and I call Him Father. (Romans 8:15-17)

I explored the meanings behind the words “father” and “dad” to consider how I use both terms. Both are titles, yet to my ear “father” sounds more formal than “dad.” From a child’s first utterances we get variations of the word dad: daddy, papa, Abba, for example. In Mark 14:36, Jesus cried out to God saying, “Abba! Father!” at a time of great need. Jesus knew He faced suffering, death, and separation from His Father. At

the same time, He knew His Father was available, attentive, and caring. He trusted His Father enough to say, “... yet not My will but Your will.” So Jesus used a child’s utterance when He called on His Father.

In the same way, I knew I could call on my dad anytime; he was *almost* always available for his children. We had a close relationship, and I did not hesitate to reach out to him whether I needed help or just wanted to spend time together. But God, unlike my dad, is *always* available.

We did not call my dad “father”; it was too formal for him. When I pray or speak of God, I call Him “my Lord,” or “my Heavenly Father”; the word “dad” seems too informal for Him. Yet I long for that closeness with God.

It has been said that we get our image of God from our earthly father. I was blessed to have a godly dad who acknowledged his sinfulness and need for mercy. Dad taught me that God is a Father of provision, protection, strength, justice, forgiveness, grace, and love.

Scripture is filled with examples of godly fathers. From Adam, to Abraham, to Noah, to the prodigal son’s father, we learn of imperfect, fallen men—but men who trusted God and passed on a godly heritage. Like these men, my dad was fallen and imperfect. He felt his greatest sin was pride, yet I remember him as a man humble enough to admit his struggles, failures, and need for Jesus.

Scripture teaches the weighty responsibility of parenting. Deuteronomy 6:5, 7-9 is a guide for Christian parenting. A father teaches the commands of God, talks with his children about God’s Word while they experience life together, and desires these statutes to resound in the home. The father blesses his children through encouraging words, which motivate them to obey (Colossians 3:20-21); he trains and disciplines

fairly (Proverbs 22:6, Ephesians 6:4, Proverbs 29:17); and he releases them to God’s care knowing he has prepared them spiritually (I Samuel 1:27-28).

One biblical father who reminds me of my dad is the father of the prodigal son. My brother was like that son, and I was like the child who stayed home. Dad longed for our salvation and my brother’s safe return home. He spent much time in prayer, sought godly counsel, did whatever he could to help, forgave over and over, and ran to my brother to embrace him and celebrate when he returned home. While at home I often grumbled about my brother, voicing my disapproval and experiencing jealousy because I didn’t think he deserved what I had. I was the ungrateful sibling. With thankfulness I can share that God used my dad’s testimony and His Word to call me to forgiveness and restoration.

A Christian father’s greatest longing is to know his children have assurance of salvation. My dad knew that he could not make us love Jesus, have faith in Him, or serve Him, but he lived his life as one who trusted Jesus. He did his best to teach us from God’s Word and release us into His care. He lived Joshua 24:15: “If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your father served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house we will serve the LORD.”

A father, a dad, a Christian father—a godly dad is a man who proclaims this for his family.

Only God can make a man a father who becomes a special man we call “Dad.”

*Johnson attends Word of Life Free Lutheran, Upsala, Minn.*

# MOTHERS

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By Brita Ylitalo

Now that my children are grown and making their own ways in the world, I often reflect on the years I spent in child-rearing. While my children and foster-children were all at home, there was so much that kept me busy it was hard to find a moment to think about what was actually happening. By the time all the meals were eaten, the clothes washed, the floors scrubbed, homework checked, the fights settled and tears dried, the games played, and laughter quieted, I had no energy to consider how I had done that day as their mother. But now that the span of the constant, hectic activity is behind me, I have time to muse about those years.

As a Christian mother, I believed my highest priority was to teach my children to “be Christians.” Yes, they went to church, Sunday school, confirmation, and all those wonderful places that teach the tenets of Christian faith. Nevertheless, I was convinced the responsibility of teaching my children to how to be Christ-like fell to me first.

However, as I reflect on those years of teaching my children, it seems that I spent more time teaching them how

to behave than how to love God. Teaching the do’s and don’ts of the Christian life often crowded out the teaching that our God is a loving, wonderful supernatural being Who created us out of His desire to be in a loving relationship with us.

As I have gotten older and grown in my own faith toward this awesome God, I recognize that being good won’t make God love and forgive us more than He always has. If our behavior changed God’s love and forgiveness toward us, we would have to ask the question, “Then why did Jesus have to die on the cross?”

These days in my meditations I ask myself why I spent so much time teaching my children “do this and don’t do that” instead of teaching about the eternal love of God who gave us His only Son in order that we would have everlasting life. And yet it is true that children need to be taught how to behave. They do not automatically share with each other, naturally love their sisters and brothers, or willingly offer to clean the kitchen. All people are sinners in need of a Savior, and so it is with our children.

So the day-to-day teaching of children gets all rolled up with teaching them how to be Christian. Is it any wonder that when those children grow up and leave they want to free themselves from all the rules that run our homes? The rules that seemed oppressive and demanding get confused with the God’s commands, as well. Sadly, in so doing many of our children take the next step by freeing themselves of what seems to be an oppressive list of rules to follow—that is, if they haven’t experienced our loving God and forgiving Savior.

When we finally recognize that we are just sinners in need of a Savior, and experience the love of God in Christ, things change. It is when we are called in our hearts to build that

relationship with a loving God that we realize obedience isn’t about following rules. Obedience flows from trusting Jesus and receiving Him into our hearts to wash away our sin. All God asks is that we believe in Him, take Him on faith. Salvation is not about our goodness, but about the goodness of our Savior.

Yes, of course we still have to teach children to behave. Scripture tells us to teach, correct, and discipline our children. But when we first teach our children to come into a relationship with God Himself through His son Jesus, the Holy Spirit will teach them, through the work of sanctification, how a Christian should live. Our children will receive the desire to follow Jesus and become more like Him. The new law for the believer is as Jesus taught in Matthew 22:37-39, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

What does this mother do with all her reflections? I pray for my grown children that my teaching was not in vain and that God would correct my mistakes. I pray that God’s love was planted in their hearts, and when they come to the end of themselves, they will call on Him. Finally, I turn to that loving God and trust that He will do what He promises in Proverbs 22:6: “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”

*Ylitalo is the mother of five natural children and 12 foster children. She lives in Cokato, Minn., with her husband, Howard, where she attends Good Shepherd Free Lutheran.*











# GRANDPARENTS

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By Paula Nyman

Grandparenting! What a sweet time of life where the duties of parenting are past and one can now spoil one's grandchildren. After all, isn't that what grandparents are for? Well, that is what so many of my grandparent friends have been telling me during the nine months we were patiently awaiting the birth of our first grandchild. I have watched with joy as many of my friends have entered this season of life and shared photos on social media, while at the same time wondering what it will be like for us.

Our own experience of our daughter, Annika, being grandparented by our parents was different from most because we were in ministry and often lived far away from them. In our case, our parents didn't have the good fortune to be able to be a daily, weekly, or even monthly part of our daughter's life. At most, we saw them twice a year. So much can happen in six months.

We find ourselves now in the same position as our parents once were. How can a grandparent speak into the lives of their grandchildren when they are separated by so many miles?

I have been contemplating this for many months now, thinking about how I can play an active role in Lewis' life no

matter where we live. Here are some conclusions I have come to:

My first and perhaps most important call is to pray for Lewis. I can do this daily no matter where I am. I love the Apostle Paul's prayer for the brethren in Colossians 1:9-13, and I have reworded it here inserting our grandson's name:

Father, I pray that Lewis may be filled with the knowledge of Your will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that he may walk worthy of You Lord, fully pleasing You, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of You, Lord; strengthened with all might, according to Your glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to You, Father, who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.

What a wonderful prayer to pray daily.

Another practical way we can speak into Lewis' life is to write letters to him. The art of letter writing is fast being lost in our world today. What a keepsake it would be for these letters to be saved for him to read when he gets older. When my heart is so full and I want to express my love for him, I can write down my thoughts and prayers when I can't tell him in person.

When I can be with him in person, how can I speak grace to him, how can I reflect Jesus' heart for him? There will be times when I will need to discipline him (speaking law to him), but then I need to also grant him the grace of acceptance, compassion, loving wisdom, tender yet tough love, kind instruction, and perseverance. My daughter and her husband will do the hard work of daily living and sharing Christ with Lewis, but I can back that up by helping him see his own heart and need for Jesus, pointing him to Jesus through sharing Scripture, reading Bible stories to him,

getting down on the floor and playing with him, and sharing our lives and experiences with him. The wonders of technology today bring him to us more often than was possible in my parenting years. What a blessing that will be.

In the past several years, I have come to see how important stories are to us, creating them as well as sharing them. In my genealogy research, I have found some stories of my family that I look forward to sharing with Lewis. I want him to hear about the lives of faith and perseverance of his ancestors. It is an important legacy that he needs to know and pass on himself.

God has given all of us certain talents and skills (not spiritual gifts) which we can use to nurture others and with which we can glorify God. I have learned that I am a creative who derives much joy from creating most anything, be it from cloth, fiber, paper, beads, or my camera and computer. I look forward to nurturing Lewis' skills and talents and getting creatively messy with him. Who knows the beauty he will create, share with others, and then in return glorify God. What a pleasure that will be to watch.

And yes, I *will* take joy in spoiling Lewis as often as I can and in as many ways as I can, both in person and through the mail.

As I write this, tears come to my eyes because no words can express the joy we have in Lewis and the honor and privilege we have in being his grandparents. I wish I could hug him, play with him, laugh with him, share stories with him, and love him in person more often. But as Paul gives us an example, I will be content where I am and thankful that He gave us Lewis to love for a season. I will seek to be Jesus to him in every way I possibly can while I have breath on this earth.

*Nyman is a member of Christ Community Church, Hagerstown, Md., where her husband, Kris, serves as pastor.*

“God sets the lonely in families,  
He leads out the prisoners with singing”  
(Psalm 68:6).

# ORPHANS

By Jonni Sliver

Nearly 30 years ago I met two boys who changed my life: Tony and Claudino. Tony was my first great love in Brazil. He was a regular visitor to the Rescue House, a safe place open during the day to receive street kids in the capital city of Belo Horizonte. There the children took a shower, had breakfast and lunch, played, and heard the gospel.

Tony was 12 years old—he looked younger—and had already been on the street for years. He had the sweetest smile in the world and seemed like he was always happy. He never took seriously our offers to help him leave the street because he simply could not imagine any other life.

Several months before I arrived, Tony did something to anger another street boy. In retaliation, the boy waited for Tony to go to sleep, threw paint thinner on him, and lit him on fire. The worst burns were on his waist and down one leg. By the time I met him, Tony's wounds had healed—that is, the skin had become thick and hard, looking like plastic. This

thick skin often cracked, and an infection formed. He was always in pain, and to deal with the pain he sniffed glue all the time. The only time when he didn't have a bag was when he was in our house. The glue covered the pain, but reduced his immune system, which enabled the infections, which increased the pain, which made Tony sniff more glue. The tragic cycle ended less than a year after I met Tony, when his little heart stopped beating. He laid down in his corner one night and simply didn't wake up.

As hard as it was to lose Tony, I think dealing with Tony's mom was worse. As soon as we learned he had died, part of our team started preparations for his burial and another group went on the hunt to find his mother. She was an addict and alcoholic who lived on the street, and it was in the darkest corners of Belo Horizonte that we looked to find her. Teresa was so drunk when we found her that she had no way of understanding what we were telling her. We brought her home, and we made the unusual arrangement of not having Tony buried for two days so that his mother would be able to take part in her son's funeral. Sadly, after 48 hours Teresa was still in a drug/alcohol haze. She threw herself on Tony's coffin and kissed his face over and over. The effect of the chemicals was so strong that we knew the next day she would wonder when Tony would come to visit her; she would have no memory of his death or funeral.

Tony showed me what happens when mothers don't mother.

And then we have Claudino, a 14-year-old

boy who could make grown men tremble—not for fear but pure exasperation. He was one of the most regular visitors in the Rescue House, and it sure seemed like he came to bring the house down. Claudino started living on the street before he was 10 years old. He learned all of the life skills necessary to survive on the streets. He was a master manipulator; on the street he got the other kids to do what ever he wanted and was at the center of almost every confusion. But when our recuperation home for street boys opened, Claudino was among the first to ask to live there.

Claudino lived with us for six years, and I can honestly say he was a handful. All of the skills he learned on the street accompanied him







in the Rescue House, and he found new ways to express them. But at heart this boy had one true desire—to be loved and to belong to someone. In the home he finally became part of a family, an unusual one filled with “aunts” and “uncles,” but a family nonetheless. He had people around him who believed that he could be more, that he could be a man of God. And he had people who walked with him all along the way. It was amazing to watch his heart open to Jesus, and the power of redemption have its effect on his life.

When Claudino was 20 years old he felt that God was calling him to minister to others as he had been ministered to. He left for a time to prepare for ministry, and returned to work in the

Rescue House, of all places. The kids who came to the house had a harder time because they couldn’t get away with much—any mischief they thought up, he had thought of it before and called them on it. Within the year he became assistant leader, and then leader of the ministry, and he continues until today.

One of the sweetest victories in Claudino’s life, however, is his very own family. Claudino began dating Carla under the loving eyes of our family. The only examples he had of strong, healthy relationships came from us, and the desire of his heart was to be the husband and father his birth family hadn’t had. And he is. The love, attention, protection and joy that Claudino

pours out over Carla and their daughter, Anna, provides hope for the kids he works with every day who look to him as their role model.

Claudino is still a handful, but now his hand is full of blessing. What he received he is passing on, and I am so grateful to have had a part in his precious life.

*Sliver is an AFLC missionary serving at the Miriam Home in Campo Mourão, Brazil.*



**THEME:** “Here I Stand” (Romans 1:16-17) **DATES:** June 13-16 **SITE/HOST:** AFLC Schools, Plymouth, Minn.

I invite you to come and take a stand this summer in Plymouth, Minn., on the beautiful campus of our AFLC Schools. You will be welcomed by a brand new sign as you come for the 55th Annual Conference of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations.



Five hundred years ago a man who was burdened by the guilt of his sin found peace with God in Scripture. Our theme, “Here I Stand,” is taken from

Romans 1:16-17, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, But the righteous man shall live by faith.”

Five hundred years later the Lord is calling us to take a stand for truth as we

gather together with like-minded Free Lutherans for worship and edification. We will open each afternoon session with a time of worship led by Pastor Rodger Olson and close our afternoons an hour early in order to present three special sessions on the Reformation. Our speakers will be Pastor Brett Boe, an AFLC pastor; Pastor Bob Lee, AFLC Schools faculty member; and Pastor Wade Mobley, president of our Schools. Our forefathers’ vision was for the Annual Conference to be a time of refreshment and challenge, a spiritual powerhouse. You are needed at the conference to be one through whom the Lord can display His power and glory back in your local congregation.

Pastor Joel Rolf, dean of our Bible school, is leading the campus team to be your host for these conference days. Virtually all of the daily activities will be held here on campus to minimize time spent driving in the metro. One other change the conference committee has made

is that the opening service Tuesday night will also include the ordination service. As we continue to pray for 40 more men for ministry, we believe the highlight of our time together should be the ordination of our seminary graduates into ministry. Our tradition of communion together will be moved to our closing service on Friday evening.

So won’t you set aside three or four days of your summer and take a stand with God’s people in this 500th anniversary year of the Reformation? There is something special that happens when the family of God gathers in unity around the Word of God to worship, pray, and do business for the glory of God.

Oh and by the way, you won’t have to stand the whole time you are here; we have seating for at least 450 in the Schools’ air conditioned chapel. See you soon, Lord willing.

~Pastor Lyndon Korhonen  
AFLC president

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Seven more names needed

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Pastor Brad Novacek, Kasson, Minn.

\*Pastor Eric Rasmussen, Fergus Falls, Minn.

\*James Rolf, Moorhead, Minn.

## Missions Corporation

(20 terms of five years each)

Brady Arneson, Honolulu, Hawaii

\*\*Lavon Bohling, Inman, Kan.

Mary Davidson, Tioga, N.D.

Pastor Rob Edwards, Dassel, Minn.

Pastor Curt Emerson, Wadena, Minn.

Pastor Luke Emerson, Newark, Ill.

Mark Fagerstrom, DeKalb, Ill.

\*Joel Forness, Wahpeton, N.D.

\*Kenn Graham, Camarillo, Calif.

\*\*Mike Grahn, Roseau, Minn.

\*Pastor Richard Gunderson, Milford, Ill.

\*Barb Gustafson, Apache Junction, Ariz.

\*David Handsaker, Plymouth, Minn.

Pastor Ken Hart, Fairbury, Neb.

Iver Heier, Prairie City, S.D.

\*Pastor Tim Hinrichs, Mankato, Minn.

\*Kevin Hoops, Byron, Neb.

\*Pastor Craig Johnson, Astoria, Ore.

Tim Jordan, Valley City, Minn.

Pastor Jon Langness, Deshler, Neb.

\*Pastor Rick Larson, Ortonville, Minn.

Pastor Brandon Marschner, Culbertson, Mont.

\* \*\*David Mattson, Centerville, S.D.

\*Pastor Henry Mohagen, Reva, S.D.

\*Marlow Nash, Colfax, N.D.

Pastor Jerry Nelson, LaCrosse, Wis.

Shelly Raan, Tioga, N.D.

\*Tim Rolf, McIntosh, Minn.

\*Vernon Russum, Grafton, N.D.

Rod Scheel, Fergus Falls, Minn.

\*\*Greg Schmitke, Moorhead, Minn.

Jim Smithberg, Columbus, N.D.

Nancy Staudinger, Tamarack, Minn.

\*Pastor Tony Stockman, Bloomington, Minn.

Shane Voxland, McIntosh, Minn.

Marilyn Wagner, Minot, N.D.

\*\*Richard West, Mankato, Minn.

Three more names needed





# BOARD NOMINEES

## Commission on Evangelism

(One layman, five-year term)

Micah Johnson, Maple Grove, Minn.  
Alex Woodworth, Valley City, N.D.

## World Missions Committee

*Voted on by corporation members*

(One pastor, five-year term)

Pastor George Lautner, Larimore, N.D.  
\*Pastor David Nelson, Badger, Minn.

## Coordinating Committee

(One layman, five-year term)

\*Ron Strand, Wahpeton, N.D.  
X

(One layman, five-year term)

Dr. Lyle Westrom, Crookston, Minn.  
X

## Bay Broadcasting

*Voted on by corporation members*

(One layman, three-year term)

Ben Dahl, Camarillo, Calif.  
\*\*Greg Schmitke, Moorhead, Minn.

## FLAPS Board of Managers

*Voted on by corporation members*

(One layman, five-year term)

\* \*\*David Mattson, Centerville, S.D.  
\*\*Richard West, Mankato, Minn.

(One pastor, five-year term)

\*Pastor Mark Antal, Park River, N.D.  
X

(One layman, three-year term)

\*\*Lavon Bohling, Inman, Kan.  
\*\*Mike Grahm, Roseau, Minn.

\* Incumbents

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

X Nominations not named by press deadline

## Youth Board

(One pastor, five-year term)

Pastor Eric Rasmussen, Fergus Falls, Minn.  
Pastor Eric Westlake, Zumbrota, Minn.

## Home Missions Committee

*Voted on by corporation members*

(One layman, five-year term)

Philip Johnson, Esko, Minn.  
\*Ron Jorgenson, Lidgerwood, N.D.

## Schools Board of Trustees

*Voted on by corporation members*

(One pastor, four-year term)

\*Pastor Alan Arneson, Fosston, Minn.  
X

(One layman, five-year term)

X  
X

## ARC Board

*Voted on by corporation members*

(One pastor, five-year term)

\*Pastor Rich Carr, Tioga, N.D.  
X

## Board of Publications & Parish Education

(One layman, five-year term)

Maren Sletten, Argusville, N.D.  
X

## Benefits Board

(One layman, five-year term)

\*Tony Onnen, Cokato, Minn.  
X

## Nominees to serve at the 2018 conference

### Committee No. 1

(Administration)

Leo Brackel, Mott, N.D.  
Pastor Shane McLoughlin, Minot, N.D.  
Pastor Brad Novacek, Kasson, Minn.  
X  
X

### Committee No. 2

(Schools)

Pastor Karl Anderson, McIntosh, Minn.  
Martin Schock, Lew Leipzig, N.D.  
Pastor Ryan Tonneson, Mesa, Ariz.  
X  
X

### Committee No. 3

(Missions)

Robert Davidson, Felch, Mich.  
Morris Haase, New Leipzig, N.D.  
Iver Heier, Prairie City, S.D.  
Pastor Jon Langness, Deshler, Neb.  
X

### Committee No. 4

(Publications and Parish Education)

Pastor John Amundson, New Leipzig, N.D.  
Pastor Dan Antal, Grand Forks, N.D.  
X  
X  
X

### Committee No. 5

(Evangelism and Benefits)

Pastor David Ryerson, Ishpeming, Mich.  
Pastor David Tilney, Cloquet, Minn.  
X  
X  
X

# AFLC Schools to host Annual Conference

The AFLC's 2017 Annual Conference will be held June 13-16 on the campus of the AFLC Schools, located at 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, Minn. The conference will open at 7 p.m. with an ordination service in Hauge Chapel. Conference committees, however, will meet Tuesday afternoon in various locations around campus.

Daily conference business will begin with devotions at 9 a.m. Business sessions will be held until early afternoon, with a break for lunch. New this year, the conference sessions will close early in the afternoon to allow for three presentations marking the 500th anniversary of the Reformation (see below). Each evening, services will be held at 7 p.m. in Hauge Chapel. The conference will close with a communion service on Friday evening.

Conference registration can be found online ([aflc.org/conferences](http://aflc.org/conferences)). The cost is \$35/individual or \$55/couple. The registration also includes events planned for youths in seventh grade and older (\$20/each), vacation Bible school for children ages 4 through sixth grade (\$20/each), and nursery for those younger than 4 (\$20/each).

Meal plans or individual meals are also included in the online registration form.

A limited amount of campus dorm rooms are available for \$35/night. Call 763-412-2058 or email [lmccarlson@aflc.org](mailto:lmccarlson@aflc.org) for more information.

## Rekindle the Fire

Held in conjunction with the Annual Conference, Rekindle the Fire is a renewing event for AFLC pastors and their wives sponsored by the AFLC Department of Evangelism. The event will be held Monday, June 12, in Hauge Chapel on the campus of the AFLC Schools in Plymouth. Randy Craig, vice president of International Evangelism ([disciple-maker.org](http://disciple-maker.org)), is the guest speaker. The event is free.

## WMF Day

Women of the AFLC will meet on Tuesday, June 13 for a day of workshops, Bible study, and business. The day will begin with registration at 8 a.m. followed by devotions. The cost to register is \$20/individual, with lunch and breakfast as an additional cost. For more information and to register, see page 17.



## Conference Events

### Monday

- Rekindle the Fire

### Tuesday

- WMF Day
- Conference Committees
- Ordination Service

### Wednesday

- Business begins
- Mission Festival Service

### Thursday

- Pastors Banquet
- Lay Service
- Youth night campfire

### Friday

- Communion Service

# Reformation conferences planned for East, West & Northwest

To mark the quincentenary of the Lutheran Reformation, the AFLC will host four regional Reformation conferences and a hymn festival this summer and fall.

Five hundred years ago, Martin Luther nailed his 95 *Theses* to the door of the Wittenberg Castle Church. His statement, "Here I stand," has summarized his defense of the theology of the Word of God alone, faith alone, grace alone, and Christ alone. This year, the Protestant Church around the world will remember and celebrate these life-giving truths in various ways.

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, as it is written 'The righteous shall live by faith'" (Romans 1:16-17).

The Association of Free Lutheran Congregations is planning to observe this historic landmark with a prayerful desire that the Holy Spirit and Word of God will work once again through His transforming grace in our congregations.

Reformation regional conferences have been planned through a grant provided by Thrivent. They will be hosted by three AFLC congregations. Speakers and their topics at the three conferences will be:

- Pastor Wade Mobley, president of the AFLC Schools, will speak on "The Mind of the Reformation: How People Thought in 16th Century Europe."
- Pastor Robert Lee, professor at the AFLC Schools and editor of *The Lutheran Ambassador*, will speak on "The History of the Reformation: A Brief Retelling of the Protestant Reformation."
- Pastor Brett Boe, pastor and adjunct teacher at the AFLC Schools, will speak on "The Heart of the Reformation: Justification by Grace Through Faith."

Dates and locations for the regional conferences include:

- October 6-8: Ruthfred Evangelical Lutheran Church, Bethel Park, Pa.

- October 27-29: Atonement Free Lutheran Church, Arlington, Wash.
- November 17-19: St. Ansgar's Lutheran Church, Salinas, Calif.

In addition, all three speakers will present their Reformation messages during the AFLC Annual Conference June 13-16, which will be held at the AFLC Schools in Plymouth, Minn. Time will be set aside at the end of each day's business session for these three presentations.

Finally, the AFLC Schools will host a Reformation Hymn Festival on Nov. 10 in Hauge Chapel on the School's Plymouth, Minn., campus. Andrew Hanson, AFLBS music director, and Marian Christopherson, director of Parish Education, will lead the hymn sing, which will also feature choral presentations by a festival choir made up of students, alumni, and friends.

More information regarding these events will be posted on the AFLC website ([aflc.org](http://aflc.org)). If you have any questions, please contact Pastor Terry Olson at the AFLC headquarters: (763) 545-5631.



# HUNGER FOR TRUTH

BY LYNN WELLUMSON

**Y**ou are invited to attend the 55th annual WMF Day on June 13, which is held in conjunction with the AFLC annual conference at the AFLC Schools in Plymouth, Minn. The WMF is meeting under the theme, "Yesterday ... today ... forever ... you shall be my witnesses," from Acts 1:8b.

Registration will begin at 8 a.m. Joan Culler, author of the 2017 WMF Bible study, will lead the devotions. Workshop leaders include Hope Unverzagt, Marsha Johnson, and Sarka Klusova.

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

Our Missions Festival speaker is Gracia Burnham, a survivor of the kidnapping of American missionaries. She will speak on their year of terror in the Philippine jungle. A separate program will be held for children ages 4 through 12.

We will host a breakfast on June 14 featuring Barb Long, a

pastor's wife from Arlington, Wash.

In 1517, Martin Luther presented the 95 *Theses* for academic debate over what he perceived to be abuses in the Roman Catholic Church. The document was translated into the common language and quickly disseminated with the advent of the printing press.

In a short time, many people in Europe found their consciences set free from the traditions of man. Even more importantly, as God's law held their consciences in fear of judgement, they heard the good news of how their gracious Savior Jesus Christ had paid their burden of sin and guilt. They then could anticipate being welcomed into heaven through faith in Christ. A hunger for the gospel, now available in their own language, grew.

We are praying that same hunger will draw you to come to hear of God's gracious gift this summer. We look forward to seeing you in June.

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

## 2016 WMF Convention • June 13 • AFLC Schools, Plymouth, Minn.

Please use this form to register for the WMF Convention and luncheon on Tuesday, June 13, and for the WMF breakfast on June 14.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Home congregation: \_\_\_\_\_

Item	Cost	#	Total
*Registration	\$20		\$
Tuesday luncheon	\$11		\$
Wednesday breakfast	\$10		\$
Gluten-free/Vegetarian/Vegan meal options (circle)	Add \$3/meal		
Dairy-free meal option	Add \$1/meal		
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$</b>

*\*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.**



## We now implore God the Holy Ghost

M

artin Luther's hymn for Pentecost, "We Now Implore God the Holy Ghost," is the next hymn for consideration. The

first stanza of this hymn is not by Luther; it was sung at public executions by the assembled mob as the victims were being burned at the stake. The first stanza was also one of the three German hymns that the Roman Catholic Church permitted the people to sing in a public worship service. From the fourth century to the time of Luther, there was little congregational singing in worship services. Luther changed this pattern by reintroducing congregational singing of hymns in the worship service in the German language of the people.

Luther was fond of this Pentecost hymn and wrote three additional stanzas to transform it into a beautiful and meaningful Lutheran chorale. At the end of each stanza, he kept the medieval custom of ending with, "Lord, have mercy," or its abbreviated form, "*Leise*," which means, "have mercy."

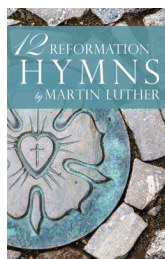
~Pastor Gordon Waterman  
Crown of Life Lutheran  
Tomball, Texas

1. We now implore God the  
Holy Ghost  
For the true faith, which we  
need the most,  
That in our last moments He  
may befriend us  
And, as homeward we  
journey, attend us.  
Lord, have mercy!

2. Shine in our hearts, O most  
precious Light,  
That we Jesus Christ may  
know aright,  
Clinging to our Savior, whose  
blood hath bought us,  
Who again to our homeland  
hath bro't us.  
Lord, have mercy!

3. Thou sacred Love, grace on  
us bestow,  
Set our hearts with heav'nly  
fire aglow  
That with hearts united we  
love each other,  
Of one mind, in peace with  
ev'ry brother.  
Lord, have mercy!

4. Thou highest Comfort in  
ev'ry need,  
Grant that neither shame nor  
death we heed,  
That e'en then our courage  
may never fail us  
When the Foe shall accuse  
and assail us.  
Lord, have mercy!  
Amen.



These hymns are featured in a new booklet from Ambassador Publications, *12 Reformation Hymns by Martin Luther*. Featuring a hymn of Luther for each month of the year, the booklet is available for \$2/each. For more information, visit [ambassadorpublications.org](http://ambassadorpublications.org).



# MAKING A CONNECTION

BY PASTOR JERRY NELSON

**I**f you have ever been in a hospital for more than a day you may have been visited by a chaplain. One of their duties is to visit patients and assess their level of support and level of emotional and spiritual comfort. This includes pediatric patients, although often the “patient” includes the parents, as well. It almost goes without saying that when parents are there for their children, it builds within the child a sense of security, knowing that they are loved.

In the medical world this is referred to as “attachment” and is recognized as the deep and enduring connection established between a child and a protective, loving parent or caregiver, especially in the first several years of life. It can also be thought of in terms of bonding that profoundly influences every component of the human condition—mind, body, emotions, relationships, and values.

Proverbs 22:6 states, “Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.” Part of that training is developing a strong connection with our children, which builds a foundation that will last a lifetime. Professionals know that the structure and function of the infant-parent relationship creates the fundamental building blocks of life span development. During the sensitive early period of development, the infant/toddler will learn to become comfortably attached to their parent/caregiver, and as a result will be able to eventually extend

that bond to others. Over time the consistency of the parents in their everyday interactions with their children provides a secure base for the child to deal with their emotions and the emotions of others. When children have a strong bond with their parents, it also develops a sense that others are available and trustworthy.

As adults we are familiar with Jesus’ statement in Matthew 22:37-40, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with your entire mind.’ ... ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and Prophets hang on these two commandments.” In our training and modeling of love to our children, we help them learn how to give and receive love. I like the words found in Deuteronomy that we are to “teach [God’s commands] to your children, talking to them when you are at home and when

you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up” (11:19). Words of connection, spoken often, express a parent’s delight in their children and builds a strong bond. Likewise, it is important for parents to also teach their children that God also delights in us (Psalm 149:4).

Once during a chaplaincy rotation I visited a young family whose toddler son was going to have some minor surgery. The family appreciated the offer to pray with them, and as we went to the Lord in prayer I couldn’t help but notice this youngster snuggle into the nape of his mother’s neck, fold his hands, and pray, too.

*Nelson serves as marriage and family pastor at Christ is Lord Free Lutheran, Onalaska, Wis.*





# Growing congregation purchases new building

When members of New Hope Lutheran, Jamestown, N.D., were looking for their own place of worship more than five years ago, the congregation was worshipping Sunday evenings at the vacated Temple Baptist Church in Jamestown, and we were just three days away from entering into a one-year rental agreement with Temple. Just then, by divine appointment it seems, our current building was offered to us—and the congregation was able to purchase it for \$35,000. Of that amount, \$10,000 was given by the Our Saviour's Lutheran in Dickinson, N.D., and we also received support from Grace Free Lutheran in Valley City, N.D., and elsewhere. The building was purchased debt free.

Fast-forward five years and our congregation has experienced some growth. We find ourselves maxing out in both Sunday school and worship space. The Temple Baptist building is still on the market, and through a series of conversations, God led us again to consider the purchase of this building. We have four challenges with our current facility:

lack of space for parking, worship, education, and fellowship. Temple has a parking lot, and roughly double the worship, education, and fellowship space of our current facility.

At our Jan. 29 annual meeting, the congregation voted unanimously to go forward with the purchase of the former Temple Baptist Church, located at 1545 4th Ave. NW in Jamestown, subject to obtaining financing and final approval by the congregation. After a series of negotiations our New Hope committee accepted Temple's counter-offer of \$180,000. We estimate that it will cost us about \$120,000 to install an elevator, construct ADA bathrooms on the main floor, install air conditioning, and effect some minor repairs.

At a special congregational meeting held on March 19, the congregation voted to approve the purchase and repairs. We also, at this time, announced our capital campaign. We hope to move in sometime this coming summer.

Our new church home has a beautiful, spacious sanctuary with a seating capacity of 200, plus room for overflow. The



front of the church will provide ample space for a worship team, a touring AFLBS choir, or whatever else God sends our way.

New Hope is grateful for all the support offered by our sister congregations in the AFLC, and all who have helped us get established as a Home Missions congregation.

We ask for your prayers as we embark on this new endeavor. Our focus is not on buildings, but we believe this new facility will foster our further development as a "free and living congregation" in this community. We pray it promotes the work of the Kingdom and brings glory to



our Heavenly Father.

**By Pastor Steve Berntson**  
New Hope Lutheran



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- Individual: \$21/year
- International: \$23/year

Visit:

[aflc.org/lutheran-ambassador/subscribe](http://aflc.org/lutheran-ambassador/subscribe)

Group (\$19) and bulk (\$17) rates are still available, though not online.

## MARCH MEMORIALS

### AFLBS

Allen Herset (4)  
Donald Gunness  
Ruth Claus  
Irma Hendrickson  
Dr. Sherman Lee  
Bernice Ness (3)  
Kaare Berge  
Roy Quam (2)  
Marlys Johnson  
John Larson

### AFLTS

Meredith Bursheim (2)

Howard Christian  
Lorrayne Lindsoe

### Evangeliism

Roy Quam  
Kaare Berge  
Larry Behne

### General Fund

Sandy DeBoer  
Haley Josh

### Home Missions

Mildred Erl, Roy Quam,  
Lois Swanson

### FLAPS

Merle Jesme

### Parish Education

Marlys Johnson

### WMF

Judith Otnes  
Florence Thompson

### World Missions

Pastor Ted Berkas  
Kenny Johnson

### Youth Ministries

Pastor Ted Berkas



**A**s we recently walked through Lent, our ears were ringing with the ping of the hammer striking the nails. The sound of God being nailed to the cross to take our punishment and sins has been heard around the world. The good news of His grace has been the pivotal point of history. Without God's grace, humanity is doomed.

Five hundred years ago, another hammer drove nails into wood. The sound of that hammer has been heard around the world, as well. It was the sound of Martin Luther nailing his 95 *Theses* to the door of the Wittenberg castle church. Luther's *Theses* were a desire to open up a discussion on how people gained peace with God and eternal life.

Luther, a monk in the Roman Catholic Church, tried his best to live for God and find peace with Him. But the harder he tried, the more he realized his failure. He said, "As a monk I labored under the impression that my salvation was lost when I experienced fleshly desire, that is, evil lust, sensuality, anger, hatred, envy, and so forth, toward my brother. I tried many things. I confessed

daily ... but I made no progress—the evil lust of the flesh continued to return. As a result I did not find peace, but only further vexed myself" (*Luther Discovers the Gospel*, Uuras Saarnivaara). When we're honest, the same is true for us. What is a person to do?

Through the reading of God's Word, Luther came to the realization that God had fully paid for his sins through the atoning work of Jesus. Luther read Romans 1:16-17: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'BUT THE RIGHTEOUS *man* SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.'" When he meditated on those verses, he was convicted that God was so righteous that He could not lie. When God promised salvation, forgiveness, and even the righteousness of Christ by faith, He would give them. Luther had peace with God because of Jesus. He was in the grip of God's grace. That one soul in the grip of God's

grace made a difference worldwide.

Individual souls in the grip of God's grace can make a difference in this world. Unfortunately, we don't always lift up our eyes and notice those making a difference. This year as we celebrate the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's 95 *Theses* being nailed to the Wittenberg door, AFLC World Missions is going to highlight souls in the grip of God's grace who are making a difference. You'll notice them showing up in *Lutheran Ambassador* articles, *Fall* and *Summer News* articles, bulletin backs and inserts, VBS materials, and even our Annual Conference reports. It is our prayer that these illustrations might be an encouragement to you as you notice the difference you and others are making, even as God holds you in the grip of His grace.

*Palmer, Shakopee, Minn., is the director of AFLC World Missions and a member of Faith Free Lutheran, Minneapolis.*

# IN THE GRIP OF GRACE

BY PASTOR DEL PALMER

PEOPLE & PLACES

**Paul and Carissa Eikom**, members of Emmaus Lutheran, Bloomington, Minn., will join **Heather Hanson**, a member of Bethany Free Lutheran, Abercrombie, N.D., this summer as they serve on the Alaska vacation Bible school team.

**Michelle Alverson**, a dorm assistant at AFLBS, took a group of AFLBS students to Springfield, Mo., to work on service projects at Immanuel Lutheran over spring break.

**Pastor Terry Olson** has accepted a call to serve part time at Bethel Free Lutheran, Grafton, N.D. Olson currently serves as assistant to the president of the AFLC, a position he will continue to fill until a replacement is found.

**Pastor Del Palmer**, director of AFLC World Missions, traveled to Bangladesh on an exploratory trip with AFLC missionary **Pastor Brent Raan** and mission candidate **John Lee**, who will graduate from the Free Lutheran Seminary in May. Together they considered various ministry possibilities. Please pray for these families as they seek God’s leading.

**Dr. Steve and Angie Lombardo** have accepted the call to serve as AFLC Home Missions support staff. They will be helping with congregational health, discipleship training, and encouragement and care for Home Missions pastors, wives, and families.

**Pastor Dale R. Battleson**, 78, Armour, S.D., died in a Sioux Falls hospital on March 27. He was a 1968 graduate from AFLTS, ordained the same year, and served AFLC parishes in Bagley, Minn., and Pukwana, S.D. He is survived by his wife, Kay, two children, Lisa and Chris, and two grandchildren. Blessed be his memory.

**Andrew Olson**, who will graduate from the Free Lutheran Seminary in May, has accepted a call to serve with Lutheran Bible Translators, on loan from AFLC World Missions.

The AFLBS Alumni Committee is in the process of planning **Alumni and Friends Weekend** for July 28-29. Events currently planned include a Golf Scramble and service on Friday and classes, workshops, and alumni activities on Saturday on campus, and a disc golf tournament to be held off campus. For more information, visit the AFLBS website at aflbs.org.

**Pastor Robert Lee**, AFLC Schools faculty, has been granted a leave of absence for fall semester by the Board of Trustees for the purpose of writing a history of the AFLC.



North Central Minnesota District hosts youth retreat

Ryan Patenaude, a senior seminarian at the Free Lutheran Seminary, was the featured speaker at the North Central Minnesota Free Lutheran Youth retreat, held Feb. 19-20 in Bemidji, Minn. The theme of the weekend event was “Endurance,” focusing on Hebrews 12:1-2. More than fifty students attended the retreat, representing the district’s congregations, and the worship team from AFLBS and local adults volunteered as counselors and chaperones. (Photo by Seth Skogerboe)

Gossman named next director of World Mission Prayer League

World Mission Prayer League has announced that Paul Gossman, Portland, Ore., has accepted the call to serve as the next general director, beginning this fall. Gossman currently works as a mission developer with multi-ethnic congregations in Portland. Along with his wife, Pris, they served as missionaries in the tribal highlands of the Philippines, training leaders and planting churches, a work which they continued with WMPL in Chiclayo, Peru. Gossman holds a PhD in Intercultural Studies from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. He headed that department at Trinity Lutheran College from 2005-2008 and has been an independent instructor and consultant in a wide variety of countries and settings.

AFLC BENEVOLENCES January 1-March 31, 2017			
FUND	REC'D IN MARCH	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$36,761	\$130,017	\$95,510
Evangelism	10,715	30,546	29,903
Youth Ministries	8,026	20,552	22,140
Parish Education	17,841	46,658	30,141
Seminary	21,029	67,626	58,797
Bible School	38,389	101,692	96,492
Home Missions	41,518	157,047	128,168
World Missions	35,497	113,490	137,409
Personal Support	56,975	159,237	150,181
TOTALS	\$266,751	\$826,865	\$748,740
Contact the individual departments for further information about specific financial needs.			



# REMEMBERING MY GRANDMOTHER

**“G**od incline my young heart to true godly fear and teaching. Amen.”

This was the prayer that my Grandma Lee taught me to pray before every meal ... in Norwegian, by the way, and it wasn't until many years later that



Pastor Robert Lee

I understood what it meant and that it wasn't a table grace. But God understood. She was my baptismal sponsor, the one who prayed with me at bedtime, too. Soon I was praying the Lord's Prayer with her, also in Norwegian.

She lived with us until I was in the second or third grade, and my mother sometimes said that after my sister was born it was mostly Grandma who cared for me. I was Grandma's boy.

Anna Sophia Opdahl was her name, and she was born in 1875 at home near Minneota, Minn., to immigrant parents. Her mother died when she was quite young, leaving several young children, and it was not easy for them after her father remarried. She was baptized by the local Norwegian-Lutheran pastor, and her education consisted of a few years in a country school, just enough to “read for the minister” and be confirmed. Then she was old enough to go to work. She was living with her aunt, who told her to be sure that she packed the Bible in her trunk. “Well, I'll put it in the bottom,” she replied. “Oh, no, put it at the very top,” Aunt Ingeborg exclaimed, “because you will need it every day of your life.”

Grandma had a hard life. When her father died in Alaska during the Gold Rush, she was already on her own. She married her sweetheart and moved with him to Akeley, Minn., where he worked in the mill. Four children were born to them, one of whom died young. Then her

husband contracted tuberculosis. There was no insurance or social services, so he had to keep on working to support his family. They could not afford to put him in a sanatorium; Grandma seemed to remember that it would cost 50 cents a week. One of my aunts said that her only memory of him was his sitting in a rocking chair in the evening and constantly coughing. He died, and Grandma was pregnant. There's a tombstone in the Akeley cemetery with the names of her husband and son on it—“the biggest mystery of my life,” she often said, because there was certainly no money to buy one.

Someone told her that the county would take away her children now, and so late one night she took them, together with what they could carry, and traveled to Duluth, where she found work in a boarding house. That's when my dad was born, and Grandma said that she would rather have had a new pair of shoes! She would meet a widower there—this is where the Lee name enters the story—and he would become her second husband, as well as a good father and provider for her children.

She would make her home with my dad after the death of her husband, and this would take them to Escanaba, Mich., where Dad was working, where he would marry my mother, and where I was born. It was at her church where I began Sunday school classes, usually sitting together

for the worship service. Grandma was a faithful Norwegian Lutheran on Sunday mornings, but somewhat ecumenical on Sunday evenings. I have good memories of the lively and unique services in the local Salvation Army citadel, especially recalling the headless piano player (he really only pulled up his Army uniform jacket over his head, much to my disillusionment) and the Christmas tree auctions. It's probably where I gained my love for the old gospel hymns.

It was my grandmother who planted the first seeds in my mind and heart of a possible calling into the Lord's service—an

unlikely possibility from a family with little church involvement. The fear of punishment from dads and moms seems to be a strong motivation for young people to avoid doing wrong; with Grandma it was the fear of disappointing and hurting her, and it

*... with Grandma it was the fear of disappointing and hurting her.*



worked. “You would never do that, would you, Bobby.” Notice, please, that this is a statement, not a question. I don't ever remember Grandma telling me that she loved me, but I never doubted it for a minute.

Take a moment, please, to thank God for a grandparent's influence in your life.

Grandparents who are reading this, take advantage of the awesome privilege and ministry opportunity that is yours to be used by God in the lives of the best looking, most gifted,

incredible (that's what you believe, anyway) boys and girls in the whole wide world.

*building the base*

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# HIS WORD, THE BREAD OF LIFE

BY PASTOR JOHN BRENNAN

"The boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them" (Matthew 14:24).

**T**he wind and the waves cast the small boat this way and that, side to side and up and down. Veteran sailors struggled against the winds that assailed them. To make things worse, this superstitious lot thought they saw a ghost coming their way on the surface of the sea. This was by no means their best moment. Their world seemed to be falling out from underneath them, and they had few options for escape. Some considered jumping into the sea and swimming for whatever safety they could find. Some opted for panic and fear, screaming like infants and hoping for a rescuer to step out of the dark night to save them.

Under normal circumstances, we could agree that these manliest of men had assessed their situation fairly well and were left with few options—swim or scream. But these were no run-of-the-mill seafarers; and

the ghost wasn't the typical garden variety. The boat's passengers were followers of Christ, and the ghost was none other than Jesus Himself.

I must admit that things looked disastrous for our soggy heroes in the fishing boat. I couldn't have done any better. We can't fault them for their reaction. But we can learn from their humiliating misadventure.

When the Lord commands us to go, we are going to arrive safely. "Immediately He made the disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side" (Matthew 14:22). The long hours of serving thousands of meals, followed by the struggle against the wind, had caused the disciples to forget the power of Jesus' words.

We can fall into the same snare. We, too, are easily caught up in the busyness of work and the worries of the world; we, too, forget the powerful Words that God has spoken. For example, the imperative, "fear not," appear many times in the Scriptures—still, we are often afraid.

We consume the Word of God, we

digest some of it, and for a time we get some benefit from it. But when we stop reading God's Word, we become like an empty stomach. We get hungry again. So, too, our souls need continual feeding. We must endeavor to return again and again to the Bible to feed on its truth. There is no more constant and reliable source of nourishment for the saint's soul than God's Word; it is truly the Bread of Life.

The work- and water-worn disciples very much needed a midnight snack of the Word, and Jesus gives it: "Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid'" (Matthew 14:27). We are privileged to take daily comfort in these wholesome words, for on every one the saint may stand firm.

"Everyone then who hears these words of Mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the Rock" (Matthew 7:24).

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