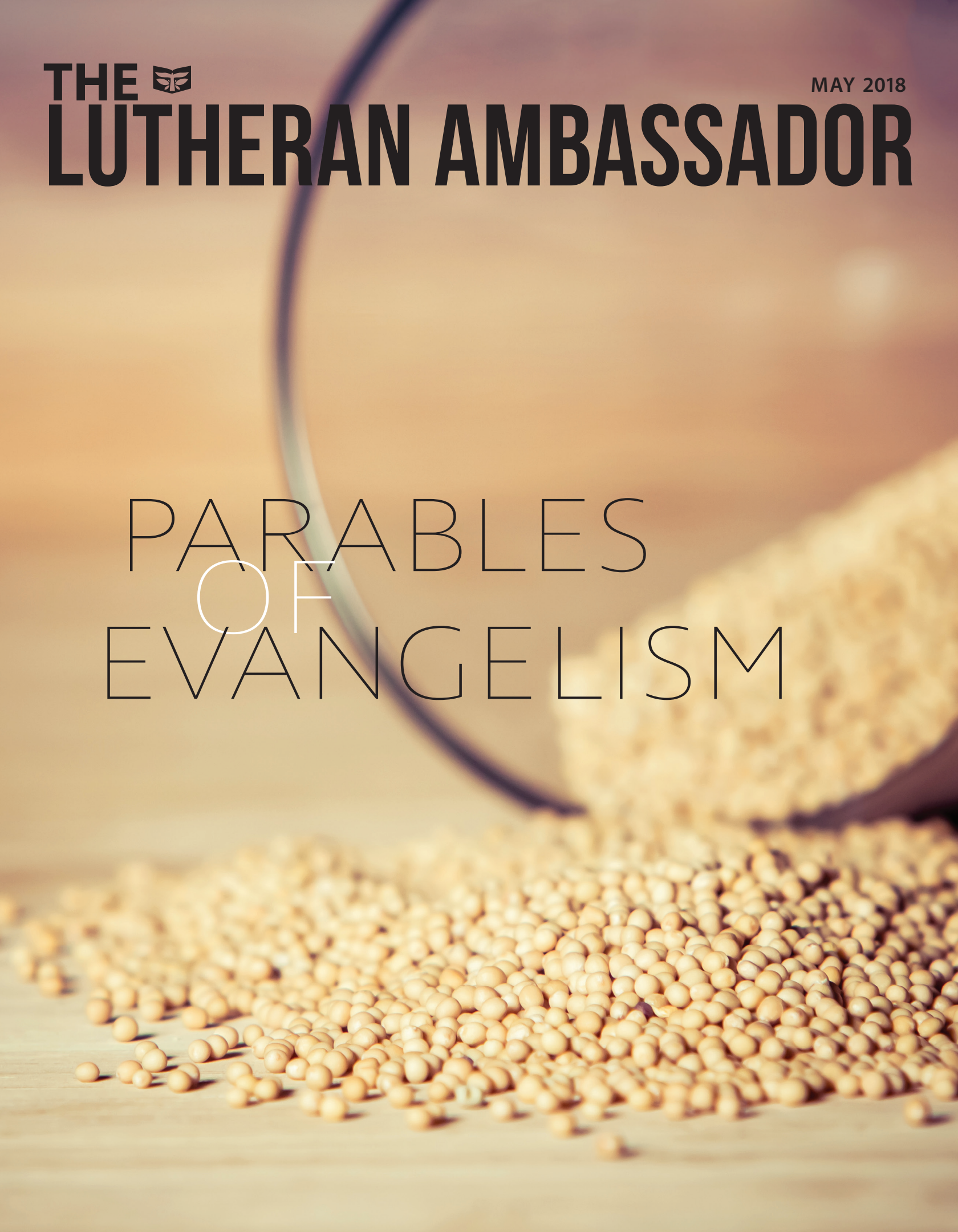


THE 

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LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

PARABLES OF EVANGELISM





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ENCOURAGING
WORD

BEAUTY OF REMEMBRANCE

BY JENAYA CRESTIK

During the month of February, we celebrated Black History Month as a nation. Slavery and racial prejudice are a shameful part of our nation's history, and we can see through the news and the world around us that there are still racial divides and conflicts today. However, it was beautiful when I and other members of my congregation had the opportunity to attend an African American church during February to discuss ethnic harmony. I was struck afresh with both the pain and beauty of remembering—something that I have come to learn is vital in the life of a Christian.

As we remember our African American brothers and sisters' horrific journeys, I am inspired by the way many of them turned to the Scriptures. So many of the gospel spiritual songs that come out of this time in history point back to the children of Israel who were also enslaved by oppressive nations. Both people groups often took comfort in the promises of God, despite the difficult circumstances of their lives.

Joshua 3-4 gives an account of the miracle that took place when the Israelites crossed the Jordan as they were heading toward the Promised Land (Joshua 3:13, 17). It is interesting to note, however, that after the crossing the Lord commanded Joshua to do something very specific—to erect stones of remembrance. Why did God ask Joshua to set a pile of stones together? Joshua 4:7 tells us:

“This may be a sign among you. When your children ask, ‘What do those stones mean to you?’ then you shall tell them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord ... so these stones shall be to the people of Israel a memorial forever.”

Hebrews 11 is another example that recounts the lives of many saints we are to remember. As we consider these saints of old, it is important to remember our own lives as well, and recall how God brought us out of darkness and into His glorious light found in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Remembrance in the context of the gospel with the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts plants seeds of gratefulness. What are some “stones of remembrance” from your own life? Out of what kind of life did God bring you? How could you share that remembrance with someone else and bring glory to God in the process?

We are prone to forget and are easily led astray by the world or our own sinful hearts. Remembering is vital not only to see where we have come from but to also remember where we are going. We are children of God who are to live lives to the glory of God and joyfully remember the present and anticipate the future eternal life that we have been given through Jesus Christ.

Crestik, a 2016 graduate of AFLBS, is a member of St. Paul's Lutheran, Cloquet, Minn.

It is the Holy Spirit's job to convict, God's job to judge, and my job to love.

When we come to the end of ourselves, we come to the beginning of God.

The cross shows us the seriousness of our sin—but it also shows us the immeasurable love of God.

Sin is the second most powerful force in the universe, for it sent Jesus to the cross. Only one force is greater—the love of God.

We are the Bibles the world is reading; we are the creeds the world is needing; we are the sermons the world is heeding.

Spend more time in study and prayer. That's the secret of successful evangelism.

Quotes from Billy Graham (1918-2018)

THE SOWER

By Dr. Ove Sander

The Parable of the Sower can be found in three gospels—Matthew 13:1-23, Mark 4:1-20, and Luke 8:4-15. Reading these passages, we could say that these texts have the same content. However, on closer observation, we can notice minor but still significant differences.

ONE STORY, DIFFERENT EMPHASES

Matthew's account emphasizes the comprehension of God's Word; he writes about understanding the Word in connection with the first sowing ground, the ground along the path. Similarly, understanding God's Word is highlighted in the fourth sowing ground, the good soil. In addition to some minor differences concerning the rocky sowing ground, the greatest differences can be found in the context of the good soil. While Matthew and Mark are specific in saying that the crop is multiplied, Luke's emphasis seems to lie elsewhere. Instead of speaking of producing 100, 60, or 30 times the crop that was sown, he stresses retaining the seed of the Word in "a noble and good heart" and "producing a crop by persevering."

When speaking of the good soil, only Mark points to the need to accept the Word of God as a clear precondition of a

fruitful Christian life. The word "accept" is similar to the word "receive," which is used by all three evangelists in connection with the rocky ground, but we can see that simply receiving Christ is fruitless without accepting Him.

These different emphases can be meaningful for us today. Matthew invites us to look for a deeper and better understanding of God's Word. Mark underlines the importance of having a close connection with Christ—He needs to become fully familiar to us and, more importantly, we need to become fully His. Luke calls us to perseverance and endurance in Christian faith and fruitful service.

THE HUMAN HEART, GOD'S SOWING GROUND

In this parable, we tend to compare the sowing grounds to the deeper religious natures of different people. Thus, we can imagine people belonging to four respective categories.

The first are those who only hear the Word of God; the Word reaches them as sound and tone, but not with its content. This is not enough. The second group includes those who, like the first, hear the Word, but also receive it. However, they have "no root," and Matthew and Mark add that they "last only a short time." The lack of roots causes fickleness. The main problem of these people seems to be the same challenge that plagues Christians today: superficiality and inability to focus. Curiously, none of the Gospels provides a hint about the problem of the people in the third category, but it may be the same superficiality and lack of deep reflection as in the previous group. Both hardship and ease can be devastating without religious depth. Thanks to God, there is the fourth group—fruitful people. We understand that we can be fruitful only after hearing and accepting God's Word, delving deep into it, and saving it in our hearts. Naturally, fruits are born with the Lord's blessing, and each fruit is of the Holy Spirit. But the parable provides a good

description of God's actions among us, as well as an invitation to live a fruitful life in the Lord.

STEPS ON THE PATH OF FRUITFUL LIFE

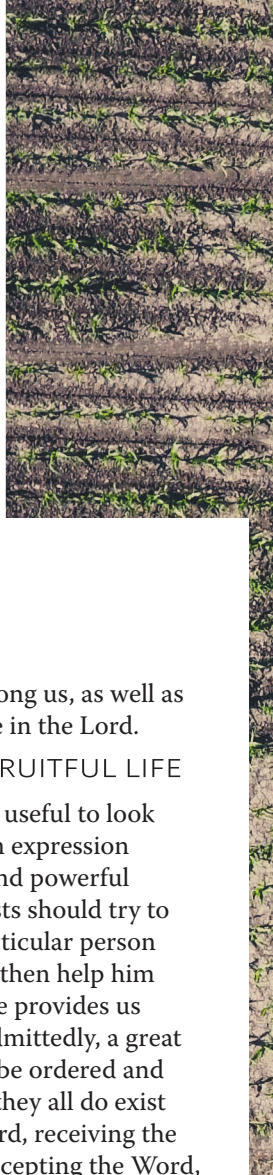
In terms of evangelism, it is useful to look at the four sowing grounds as an expression of the dynamic of God's living and powerful Word at work with us. Evangelists should try to understand the position of a particular person on this path to fruitfulness, and then help him or her further along. The parable provides us with the following steps (it is, admittedly, a great abstraction and these steps can be ordered and connected in various ways, but they all do exist on this path): hearing God's Word, receiving the Word, delving into the Word, accepting the Word, retaining the Word, and producing fruit.


The obvious precondition is good knowledge of the people to whom we proclaim the Word. When we know how far a person is on the path, we may be able, with God's assistance, to help the person go further. Lutheranism provides us with the interpretation that we have to return to hearing and receiving the Word and completing all the other steps on a daily basis, which is the essence of living in daily repentance and growing in faith.

As people of faith, we find that we are moving simultaneously in two directions. On the one hand, as we progress on our path, our faith increases and fruits multiply. On the other, we always return in repentance to the starting point of the path to hear God's gracious Word and receive Christ each day and at each moment again and again in our lives.

GOING OUT IN PRAYER

Jesus Christ is the Great Sower of the Word, and we are His associates and helpers. We are simultaneously the sowing ground and the sower. We sow what we have partaken ourselves by God's grace. The evangelists, without exception, emphasise the need to "go out" when talking





about sowing the Word. It seems that leaving the sheltering walls of our churches, either to our neighbors or to distant nations, is what European and American Christians need more than ever. It is always an arduous and risky effort, but it also can build God's kingdom and strengthen us in our faith. Indeed, only by giving faith can we keep it ourselves. We need to sow the Word for the fruits of the Holy Spirit to multiply in our lives.

There is one more aspect to sowing the Word that we tend to underestimate or even forget. It is prayer—for all of us who are called to this work, but also for those to whom we proclaim the Word. Someone has aptly said that before you go and talk to a person about God, talk to God about that person. It is our prayer that the ground of every human heart may eventually become the good soil that produces a crop a hundred times. And remember that we are only sowers or planters. The actual growth and spiritual life comes solely from God. He alone is to be credited for successful sowing and harvest.

Sander, a graduate of the AFLC seminary, is rector of the Institute of Theology for the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church.



THE WEEDS

By Gracia Gilbertson

Weeds. The bane of every gardener. When I was young, my parents planted a large vegetable garden each spring, and one of my least favorite chores was the dreaded task of weeding. Even though my father painstakingly prepared the soil and planted the seeds, eagerly waiting for them to take root and flourish, the pesky weeds would soon be growing right alongside the planted crop.

Such is the case in the parable Jesus told in Matthew 13:24-30, saying, “The Kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow



good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?' 'An enemy did this,' he replied. The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' 'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.'

Many Bible scholars believe the weed Jesus is talking about here is *darnel* (also called a *tare*), a weed that looks like wheat initially, but can later be identified due to its different head. You can imagine the concern and even alarm of the farmer's servants when they saw a whole field mixed with wheat and weeds growing together. The disciples were mystified when they heard this story and asked Jesus what the parable of the weeds meant.

Jesus answered in Matthew 13:37-43, saying, "The one who

sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear."

In this parable we see the heart of Jesus, the Son of Man. He desires the wheat, the people of the kingdom of

God, to grow and reach full maturity, not losing any to the evil one. Jesus knows how the evil one works, attempting to sow discord, doubt, and discouragement into the hearts of believers. One of his favorite tactics is to cause believers to question the truth by asking, "Did God really say ...?" The only way to withstand his sneaky attack is to stay rooted in the Word of God—reading, studying, meditating, memorizing, and sharing it.

And though we know in our natural world a weed could never turn into wheat, God works in mysterious ways to further His kingdom. We need only to look at the life of the Apostle Paul or listen to the testimony of a believer to know God is capable of transforming lives in miraculous ways. For several summers, our former pastor would ask various ones in the congregation to share their testimonies during the service. I was amazed at the unique ways the Spirit of God worked to draw people to Jesus: through bumper stickers on cars that one man could not seem to avoid as he drove on the freeway; through a deep sense of God's presence even coming out of a drunken blackout; through the deep grief of infertility that led a woman to the place of knowing we are all "adopted" into His kingdom.

Perhaps in allowing the weeds to remain and grow along with the wheat, God is allowing us to be part of His transforming work by sharing our faith. As II Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." We all bump into people outside of God's kingdom daily and have opportunities to share our faith in words and actions "so that in every way [we] will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive" (Titus 2:10).

Listening to the recaps of the life of Billy Graham, I was struck by several things. One was his focus on the simple message of the deep love of God for each one of us, all sinners saved by grace through His Son who died on the cross to forgive our sins, so we can have a living relationship with Him. Second, Billy was reliant on the Word, often saying, "The Bible says ...". And finally, Billy left the judgment of a person's soul to God alone. May we all so radiate the love of Christ and "shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

Gilbertson is a member of Elim Lutheran Church, Lake Stevens, Wash.

Matthew gives us some useful background to Jesus' parables and "the secrets of the kingdom," which can encourage believers to evangelize and disciple. Matthew is the first book of divine inspiration to God's people after a 400-year silence following the writing of *Malachi*. Matthew portrays Jesus as the King, "the Son of David," from the first verse of the Gospel and throughout his book. Jesus' kingly role is well portrayed when, after His baptism, He is led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness. During His 40 days there, Jesus upends the power of the "Prince of this world" and proceeds to reveal that He is the One in charge (chapter 4). Jesus then publicly proclaims "the gospel of the kingdom," calls His disciples, heals the sick, casts out demons, and delivers the edict of His Kingdom, the Sermon on the Mount (chapters 5-7). This foundation of evangelism and discipleship allows the "secrets of the kingdom" to expand both in individuals and in the world.

Consider the parables of the mustard seed and the leaven from 13:31-35. Jesus gave these parables to help explain the concept of His kingdom and, particularly, how it would grow and expand. Everyone knew about seeds and leaven, but connecting these ideas to the kingdom of heaven was not common knowledge. Thus, Jesus tried to help His hearers see that the secrets of the kingdom are a tangible reality and that they are now alive and active.

Parables were a common teaching method in Jesus' time and culture. A parable can increase the attention of the hearers by providing an image to ponder along with the conceptual construct, in hopes that the teaching point will be retained and understood. Beliefs can be changed through images more often than pure logic or reasoning. Both the gospel message and the kingdom of heaven were mysteries to those in Jesus' time, even as they are to some today. Through these parables, Jesus was helping His disciples understand these mysteries. Let's take a closer look at the parables.

The first, the mustard seed, shows that when the smallest seed of the garden is planted, it grows into the largest plant, becoming strong enough for birds to find safety and rest (some mustard plants were 10 feet tall). Borrowing from Jesus' explanation of the first parable we see what is important here: the tiny seed is planted in good soil so it will grow into a plant of great size. That seed is the message of the kingdom, the gospel. Once the seed is in good soil—a new heart—it will grow into the largest interest of the whole heart, outgrowing all the other ideas that have been sown into it.

Truly, Jesus is revealing that the Word, the message of the kingdom, is living and active, doing its work in all the component parts of the heart. It brings light where

darkness and foginess existed, and it brings truth where half-truths or lies resided. Oh, what a miracle it is when grace does its work, bringing faith to life and action and giving understanding that Jesus is more than a good moral teacher. The Word reveals Jesus as the Son of the Living God, the Savior of the world—of my soul. The Word delivers and leads me out of the domain of darkness and into the kingdom of the Father's beloved Son. This transaction and transformation is the foundation from which the kingdom can grow and mature. Jesus desires that many will hear the good news and enter this divine human relationship as it was initially designed for us to have and experience. Thank you, Jesus.

The next picture Jesus gives us of the kingdom is leaven or yeast. Having grown up on a Minnesota farm, I had a hands-on experience of how yeast works in a lump of dough. I had to knead the yeast throughout the dough so it would rise evenly, then put it on the old cook stove, which was still warm from breakfast. I would often lift the damp towel that Mom draped over it to see how much the dough had raised. It was just amazing, but more so when I smelled and tasted the fresh bread with lots of melted butter.

As we understand how yeast releases its inherent power to leaven all the dough, so too faith, once birthed in the human heart by the good news, releases its inherent power. It spreads the King's rule and kingdom throughout the whole heart, the whole person, the whole life of the believer. And oh the feast when the believer shares a fresh slice of the living bread with others.

This is how the kingdom of heaven expands, how the simple gospel message of the kingdom spreads. This is how the divine ignites the creative genius of man and propels the expansion of the gospel of the kingdom to vistas unknown. Let's get to work and spread it in each of our spheres of influence and responsibility as individuals and as the living, active Body of Christ making disciples of our families, neighbors, and nations.

Benz, an AFLC pastor serving in chaplaincy ministry, lives in Colorado Springs, Colo.

SEED & LEAVEN

By Pastor Mark Benz



TREASURE & PEARL

By Hannah Williams

Jesus speaks to a crowd gathered about Him with passion in Matthew 13. After illustrating the terrible and wonderful apocalypse, in which the “field” of the Church is harvested and the “weeds” of the world are burned, He withdrew to a home and told the disciples other parables, too: “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything and bought it” (Matthew 13:44-46). In context, Jesus’ deep longing to see us saved is clear, and the parables almost read like pleas. This is the call of Christ: “Leave everything and follow Me!”

Early Christians knew the seriousness of that call: slandered as traitors or cannibals, they paid for their faith with their lives, on and off, for centuries. How painful it must have been for parents to instruct their children to worship when they knew it could mean watching them be torn apart by lions. But knowing they had the truth, they could do nothing less—and this display of ardent faith resulted in more Christians, not fewer Christians. In the words of Tertullian, “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.”

The Reformers also knew what it meant to answer the call: Jan Hus traded an academic career for a grisly death at the stake, refusing to excuse indulgences, papal decadence, and abuse of the Lord’s Supper; Martin Luther found himself excommunicated from a church and pope he had once loved and, at one point, hid in a remote castle in fear of his life. They and others considered themselves at the mercy of the Bible. Their hearts burned to see their countrymen reconciled to God. “Seek the truth,” Hus wrote to the faithful Christian, “listen to the truth, learn the truth, love the truth, tell the truth, defend the truth even unto death.”

In the 20th century, Sophie Scholl and other members of the White Rose group spoke against National Socialism and eugenics in Germany, compelled by their belief that

man was created in the image of God and bought with a price. Scholl’s diary revealed her fear, her spiritual isolation, and her hatred for the excuses of those who simply wanted to survive. “... I shall cling to the rope God has thrown me in Jesus Christ,” she wrote, “even if my numb hands can no longer feel it.” With fire shut up in their bones, Sophie and her brother, Hans, wrote and distributed anti-war leaflets until Nazis executed them in 1943.

Men and women like these “sold all they had” for the treasure revealed in God’s Word, an investment of sorts that could only pay off in the next world. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, another martyr for truth, called this “the cost of discipleship.” Though our salvation is free for us, it was not free. Jesus paid a terrible price for it on the cross. We who understand what Jesus worked for us see salvation as a buried treasure or a priceless pearl. We would rather have Jesus than anything else.

Similarly, we who understand what Jesus worked for us don’t want anyone to miss out on it. Like the man who found a treasure in a field, we sell out “in our joy” at the expense of looking fanatical and bringing God into everything. We are heartbroken that so many who could have this treasure are instead consumed with perishable, cheap counterfeits. We who understand what Jesus worked for us do not speak from anger, arrogance, or empty compulsion. Though our words may sometimes echo those who do, our love is what reveals us as Jesus’ disciples. The man who found a treasure buried in a field didn’t complain about the unfairness of selling everything to purchase that field. Jesus said that he sold out “in his joy.” The merchant with a passion for pearls made no desperate attempt to “have it all,” as Americans often do. He knew the value of that one pearl was greater than everything else he possessed put together.

Williams attends St. Paul’s Lutheran, Fargo, N.D., and volunteers at the Perry Center, a Christian ministry for women in crisis.





In this last of seven parables in Matthew 13, Jesus likens the kingdom of heaven to a net. Jesus said, “Again the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathering fish of every kind ...” For many of His listeners this was a subject they could readily understand, for many of them were fishermen or lived near the sea. I can relate to this, too, for I live in Naknek, Alaska, a fishing village on Bristol Bay, the salmon capital of the world—according to some.

Jesus specifically used a word here for net that is different from the small hand net of Matthew 4:18. The word here is for a seine or a dragnet that could be a half mile long and quite deep. What a catch could be made! And Jesus says in the parable that the net was filled with fish of every kind—indeed, a great catch was made.

Here in Bristol Bay fishermen use such nets behind boats and from shore, stretching anywhere from 150 feet to 900 feet. I have seen such nets full of the five varieties of salmon native to our waters, and other types of fish, as well. It’s quite a sight and very exciting as people make their yearly livelihood and provide delicious, healthy food for many.

Jesus said that following the catch there is a time on shore of going through and separating the good from the bad fish. I have experienced this, as well. Flounder and a bottomfish called Irish lord are thrown back in the water and the salmon are kept and prized.

What is the message of this parable for us? Most agree that the net in this parable is the gospel, the good news of Jesus coming to a lost world and lost people. He came to



THE NET

By Pastor Jeff Swanson

we welcome these workers with free coffee, hot chocolate, a cup of cold water, fresh cookies, Bibles, tracts, and a friendly visit. Hopefully, we also had an opportunity to share the gospel with them. This coffeehouse outreach is appropriately called “The NET.” We have welcomed folks from Eastern Europe, Africa, Asia, South America, and most of the 50 United States, sharing Bibles and tracts in many languages. It is a joy to be a part of the gospel net being cast out and souls being gathered in.

Jesus went on to speak of the end of the age in His parable, when angels come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous. I am thankful that this separating work is God’s alone and not ours. I am also thankful that the gospel declares that we may be righteous through faith in Christ. Philippians 3:8-9 addresses this thought, “... that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the law but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith.”

How blessed are those who are seen by the separating angels as part of the righteous. In the last verse of Jesus’ summary of the meaning of the parable, we see what happens to those who are not righteous. He says of the wicked, “the angels will cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 13:50).

God is good. He has chosen gladly to give us the eternal, unshakable kingdom (Luke 12:32, Hebrews 12:28). He has given us the gospel net, the good news for the world. He has called us to be fishers of men (Matthew 4:19), and He takes care of the harvest.

Praise be to God. Trust Him. Rejoice in Him. Serve Him. Rest in Him.

Swanson, an AFLC pastor, serves with the Lutheran Mission Society in Naknek, Alaska.

live for us, die in our place on the cross, bearing our sins in His body. He was raised from the dead, bringing to us the hope of resurrection and everlasting life. And He promises to come again and take believers home to heaven forever. The gospel offers forgiveness of sins, peace with God, and everlasting salvation.

How thrilling to think of the net being cast out into all the world and brought in filled with all kinds of fish—people. Revelation 5:9 says there will be people from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. I have seen this fulfilled in a small way in recent summers here in Naknek. Our little community of 500 people swells to 10,000 each summer as people come from all over the world to fish commercially and to work in the processing canneries. A few years back we opened a Christian coffee house where

CASTING A VISION

By Andrew Kneeland

An editorial in the *Washington Post* last year made the bold claim that “mainline Protestantism” had just 23 Easters left before it disappeared.

Citing the growing number of people shedding religious affiliations, the rise in popularity of “non-Western religions,” and those who have abandoned religion altogether, Ed Stetzer, the executive director of the Billy Graham Center, warned that if mainline Protestantism didn’t stem its decline it would face an “expiration date” of 2039.

Pastor Jim Rasmussen doesn’t want to see that happen. The Commission on Evangelism director is casting a vision for disciple-making in AFLC congregations and is aiming to equip the local congregation with tools to reach the lost and make disciples.

“As I look at the Christian church,” Rasmussen said, “we’re in a very critical situation if we don’t become active in multiplying. We’re going to be—as a Christian church—less significant than we are now. And we’re not very significant now.”

Rasmussen spends his time traveling to congregations within the AFLC and sharing about discipleship and disciple-making. He is also assisting in teaching “Evangelism and Discipleship” classes in both the Bible school and seminary. Rasmussen’s goal is to instill a vision for disciple-making in students, and in AFLC congregations.

Christians aren’t called to merely make converts, Rasmussen said. Jesus’ Great Commission calls His followers to create disciples. In the original language, the sense of the verse could be translated, “As you go, make disciples.” Jesus’ model of ministry wasn’t necessarily for His disciples to roll into a town, preach the gospel, and leave the next day. The Early Church modeled a ministry of church planting, relationship building, and disciple-making.

“Our one-year goal is to have 10 percent of congregations involved in disciple-making training,” Rasmussen said. “Right now, we’re at four or five percent. That’s really going to be our focus going forward.”

Disciple-making doesn’t need to be a complicated formula or system. In fact, Rasmussen said that most AFLC congregations aren’t even aware of how

close they are to having an effective minister of training disciple-makers. Rasmussen’s vision for this ministry is a one-to-one relationship of a more-mature believer with a less-mature believer with the purpose of developing spiritual growth and spiritual multiplication. Disciple-making differs from mentorship in that it focuses on empowering the person you’re working with to start working with someone else growing in their faith.

“That’s really my heart,” Rasmussen said, explaining, “that we could help congregations understand the idea of what disciple-making looks like. Most congregations are just a little step away from being disciple-making congregations.”

Rasmussen is fond of a mathematical illustration to demonstrate the potential power of disciple-making. If a hypothetical “super evangelist” were able to reach 1,000 people for Christ every day, it would take more than 20,000 years to reach every unbeliever. Instead, if one person met regularly with one other person over





the course of a year, and then both of those people spent another year with a third and fourth person, a process of multiplication begins. What would take one person 20,000 years to accomplish would take a ministry of disciple-making just 33 years.

It can be difficult to cast and maintain a vision of disciple-making, though, because it's often difficult to see it happening. Waylon Moore, in *New Testament Follow-Up*, writes that it takes three to five years for disciple-making to become obvious in the local congregation. But Rasmussen encourages the congregations he visits because often they are not far from an effective disciple-making ministry.

"We do teaching and preaching very well in most of our congregations," Rasmussen said, "But if you don't show people how to [implement these ideas], you're not doing the training. That's really the only step we need. But most people don't understand how close they are, how easy of a step it would be. Disciple-making is just a part of life."

By way of encouraging and equipping the local congregation, Rasmussen has also put together several resources on the AFLC Evangelism website. Containing tools such as visual aids, tracts, videos, and other resources, the website also shares details about 15 workshops that Rasmussen could hold in your congregation.

The Commission on Evangelism is casting a vision for disciple-making in the local congregation. They are aiming to have 10 percent of AFLC congregations involved in disciple-making training. Are you interested in this gospel-advancing ministry? Visit www.aflc.org/evangelism for more information.

Kneeland, a second-year seminary student at AFLTS, is a member of Solid Rock Free Lutheran, Anoka, Minn.



VISION

BY DR. TIM SKRAMSTAD

For the past two months, we have touched on the Lord's vision of the great multitude standing before His throne. Now, we are challenged with how this vision can be accomplished. Thankfully, the Lord has provided a strategy for accomplishing His will.

Our salvation has been given to us entirely by grace. The most essential part of God's strategy is seen in the death and resurrection of our Lord. We cannot save anyone, but we are called to pray, proclaim the gospel, be witnesses, and make disciples.

The challenge before every believer remains, "What would the Lord have me do?" Will your local congregation and the AFLC be willing to be used of God to bring lost souls into the kingdom of heaven? Part of that willingness is to build free and living congregations. Our spiritual forefathers believed that the local congregation is vital to the salvation of souls. By stating that "the congregation is the right form of the kingdom of God on earth," their purpose was to remind everyone that it is in the local congregation where the Word is proclaimed, the sacraments administered, and souls are brought to Christ.

The Lord has blessed us with another element of His strategy to reach the lost. We have an Association because we see the need for teamwork to build up the body of Christ. The seventh Fundamental Principle encourages us to "gladly" work together in our mutual endeavors. Praying and working together builds up the body

of Christ and lost souls hear the precious gospel. The principle of teamwork helps us to understand how the Lord's strategy of congregations working together will accomplish much more than any one individual or congregation can alone.

A local congregation desires that the next generation will be grounded in the Word and trained to share their faith. With that hope it sends students to our Bible school. It prays for young men to have a burden for the lost and to be called to work as pastors, chaplains, and missionaries. We would not have future church workers or pastors without the work of our schools. The vision of heaven is fulfilled one person at a time as individuals are discipled in the Word of God and go into the world with the life-transforming power of the gospel.

Are the words of Jesus to be believed that "you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth"? We must have a restlessness in our souls and prayer life over the lost people in America as well as in every country in the world. Right away, some might argue with God and say that the need is too great, our resources are too limited, and we are too small. While the Lord is not expecting us to establish a congregation in every city in America or a mission field in every country in the world, we are to be praying and placing ourselves and the entire AFLC at His disposal. We are also to be open to unexpected opportunities for establishing work that is not part of our own plans.

I had the experience of being the lead pastor of a very active Army chapel. Several families with small children started to attend and they had a desire for a Sunday school. The Post Chaplain who oversaw religious activities decided that there should be only one Sunday school at the main chapel. While he could see that the main chapel had better facilities, his vision was too limited, and his actions hurt the growth of the body of Christ. We need to ask ourselves if we are holding on to old traditions even if a certain policy or decision may be limiting the advancement of the gospel.

Even as this senior chaplain hindered the work of the gospel, so can anyone in leadership. God's plan or strategy in each of our AFLC ministries is designed to maximize the opportunities for the gospel to be presented. Leaders can be more effective and advance the Kingdom's work if they are willing to ask for prayer, solicit advice, and create an atmosphere of transparency and trust. Whenever a church council or national board meets, its members need to keep in mind the prayer of Paul who asked that the Lord would "fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding" (Colossians 1:9).

May the Lord find each of us seeking and doing His will.

Skramstad, a retired AFLC pastor and former military chaplain, lives in Eagan, Minn.



BY MICAH BERGER

'A

koro," said the woman as we met on the path.

"*Akoro ayong*." I knew what she was trying to tell me. "I'm hungry."

Imagine meeting a stranger on the street and instead of hearing, "Hello," or, "How are you?" the first words that you're greeted with are, "I'm hungry."

It would be strange to hear in America and yet, in Karamoja, a place known to have periods of hunger and drought, it's a common way to begin a conversation and not unusual in the least.

The climate is semi-arid in this part of Uganda, where a farmer can never be sure of a sufficient harvest much less a bountiful one. As a result, the people are mostly pastoral instead of agricultural. And in times when food has been scarce, international aid organizations have had to step in, bringing crops from the other, more fertile, parts of the country.

Perhaps this is part of the reason why a Karamojong, when seeing an outsider, might expect to receive food from him

I AM HUNGRY

upon request. Another part of the reason might simply be that as a people who have known real hunger, they are well aware of their need for food and are not afraid to ask for it.

But the people of Karamoja have a need even deeper than food, though perhaps they don't realize it. It's a need that can be met not by any number of physical resources but by the proclamation of the gospel alone. Unfortunately, we've seen that at times pursuing what the body needs can get in the way of receiving what the soul needs. A friend of mine told me once of an unsuccessful evangelistic effort in a certain village where, apparently, he was driven away as soon as his audience figured out that he had no tangible resources to hand out among them.

The Word of God says: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." As Christians, we don't always see that hunger when we share Christ with the world. It's not easy. But then sometimes we do see it. Not long ago I was helping Michael Rokenbrodt teach a Bible story at the local primary school. It was a story from the Old

Testament, which did not even mention Christ by name. Yet when we came to the time of discussion, a lot of their questions were about Jesus. "Who is our redeemer?" "Why was Jesus born?"

These questions gave us a great opportunity to share the gospel with them. And as we did, we could see their hunger for it. Our class time ended up going an extra hour just for discussion.

I believe that there is a hunger for more than just food in Karamoja. As in all of God's creation, those who receive His Word find it sweet and nourishing. Their souls begin to hunger for more and more of this good news.

And so our prayer for this land is that this spiritual hunger will spread until every soul is driven to the true Bread of Life, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Berger and his wife, Famke, have recently moved to the remote area of Karamoja, Uganda, where there is a great need for the gospel.

CARRY THE TORCH

BY PASTOR MARLIN
HARRIS

Jesus calls us to carry on the important message of salvation. He said, “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:14-16). The message is clear and simple. Jesus wants us to bear the torch.

It is interesting to note what the 2018 Winter Olympics torch relay entailed. It began on Oct. 24, 2017, and ended on Feb. 9, 2018, at the opening ceremonies of the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea. After it was lit in Olympia, Greece, the torch traveled to Athens on Oct. 31. The torch began its journey through South Korea on Nov. 1, visiting all regions of Korea beginning in Incheon. The torch travelled across the country for 101 days with 7,500 relay runners participating over a distance of 2,017 kilometers. The torch bearers each carried the flame for 200 meters with the relay ending at the opening ceremonies in the Pyeongchang’s Olympic Stadium.

Similarly, our Lord wants His gospel—a light, a burning torch—to be carried to all nations to reveal and dispel the darkness of sin. To that end, He appointed 12 apostles, instructing them to make

disciples of all peoples by teaching and baptizing them. He also called Paul as an apostle to the Gentiles. Paul encouraged the followers of Christ to “shine like the stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life. Then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain” (Philippians 2:15-16).

The apostles needed other gospel runners to assist them and eventually succeed them. They enlisted men and women, like the Olympic torch bearers, to evangelize and carry the light of the gospel to many communities. Paul, too, covered a lot of ground himself. However, he couldn’t keep on doing this by himself, so he enlisted many helpers such as Timothy, Titus, Silas, Mark, and Luke to help in evangelizing and spreading the good news about Jesus.

Because many generations have passed on

the torch, we have come to know the saving love of Jesus Christ. It would be tragic if the progress of the gospel stopped with us. We do not want that to happen, so we, too, must pass the torch of God’s truth on to others—to our children, neighbors, coworkers, and with whomever we come into contact. In doing this, we keep the torch moving as it leads others to faith in Jesus Christ and to their ultimate destination of heaven.

Let us pray and ask the Holy Spirit to keep the torch of our faith burning and to make us a shining light to the world.

Harris, who serves True Vine Lutheran, Mora, Minn., is director for the AFLC’s Division of Institutional Chaplaincy.



WMF DAY

Y

ou are invited to attend the 56th annual WMF Day on June 12, which will be held in conjunction with the AFLC Annual Conference in Dickinson, N.D. The WMF is meeting under the theme, "Rejoice in Hope," from Romans 12:12-13.

Registration will begin at 8 a.m. Joyce Erickson, author of the 2018 WMF Bible study, will lead the devotions. Workshop leaders include Cris Finstrom, Michelle Mobley, and Christie Friestad.

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 Debby Strand.

Our Missions Festival speaker is AFLC Missionary Nate Jore, who serves with his family in Uganda.

We will host a breakfast on June 13 featuring AFLC missionaries Matthew and Ednay Abel, who will be serving in Paraguay.

Proposed Amendment

A proposed amendment to the National Constitution will be presented at the business meeting; it must be approved by two-thirds of those in attendance at WMF Day, then it will become a

recommended amendment. If passed, the final approval would require a two-thirds vote of those in attendance in 2019.

Article V Officers, Section 5

Officers shall be elected for a term of three years. All officers may be eligible for re-election but no officer shall hold the same office for more than two successive terms. The President and Communications Secretary shall be elected one year; the First Vice-President and the Recording Secretary the following year; the Second Vice-President and the Treasurer the third year. Newly elected officers shall officially assume their duties at the first regular WMF National Board meeting following their election.

The proposed change is for practical reasons to clarify the officer terms. The suggested change is: Newly elected officers shall officially assume their duties at the All boards September meeting following their election.

*Lynn Wellumson, Williston, N.D., is the president of the WMF.
Dawn Johnson, Wilson, Wis., is the executive secretary of the WMF.*

2018 WMF Convention • June 12 • Dickinson, N.D.

Please use this form to register for the WMF Convention and luncheon on Tuesday, June 12, and for the WMF breakfast on June 13.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home congregation: _____

Item	Cost	#	Total
*Registration	\$20		\$
Luncheon: Meat & cheese sandwich, pickle, coffee, water	\$15		\$
Breakfast: Donuts, muffins, fruit, juice, coffee	\$10		\$
(Special diets can be ordered off the menu of the house grill)		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.

2018 SEMINARY GRADUATES

MATTHEW QUANBECK

Moorhead, Minn.

Pondering my life to write this short biography, I can say with the Psalmist, “The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places” (Psalm 16:6). I am blessed with a wonderful Christian family and trace my faith back to my baptism. I was born to



Pastor Lloyd and Jean Quanbeck on Nov. 21, 1989. I am the oldest of their seven children (six boys and one girl). I grew up primarily in Minot, N.D., graduating from Our Redeemer’s Christian School, while Dad

served Bethel Free Lutheran.

After high school, I attended the Association Free Lutheran Bible School. God used this time to strengthen my assurance of salvation as I grew in my understanding of “this grace in which we stand” through the finished work of Christ (Romans 5:2). Following graduation from Bible school, I attended Minnesota State University Moorhead where I met my fabulous wife, Cortney, a nursing student. We married in the summer of 2010. During our college years, we attended Maranatha Free Lutheran, Glyndon, Minn., where my dad currently serves as pastor.

After I graduated with a public relations degree, Cortney and I moved into the AFLBS men’s dorm where I served as resident head during my time at seminary. While there, the men’s dorm gained two additional female residents, Aleithia (turning 3 in May) and Selah (1).

Through seminary, I have grown greatly in biblical understanding and practical ministry knowledge. I have grown in confidence in my Lutheran convictions and my ability to explain them. I have appreciated the seminary’s emphasis upon pastoral training rather than mere academic study. I am now concluding my internship at Ruthfred Lutheran Church in Bethel Park, Pa., under Pastor Steve Carlson. And I have accepted a call to serve United Lutheran, Laurel, Neb. This last year has been a productive time of hands-on ministry experience and personal growth.

NICHOLAS SCHULTZ

Madison, S.D.

Hello! My name is Nicholas Schultz. I was born to Paul Schultz and Cynthia Christensen on July 26, 1985, in Madison, S.D., where I spent my entire childhood. I was baptized at St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church, but grew up



going to the Madison United Methodist Church which was located just a couple blocks away from our home. I honestly cannot remember a time when I did not know who Jesus was and what He did for

me on the cross. I am so thankful to God for His faithfulness through his Word and baptism.

Following my high school graduation, I pursued a degree in history and philosophy at Southwest Minnesota State University in Marshall, Minn. While in Marshall, I married my high school sweetheart, Miriam (Warner). After completing my bachelor’s degree, we moved to Sioux Falls, S.D., where we became members of Living Word Free Lutheran Church. Miriam and I were very active in youth ministry and music ministry at Living Word, and it was while serving there that we discerned a call for me to go to seminary.

One of the most important things I learned in seminary is how God prepares and equips people for whatever He calls them to. I do not necessarily mean seminary as a place of preparation, but that God works through His Word to equip the saints for every calling in their lives.

I’ve had the pleasure to serve alongside Pastor Jim Johnson at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Camarillo, Calif., during my internship year. I do not think we complained about the weather once! I am humbled to have accepted a call to serve as the pastor of Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Kirkland, Wash. Please pray for my family as we transition to the Pacific Northwest this summer.

KENDAL FLATEN

Newfolden, Minn.

I was born Sept. 3, 1983, and raised on a dairy farm in Northwestern Minnesota, just a mile outside the town of Newfolden. I was baptized and taught the Christian faith at Westaker Free Lutheran Church. I remember fondly the vacation



Bible schools each summer. Specifically, the year they had root beer as a prize for the week’s memory work. We didn’t get to drink pop very often (and I probably had nice white teeth).

After graduating from high school I went to AFLBS for two years. I still didn’t know what I wanted to do after that, so I attended college at North Hennepin in the Twin Cities and then ended up in Thief River Falls at Northland Community and Technical College where I learned about broadcasting. Following that I worked in radio broadcasting at KRJM radio station in Mahanomen, Minn., for about six years.

I attended church at Maranatha Free Lutheran in Ulen, Minn., where I got the chance to be involved in youth ministry, be a part of a young adults Bible study group, and preach on occasion. I began to see a need to move on from broadcasting and God began to use different people to encourage me to consider the ministry and possibly going to seminary.

After many excuses were overcome, I began seminary classes in the fall of 2014. It is fun to look at how three years of seminary creates bonds between seminarians. Last summer I began my internship year at Our Savior’s Free Lutheran in Stanley, N.D. My parents, Emory and Jennifer Flaten, helped me move out to Stanley. Dad was very pleased at how well his pickup made the trip with a trailer in tow.

I have learned a lot on internship and now am looking to see what God has in store moving forward.

MATTHEW NELSON

Maple Grove, Minn.

I was born August 21, 1982, to Jerry and Terri Nelson in Minneapolis, Minn., and spent my first years living in the Twin Cities suburb of Maple Grove. I was baptized into Christ as an infant at Vision of Glory Lutheran Church in Plymouth, Minn. My parents nurtured the faith I was given in baptism by pointing me to Jesus, teaching me to pray, and by keeping me in the Word and active at church. The LORD has been faithful to me and I am so grateful that He has continued to lead me to repentance and assurance of my salvation.



During my teen years I also attended Maranatha Lutheran in Spring Lake Park, Minn., and Emmaus Lutheran in Bloomington, Minn. It was at an Emmaus Bible camp retreat that I first recognized the Holy Spirit calling me into a life of ministry. After graduating from high school, I went to AFLBS, and later received my bachelor's degree in religion from Faith Evangelical College in Tacoma, Wash. In February 2009 I married Lori Onnen from Cokato, Minn., and we have three wonderful daughters, Sophia (8), Corinne (6), and Naomi (2). I had the privilege of serving in three different congregations over 11 years before entering seminary: Hope Lutheran in South Minneapolis (ELCA), Good Shepherd in Cokato (AFLC), and Sidney Lutheran Brethren in Sidney, Mont. (CLBA).

Seminary was a challenging and exhilarating time for me. I loved studying Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic, spending many hours digging into Scripture, being lovingly mentored by my professors, and singing in the seminary chorus. My internship has been at St. Ansgar's Lutheran in Salinas, Calif. I have been lovingly received here and have learned much from my wise supervising Pastor Scott Stroud. I have accepted a call to serve Salem Lutheran, Radcliffe, Iowa, and St. Paul's Lutheran, Jewell, Iowa.



The 2018 Annual Conference

Let me welcome you to the "Wild West!" Well, it isn't so wild anymore, except that wherever we go, people need Jesus: Dickinson, N.D., included. When we meet together June 12-15 at the Ramada Grand Dakota Lodge in Dickinson, we will come together to encourage one another in the work of the Lord. Will you come join us for even a couple of days? If you do, you will hear firsthand what God is doing in and through all areas of your AFLC. We are attempting to keep reports concise and have major budget discussions completed prior to the conference so that more time may be devoted to fellowship, prayer, worship, and even electives that will help you in your congregations. Please come and help us as a conference as we work to meet the needs of your local congregations.



Pastor Lyndon Korhonen

Though these are not easy days to do God's work, He is still taking wild lives and taming them for His greater eternal purposes. Our theme this year is from I John 5:13, "That You May Know." What a great message we have to proclaim to our communities and the world. We can know the living God through His Son Jesus Christ. His finished work on Calvary is the basis of our "knowing" where we stand with Him.

Korhonen, Plymouth, Minn., is the president of the AFLC.



2018 Annual Conference

June 12-15

Ramada Grand Dakota Lodge, Dickinson, N.D

Host: Our Saviour's Lutheran, Dickinson

Theme: "That You May Know" (I John 5:13)

Online registration, housing information, and conference schedule can be found at:

aflc.org/conferences

Bethany Bible Camp 2018 summer schedule

Bethany Bible Camp announced its 2018 summer schedule.

- **Junior Camp:** June 19-23, Pastor Jesse Kneeland speaking on, "Thirsty," Psalm 42:1-2
- **Senior Camp:** June 23-28, Pastor Lyndon Korhonen speaking on, "Confidence in the Lord," Proverbs 14:26
- **WMF Summer Rally Day:** July 12
- **Men's Retreat:** August 17-19

For additional camp happenings, information, and registration forms, visit bethanybiblecamp.com. To rent the camp for your family reunion or Bible camp call: 218-751-6094 or 218-556-6600

Bethany Bible Camp is located at 51497 Tanager Drive, Bemidji, MN 56601. Caretakers are Greg and Teresa Renn (218.751.6094), and the marketing and outreach coordinator is Angie Berg (218.556.6600). Facebook and Instagram accounts can be found at @Bethany Bible Camp.

PEOPLE & PLACES

Members of the **World Mission Committee** have announced plans to call a new director of World Missions by the end of 2018. Pastor Del Palmer, current director, has announced his plan to retire. In a letter to members of the Missions Corporation, the World Missions Committee outlined a process for replacing Palmer, which includes:

- Identifying the qualifications necessary in the new director
 - Praying for and calling a director by the end of 2018
 - Mentoring the new director in 2019
- Palmer will transition out of the director's position as these steps are being completed.

Pastor Tonnes Pollestad, the AFLC's director of Development, announced that the mortgage on the house for the AFLC president has been retired. In addition, \$230,000 remains on the mortgage for the Charles Property.

Members of the AFLC Coordinating Committee restored **Trinity Lutheran Church**, Smithville, Texas, to the regular congregational roster, at the congregation's request, after a period of inactivity.

Pastor Jeremy Vance, Coon Rapids, Minn., has resigned from Sunnyside Free Lutheran Church, Stacy, Minn.

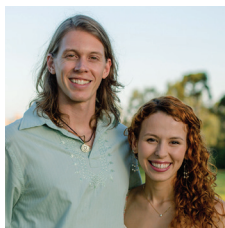
Pastor Gordon Strunk, who serves St. John's Lutheran, Ambridge, Pa., has announced his retirement.

Abels, Lees receive new WM assignments

Calls received to minister in Brazil, plant congregations in Paraguay

After much prayer and discussion, members of the World Missions Committee have recently made decisions about the deployment of two of its missionary families.

Matthew and Ednay Abel will be sent to Paraguay to plant congregations.



The Abels have served in various capacities during their first term in Brazil. With servant spirits and whole-hearted enthusiasm, they

have gone wherever they have been sent. The Committee desired to come up with a long-term goal for the Abel's ministry while they are home on furlough this year. After prayer and consultation with the Brazilian Field Conference, the Committee decided to step out and fulfill a long-time dream of the AFLC. A resolution was passed at the 1977 Annual Conference to have a tri-nation vision for South America: to have Free Lutheran congregations in Brazil, Paraguay, and Argentina. With this in mind, members of the Committee resolved to expand its work with the AFLC of Brazil by sending Matthew and Ednay Abel to plant congregations in Paraguay.

John and Hannah Lee will be sent to the AFLC Brazil. The Committee had a goal of sending the Lees to India to help with our pastoral training there. After realizing it was not possible to send a missionary to India at this



time, the Committee researched a second country near India with well-established and reliable contacts. AFLC World Missions made two trips to this Asian country accompanied by John and once by Hannah. After much discussion, thought, and prayer, the Committee concluded it was not God's will for the Lees to be deployed to this country at this time.

Since the Lees, who have a call from AFLC World Missions, still feel called to missions, the Committee began investigating other options. Through prayer, consultation with the Lees, and an invitation by the Brazilian Field Conference to serve in Brazil, the Committee has decided to deploy the Lees to Brazil.

Please be in prayer for these two couples as they serve the Lord in their assigned places.

MARCH MEMORIALS

AFLBS

Sherry Stover
David Elmquist (3)
Pat Spading
Jim Boe
Ruth Claus
Kevin Lovdal

AFLTS

Gerald Tysver
Elsie Lautner

General Fund

Pastor Les & Jan
Galland (5)
Jim Boe
Larry Behne

Home Missions

Steven Hogrefe

Parish Ed

Myron
Smedshammer
Palmer & Amy
Haugen

World Missions

Arlo Kneeland

... in honor of

AFLTS

Anna Marie Hueser

Parish Ed

Jeanette
Smedshammer

AFLC BENEVOLENCES March 1-31, 2018

FUND	REC'D IN MARCH	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$x	\$x	\$131,154
Evangelism	x	x	30,900
Youth Ministries	x	x	20,611
Parish Education	x	x	46,712
Seminary	x	x	67,626
Bible School	x	x	117,162
Home Missions	x	x	123,536
World Missions	x	x	113,490
Personal Support	x	x	159,837
TOTALS	\$x	\$x	\$811,028
For additional financial information for each department, go to www.aflc.org/giving			

TOWARD A THEOLOGY FOR EVANGELISM

A couple of decades ago our fellowship was troubled by a theological controversy. In many ways it was an echo of debates that had divided American Lutherans more than 100 years ago, with roots that reached back to the time of the Reformation. What does it mean that God has chosen us before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4)? Are we chosen



Pastor Robert Lee

because God foreknew that we would believe? Aren't we called to choose to serve Him (Joshua 24:15)? What is our part in salvation? Do we have a part, or are we totally passive? Is it correct to use evangelistic action words like "accept" or "receive?"

Several years ago, I was privileged to have Dr. Robert Kolb as my teacher for an evangelism class, and it was he who deliberately used the phrase "a theology for evangelism" rather than "a theology of evangelism." Is our theology compatible with an evangelistic emphasis? Do our convictions on salvation "work" for evangelism? This editorial certainly will not provide perfect and simple answers, but hopefully it will give us all some questions to ponder.

First of all, do we believe that evangelism should be the heartbeat of the body of Christ? Surely it was the heartbeat of Christ Himself, who came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). If we believe that every man, woman, and child on the face of the earth has an undying soul that will be either won or lost for all eternity, then nothing is more important in all of our church work than the salvation of lost souls.

Do we believe what the Bible says about human sinfulness? The Word of God is absolutely clear concerning our fallen human condition: "There is none righteous, not even one, there is none who

understands, there is none who seeks for God" (Romans 3:10-11). Please note that God's Word says "none," not "some." The words of the first confession of sin in our hymnal speak of our need: "... we poor sinners confess to You that we are by nature sinful and unclean, and that we have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed."

Do we believe that none are able to save themselves, that all must come with empty hands? Probably most of our readers memorized the meaning to the Third Article of the Creed during our confirmation instruction: "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him." The Word of God is equally clear: "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). Do we believe this?

Is Jesus Christ the heart and center of our theology? "We preach Christ crucified" (I Corinthians 1:23). "For I determined to know nothing among you," Paul wrote of his evangelistic ministry in the city of Corinth, "except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (2:2). When the apostle summarized his gospel message toward the end of his letter, it was still all about Jesus (15:1ff). Is the heart of our message Christ-centered and cross-centered? One of our local Christian radio stations once used the line from an old hymn as a theme: "Give the winds a mighty voice, Jesus saves!" (*We Have Heard the Joyful Sound*, by Priscilla Owens).

Does our theology demand that we give all the glory to God, while still allowing us to proclaim the evangelistic imperatives of Holy Scripture? So, we invite all who hear to come to Jesus (Matthew 11:28), to receive

Him as Savior and Lord (John 1:12). It is no coincidence that the Bible closes with a simple invitation to be preached by His Bride the Church: "And the Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come.' And let the one who hears say, 'Come.' And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost" (Revelation 1:17).

Our answers to the questions above do not settle everything in our poor attempts to reconcile God's work and our response. O. Hallesby wrote in one of his devotionals that the Scriptures speak of the mystery of faith, and indeed faith is a mysterious thing (*God's Word for Today*, March 12). But can we not take great comfort in the truth that He has chosen us and still praise Him for the gift of faith that permits us to testify

... nothing is more important in all of our church work than the salvation of lost souls.

that we have chosen Him? D.W. Whittle's old gospel hymn, *I Know Whom I Have Believed*, says it well:

I know not how the Spirit moves,
convincing men of sin,
Revealing Jesus through the Word,
creating faith in Him.
But "I know in whom I have
believed ..."

This is a theology for evangelism. May we believe it and live it.

building the base

FAMILY, HONOR ONE ANOTHER

BY PASTOR RICHARD GUNDERSON

I chose this subject out of what I feel is a serious problem both in our society and, sad to say, in the Church, the family of God. Without any doubt, the problem begins with the way we treat one another in the home.

The Fourth Commandment says; “Honor your father and your mother that the days may be long on the land that the Lord your God has given you.” The *Small Catechism* gives us two responsibilities in explanation of this commandment. First, to fear and love God and, second, to not despise our parents and superiors.

I will be very honest with you when I admit that high on the list of regrets in my life—what haunts me to this day—is the way I disrespected my father and mother. What really hurt was that they both were taken from this life in the twinkling of an eye. My only consolation is found in God’s gracious forgiveness. I admonish you from experience to keep your accounts with one another short, whether in the family or without.

Membership in the family means honoring one another, especially father and mother as they are the source of anyone’s membership in a family. They are to be honored for that reason, but more, because God has placed them over us to care for us. We read in Leviticus 19:3, “Everyone one of you shall reverence his mother and his father.” Or again, Ephesians 6:1, “... children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this right.” We see the seriousness of the need to honor parents in the warning found in Deuteronomy 27:1, “Cursed is he who dishonors his father or mother.”

The family of God also suffers from a lack of respect for one another. Salvation and membership in the family of God is not an escape route to willful living. The redemptive process that Paul presents in Romans 12:10 is, “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor.” Pastors are dishonored with criticism rather than loyalty and prayers for them. Pastors have disrespected members of a church in the management of the life and business of the

congregation. Members treat one another disrespectfully over matters that many times are so petty it is embarrassing. We all need to check our accounts.

Scripture tells us to honor, respect, value, and prefer others. Richard Lenski blessed me with his comments on Romans 12:10, “The brother love of Christians should be like that of the members of one family, we are all *Geschwister* (brother and sister). In brother love all are alike, (and) stand on the same level.”

When we realize the great value God has placed upon us in the redemptive work of Christ it should change our attitude toward others whom God loves. We would do well to see that we are just one part of a fallen but bought-back gang of sinners. When we see others as valued by God, then it should change our attitudes and approaches in living together in harmony.

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