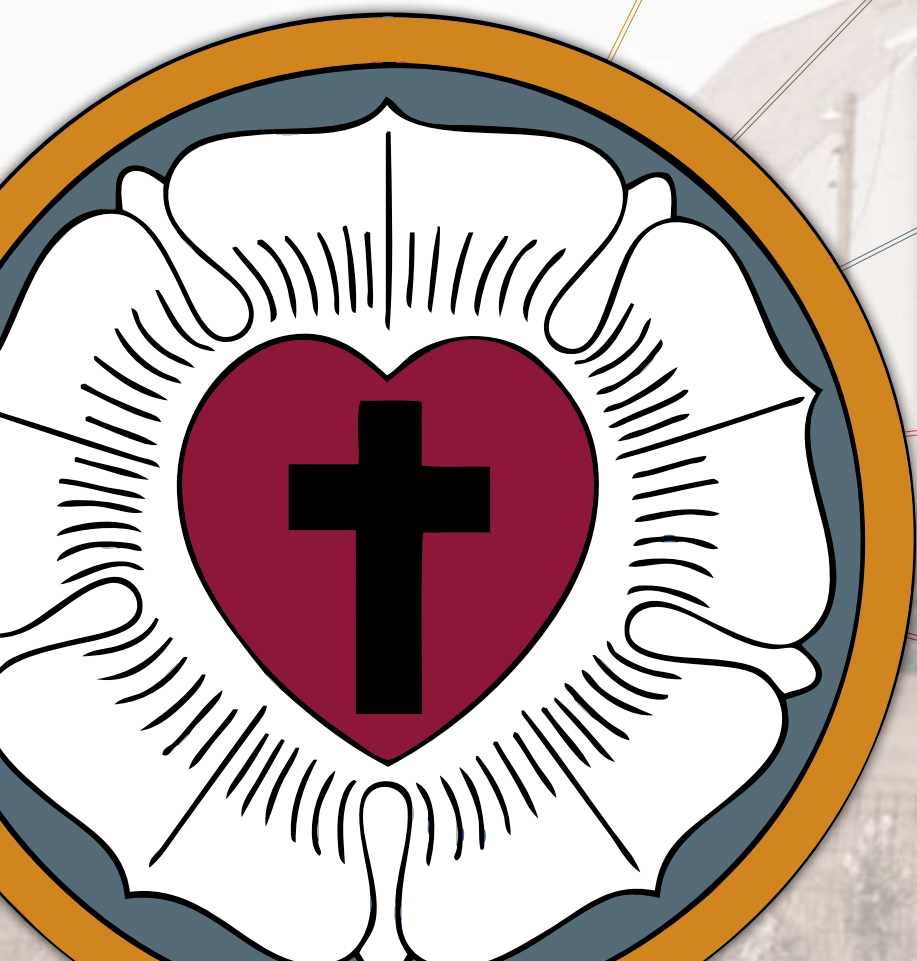


THE LUTHERAN 

OCTOBER 2012

# AMBASSADOR

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# The Body of Christ

BY RACHELLE KLEMMER

What is the difference between a moose? Do you walk to school or carry your lunch? These old non sequitur jokes have a point, I promise.

What exactly does it mean to be gifted—either in the Church or in society at large? Many Christians have taken some sort of “spiritual gifts inventory” similar to those career tests you take in high school, except that results are along the lines of “discernment” or “evangelism” or “administration” or any other nouns taken from selected Bible passages on the topic.

Is it necessarily a bad thing if you don’t know exactly which of these nouns pegs you? Are these lists exhaustive or is the apostle Paul throwing out just a few of many possible examples?

Having grown up in the feel-good, prosperous, kid-friendly culture of the 80s and 90s, my generation had the motto drilled into them that “everybody is special.” There was even a 1997 Max Lucado book called *You Are Special* about wooden puppets picking on each other, while two of them catch on and realize their society’s labels don’t matter because their Maker has given them inherent worth.

But real life calls, and so does the cynicism and materialism in society. Of course, the job market, the stock market, drought, student loans, underwater mortgages, and health care costs are external, impersonal, material forces that don’t give a hoot about each human’s inherent worth—let alone unique giftedness.

One of Martin Luther’s contributions to theology was empha-



sizing the dignity of all work. But a materialistic worldview has taken over society and language to the extent that phrases like “He is being paid minimum wage” and “He is worth minimum wage” are used interchangeably. In our narcissistic age, there are rewards for believing one’s self better than others.

At any rate, the idea of “specialness” and “giftedness” is easy snark bait, especially if everyone believes they have it. After all, a place like Lake Wobegone, where everybody is above average, is mathematically impossible.

It is a good thing, then, that the Bible uses the organic analogy of specialized parts of the body, rather than a strictly quantitative and hierarchal measure, to discuss spiritual gifts (I Corinthians 12:12-31).

In this passage, there is the self-deprecating foot and alienated ear on one hand (no pun intended), and on the other extreme, the eye blind to the contributions of others and the head whose false sense of independence gets to its head.

It is a non sequitur to claim the nose is either above average, or the pinkie toe can be compared against the pancreas, or the kneecap is more spiritual than the “funny bone.”

While the passage makes reference to “greater gifts,” the emphasis is on all Christians having an indispensable part by definition of being members of the Body.

In the Body of Christ, everybody—whether or not they can define it or measure it—has a special gift to bring.

*Klemmer is from Wadena, Minn., and attends Zion Free Lutheran Church.*

October 2012 >>

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR vol. 50, no. 10

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

For subscription changes and information: The Lutheran Ambassador, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441. 763-545-5631 or e-mail at luthamb@aflc.org.

Subscription rates:  
\$19 a year, Group Rate, U.S.  
\$20 a year, Individual, U.S.  
\$22 a year, International  
Periodicals postage paid at Minneapolis, MN, and additional mailing office.

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

Lutheranism: The best and worst of all religions ...  
the best for those who appropriated it in its true  
dynamic form—the worst when it entailed only  
words and ceremonies.

—Erick Pontoppidan

[ Years have only confirmed and established me in the Word of God and in the  
doctrines of the Lutheran Church. But I was established equally in the living  
faith; and the living faith includes awakening, repentance, conversion and a  
living experience of salvation in Christ Jesus. Without this your faith is dead.

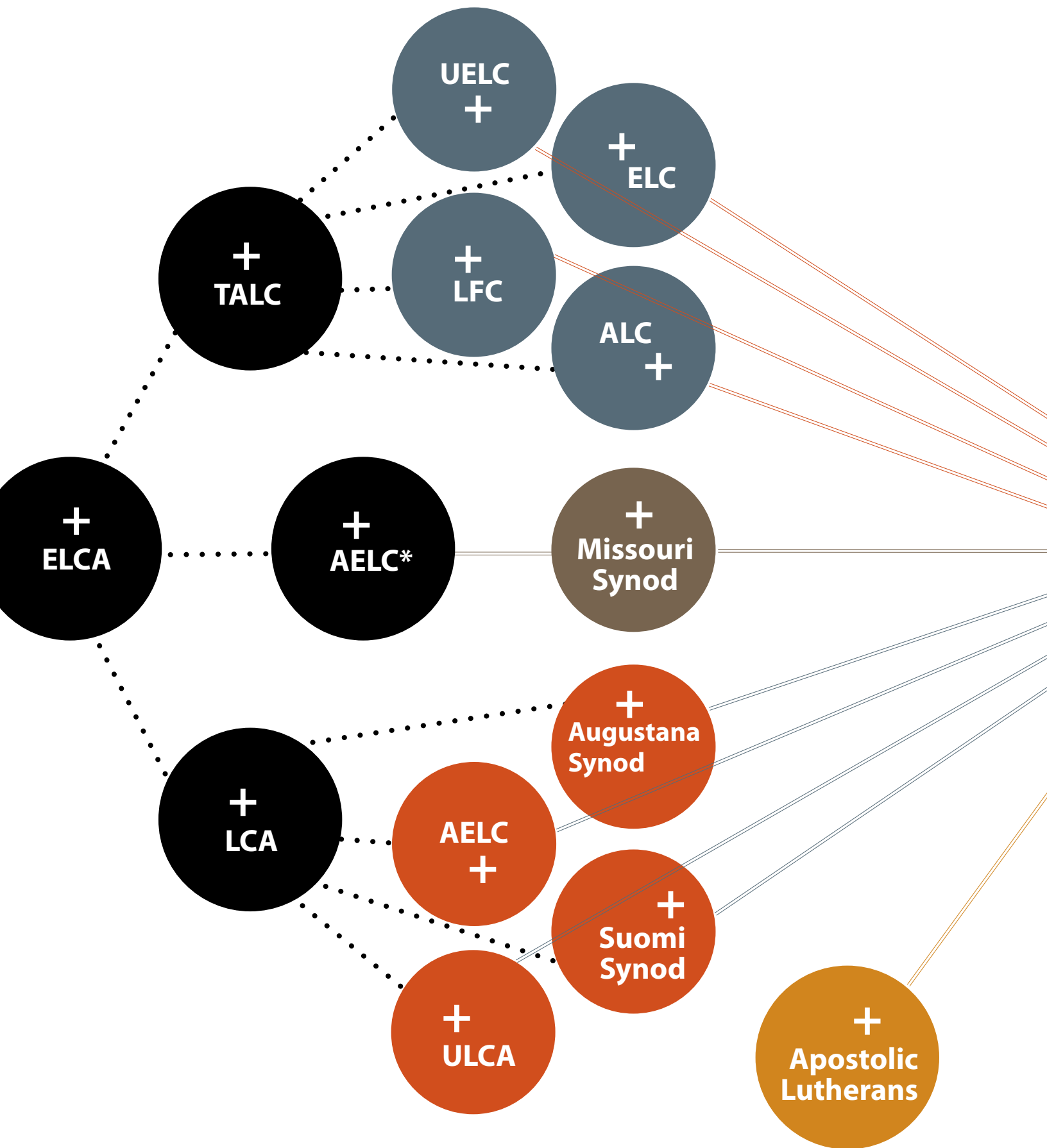
—J.O. Gisselquist ]

Times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord  
never come apart from the searching of God's  
Word. Rather, every time there has been a mighty  
movement of God's Spirit, the Word of God has been  
given pre-eminence.

—Maynard A. Force

The fact remains that to the true Church of Jesus  
Christ in its evangelical mission, and to the saints  
of all ages, the Bible as the authentic Word of God  
has been the unfailing foundation of living and  
life-giving water, the well of salvation for weary and  
sin-burdened pilgrims on their way to the promised  
land.

—John R. Lavik



**ELCA:** Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

**TALC:** The American Lutheran Church

**\*AELC:** Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches

**LCA:** Lutheran Church in America

**UEL:** United Evangelical Lutheran Church

**ELC:** Evangelical Lutheran Church

**LFC:** Lutheran Free Church

**ALC:** American Lutheran Church

**AELC:** American Evangelical Lutheran Church

**ULCA:** United Lutheran Church in America

# GIFTS

— BY PASTOR ROBERT LEE, EDITOR

**D**id all of the founding congregations of the AFLC come from the Lutheran Free Church (LFC)?” Your editor hesitated at first when he was asked this question, but then he recalled that there were a couple of congregations included on the first lists of non-merging congregations in 1962 that had never been a part of the LFC. This number would increase over the years, and, although a few former LFC congregations “would find their way home,” a strong majority of our congregations today come from different Lutheran backgrounds.

Here’s a brief history lesson: the 1960s was a decade of Lutheran mergers. The American Lutheran Church (TALC, 1960), with which the majority of the LFC united on Feb. 1, 1963, was a merger of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC), the American Lutheran Church (ALC), and the United Evangelical Lutheran Church

(UELCH)—three church bodies whose heritages are represented in our midst today. The second major church union was the formation of the Lutheran Church in America (LCA) in 1963, joining the United Lutheran Church in America (ULCA), the Augustana Synod, the Suomi Synod, and the American Evangelical Lutheran Church (AELC)—all of which are also represented in the AFLC. (The ALC and the LCA joined with the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches to create the new Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) in 1988.

The AFLC sees itself as a continuation of the LFC, operating under its Fundamental Principles and Rules for Work and seeking to carry its emphasis on free and living congregations forward in the 21st century. Yet during this golden anniversary year of the founding of the AFLC, it is most appropriate that we remember the richness of the gifts that all of our congregations bring to our new and common heritage from their unique backgrounds. This current issue of *The Lutheran Ambassador* is published with the goal of honoring these gifts, and we are grateful to those who are expanding the appreciation of our readers through their articles.

The two church bodies most represented in the AFLC are the Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC) and the

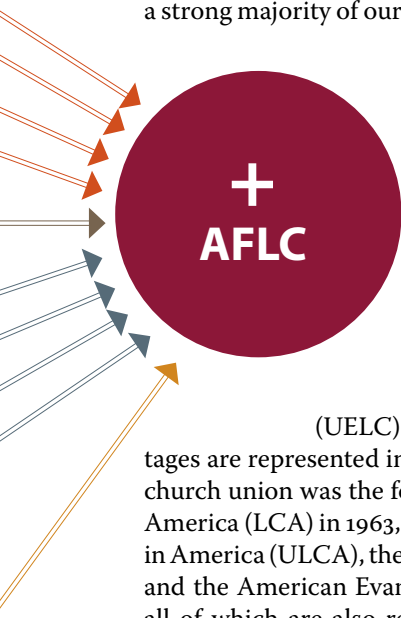
American Lutheran Church (ALC). The ELC, which shares many roots with the LFC, was formed in 1917 as the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America, changing its name in 1946 to signify a growing ethnic diversity. The ALC was organized in 1930 by three German church bodies: the Joint Synod of Ohio, the Iowa Synod (including the Texas Synod), and the Buffalo Synod. AFLC congregations in northern Illinois, for example, have ELC roots, while those in central and southern Illinois come primarily from the ALC. Sharing a similar German heritage, there are some in the AFLC who trace their backgrounds to the Missouri or Wisconsin synods.

One of the first congregations to join the newly organized AFLC was the former Morgan Avenue Lutheran Church in Minneapolis, coming from the Suomi Synod. Others soon followed, most notably St. Paul’s of Cloquet, Minn. Most of our congregations in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan have their background in the Suomi Synod, officially known as the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, which was established by immigrants from Finland in 1890. (Other Finnish immigrants found their home in congregations of the Laestadian or Apostolic Lutheran heritage.)

The Augustana Evangelical Lutheran Church, popularly called the Augustana Synod, dates back to 1860 when it was founded by Swedish immigrants. Many people in the AFLC share an Augustana heritage, and one of our congregations in Duluth, Minn., even bears the Augustana name. Danish Lutherans are also represented in our midst, for example, through St. Ansgar’s in Salinas, Calif., (AELC) and United in Laurel, Neb. (which includes a former UELC congregation).

Our fellowship has added a number of congregations during recent years in the eastern United States. Two Pennsylvania congregations, Ruthfred of Bethel Park, and St. John’s of Ambridge, come from the old ALC, the latter from the Buffalo Synod. Our other eastern congregations trace their roots to the former ULCA, once the largest American Lutheran church body, whose roots trace back to the beginnings of Lutheranism in the United States.

What is the family tree of your congregation? Where does it fit in the “Lutheran alphabet soup” collection of synods listed above? Take some time to trace it, please, learn more of your unique roots, and give thanks to God for the “beautiful heritage” (Psalm 16:6) with which He has blessed you.





# THE LEGACY OF THE UNITED LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

BY PASTOR DAVID BARNHART

**T**he Lutheran congregation where I was baptized and confirmed in Worthington, Pa., was part of the United Lutheran Church in America (ULCA), though at the time, its membership in that body was of little significance to me. Only years later did I come to realize just how much the ULCA had impacted and enriched my life.

The ULCA was formed in 1918 through a merger of the General Synod, the General Council and the United Synod of the South. The latter had left the General Synod at the time of the Civil War. It was a milestone in Lutheran history when fellowship between northern and southern Lutherans was restored.

All three Lutheran bodies had a direct connection with Henry M. Muhlenberg, often called the patriarch of the organized Lutheran Church in this country. He helped found the nation's first Lutheran body or synod called The Pennsylvania Ministerium, which eventually became part of the General Synod.

Churches of both the Pennsylvania Ministerium and the General Synod were established under the "free church" principle, with authority and control of congregations at the local level. Muhlenberg, who was associated with Halle University in Germany, was greatly influenced by pietism. He believed, preached and taught every person's need for repentance and conversion to a living faith.

Muhlenberg's sons, Frederick and Peter, were Lutheran pastors and heroes of the American Revolution. Frederick Augustus Muhlenberg became the first speaker of the US House of Representatives and the first person to sign the Bill of Rights. General John Peter Muhlenberg served under George Washington. After the Revolutionary War he served in the United States Senate.

A new Lutheran hymnal was produced in 1917 prior to the merger by the three church bodies that would make up the ULCA. *The Common Service Book*, based on the liturgy of 1888, was not only useful in uniting the various churches that formed the ULCA, it brought uniformity to their worship services. Many still consider *The Common Service Book* one of the finest Lutheran hymnals ever produced.

The ULCA was conservative at its formation. Its constitution described the Bible as "divinely inspired and infallible." Between 1930 and 1961, the ULCA passed strong statements on the sanctity of marriage and urged its pastors not to perform a wedding ceremony for couples unless the blessing of God could properly be given to the marriage.

The ULCA also produced one of the strongest statements on gambling: "We request pastors and church leaders

to urge upon Christians the need for conscientious avoidance of everything that bears any taint of the gambling spirit; to be scrupulously careful that all money-raising efforts of their respective congregations or auxiliary organizations be scriptural and therefore above reproach in this respect; to seek the repeal of all legislation that legalizes gambling; and to use every Christian means within their power to destroy this foe, so destructive of the moral fiber of our civilization."

One of the fundamental principles of the ULCA was the understanding "that congregations are the primary bodies through which power committed by Christ to the Church is normally exercised." However, this policy vanished in the next merger that formed the Lutheran Church in America (LCA).

As the years went by leading up to the formation of the LCA in 1962, liberalism and doctrinal compromises were introduced by the seminaries into the ULCA and carried over into the LCA. Many pastors adopted the higher critical method regarding the study of Scripture.

Eventually leaders of the ULCA refused

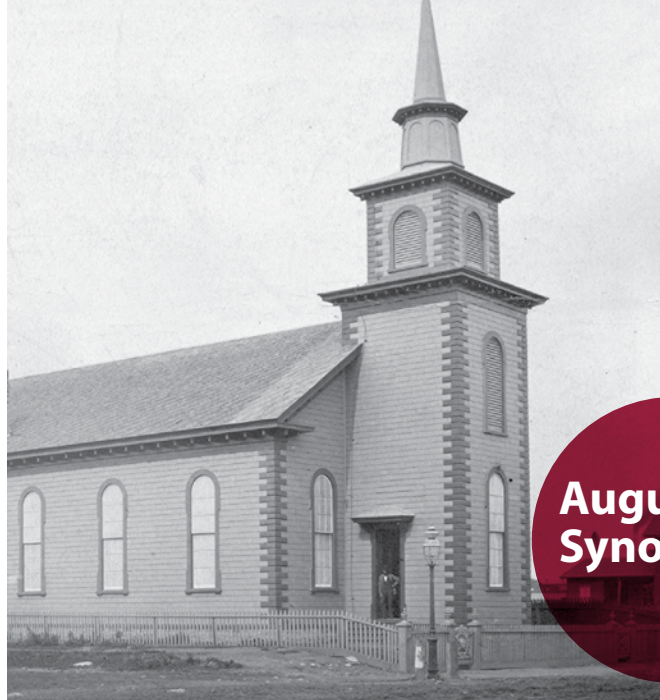
to acknowledge the Bible as the "divinely inspired and infallible Word of God."

Paul's words to Timothy should be a reminder to all Christians that any church body can fall into sin and compromise if it is not careful. "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers" (1 Timothy 4:16).

*Barnhart is a member of Peace Free Lutheran, Canal Winchester, Ohio. He is the director of Abiding Word Ministries. Pictured is Henry M. Muhlenberg.*



**+**  
**ULCA**



# FROM SWEDEN TO AMERICA WITH THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST

BY LAUREL JOHNSON

Men and women left Sweden, crossed the Atlantic Ocean, and sought settlement for their families in the New World. In their hearts they carried the faith of their forefathers. The treasures these emigrants took from Sweden were meager in material things, but rich in spiritual qualities.

The Augustana Synod was formally organized in June 1860 at Clinton, Wis. The founders wanted to emphasize the fact that they belonged to the great family of the “mother church of the Reformation.” As such, they adhered to the fundamental doctrine of the Lutheran faith. This doctrine is set forth in the Augsburg Confession. From worship around the hearth in simple frame cabins, gradually in many, many places churches lifted their spires. Faithful saints read their Swedish Bibles and “Psalm books.” They knew the contents of *Luther’s Catechism*. And among their books were the writings of Johann Arndt, Carl Olof Rosenius and other devotional authors. Through the years they experienced God’s grace, growth, concentrated fellowship and united endeavors.

These people believed that the gospel of Jesus Christ is for all people and for all conditions. The grace they themselves had experienced—a forgiveness of sins through faith in the crucified and risen Christ—was the power that sent them out to proclaim His kingship.

A faithful teacher invited me to Sunday school. I was 6 years old and I loved it so much I offered to sing for the church service. This brought Mom and Dad to church, Mom playing the piano and Dad coming to listen. Thus was my beginning in the Augustana Synod. Memories precious to my heart include the pastor’s beginning liturgy, “Holy, Holy, Holy is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory” (Isaiah 6:3). This set the awesome tone of reverence due our heavenly Father as we gathered for worship.

The Word of God was faithfully preached by our pastors.

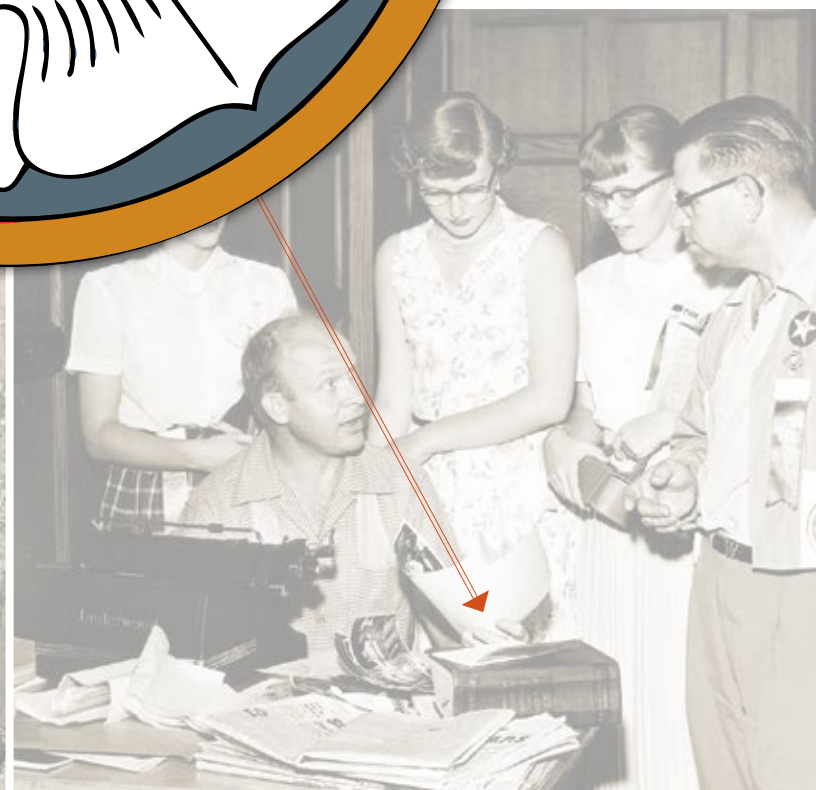
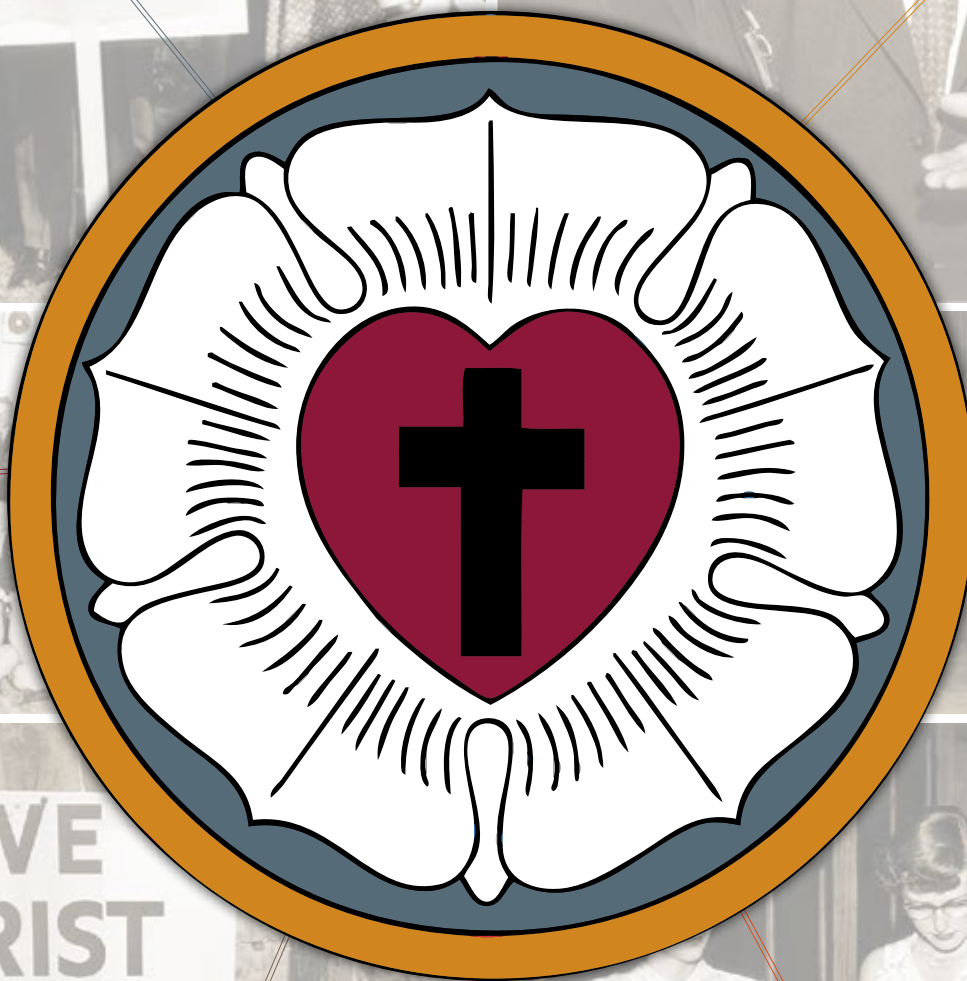
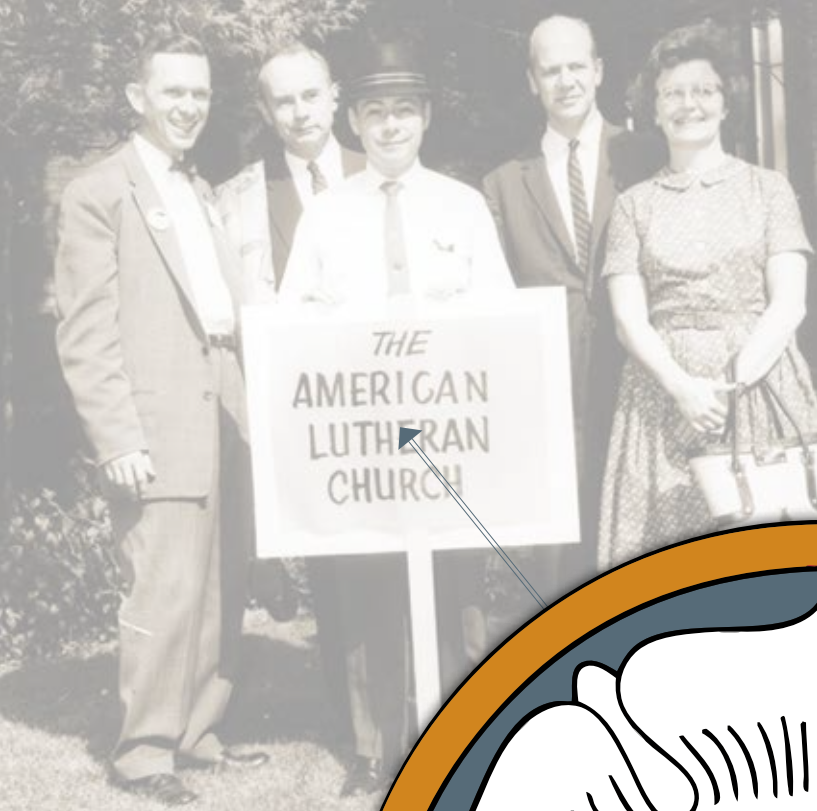
There are many aspects to the Augustana Synod that I was able to participate in while growing up. Martin Luther has been called the father of evangelical hymnody. In my church I gained an appreciation for the rich treasury of hymns and the high place that music and song has always occupied in the Lutheran Church. As a child we had a Junior Mission Band, which planted a love for missions and reaching out to all people in me at a very early age. Confirmation was a special time as we studied *Luther’s Catechism*. Luther League carried out a far-flung program with rewarding evidence that the youth served their Lord with joy. Having parts in the Christmas programs meant memorizing much Scripture. The Lenten services were centered on the passion of our Lord following His journey to the cross. Augustana also had a strong preaching, teaching and reaching ministry in its churches.

As I reflect on my years in the Augustana fellowship, so many loving, faithful, praying, steadfast and compassionate saints come to mind. They all had a part in shaping my spiritual life, amplifying Jeremiah 29:11, “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future.”

I am forever grateful to God for the foundation and heritage I received during my years in the Augustana Synod. The song I sang that first Sunday in church was, “Jesus wants me for a sunbeam.” The phrase, “to shine for Him each day,” is a spiritual goal that only Jesus can help me attain in my daily walk with Him.

*Johnson and her husband, Pastor Wendel Johnson, are members of True Vine Lutheran, Mora, Minn. They live in Cambridge, Minn. Pictured is the original Augustana Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, built in 1896. (ELCA Archives)*







# GROWING UP IN THE OLD AMERICAN LUTHERAN CHURCH

BY LINDA HORNE

**G**rowing up in the “old ALC” played a vital role in forming my faith as an adult. The third of five children born to Pastor Elmer and Mabel Nelson, I was blessed to be born into a strong Christian family and a strong Bible-believing church.

In reflecting on that time, one of the memories that comes to mind when thinking about our worship is the use of the old brown American Lutheran hymnal and the liturgy that was used for every service. Although I was a young child during the years prior to the 1958 adoption of the new red *Service Book and Hymnal* (of which the Lutheran Free Church was a contributing entity), I remember how impressed I was when I learned that the responses used during our worship were taken directly from the Old Testament and were always the same. There was something very reassuring to think that the words we sang had been used by generations of worshipers.

The old ALC was strongly rooted in the Bible—as is our AFLC of today. Sermons were scripturally-based and made relevant to current situations. Thinking back on those years it becomes clear to me that worship was an integral part of our lives, as was evidenced in the overflow crowds which seemed to hunger after the Word. It was not at all unusual to have folding chairs placed in the center aisle and the side aisles in order to accommodate all who wanted to hear the Word and to worship the Lord.

Our worship was filled with music, not only from the hymns we sang, but also by the special music selections provided by one of the three choirs in my congregation. I gained an early appreciation for the important contribution of music to our worship and the people who helped to provide that aspect of our praise to the Lord.

My home congregation was deeply involved in outreach (evangelism), as was evidenced in the steadily increasing numbers of worshipers on a given Sunday morning. There were teams of members willing to give of their time to share their faith with friends and neighbors and extend an invitation to come worship with us.

Not only was local outreach a concern in my church,

world outreach support was strong as well. As a child I remember the excitement of looking forward to Mission Festival Sunday when we would spend the entire day at church with visiting missionaries speaking at the three services, bringing far-away people and places to life. It became very clear that we had an important part in bringing Christ to the world.

As another part of that outreach, our vacation Bible school ran for three weeks every summer and was attended by more than 200 children, more than half of whom filled the youngest class, 3- to 5-year-olds. The closing program for VBS took place on the final evening when the children's work was displayed. Prior to the program, everyone was invited to enjoy an ice cream social on the church lawn.

Our Sunday school was strong and well attended. Lessons to be covered were sent home each week with the children to read before the following Sunday so they would be fully prepared. As part of our Saturday evening ritual, I can remember my mother reading the lessons and memory verses with each of us before we went to bed so we would be prepared for class the following day. When we were old enough for confirmation classes, the same parental interest in our prep work let us know that what we were learning was important and was preparing us to take our place in the church as contributing members.

An active youth group (Luther League) is another memory that comes to mind when I think of my years in the old ALC. Again, parents played an important role by strongly encouraging participation and offering help when it was needed. As in our AFLC today, a strong youth group is vital to the strength of the each congregation and the church as a whole.

I definitely believe that I was blessed to have been taught the faith that sustained my parents throughout their lives; this is the faith my husband and I strive to share with our children and grandchildren.

*Horne and her husband, Pastor Jan Horne, live in Ashkum, Ill., where he serves Zion Lutheran in Ashkum. Pictured are various ALC ministries. (ELCA Archives)*



ALC  
+

# THE APOSTOLIC LUTHERANS AND THE POWER OF THE KEYS

BY PASTOR WAYNE JUNTUNEN

There are numerous former Apostolic Lutherans who are members in various congregations of the AFLC. I have no doubt we do bring an important and meaningful contribution from our heritage. A distinctive thrust of the Apostolic Lutheran Church, of which I am a member, surfaced from its roots in the Swedish parish of Karesevanto during the pastorate of Lars Levi Laestadius. But the tendrils of those roots go back to Christ.

It was on the evening of the Resurrection Day, when the disciples of the Lord were huddled behind locked doors. Suddenly the Lord stood in their midst, and having shown them the marks of His crucifixion, He said to them: "... 'Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.' And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained'" (John 20:21-23).

This Christ-given authority is the doctrine known, at least in the Lutheran Church, as the "Power of the Keys." Lutheran theologians, in preparing the various articles of faith that were to be considered at Smalcald, stated in Article VII, entitled, "The Keys," that "The keys are a function and power given to the church by Christ (Matthew 16:19; 18:18) to bind and loose sins, not only the gross and manifest sins but also those which are subtle and secret and which God alone perceives" (*The Book of Concord*, Tappert, p. 311). They go on in Article

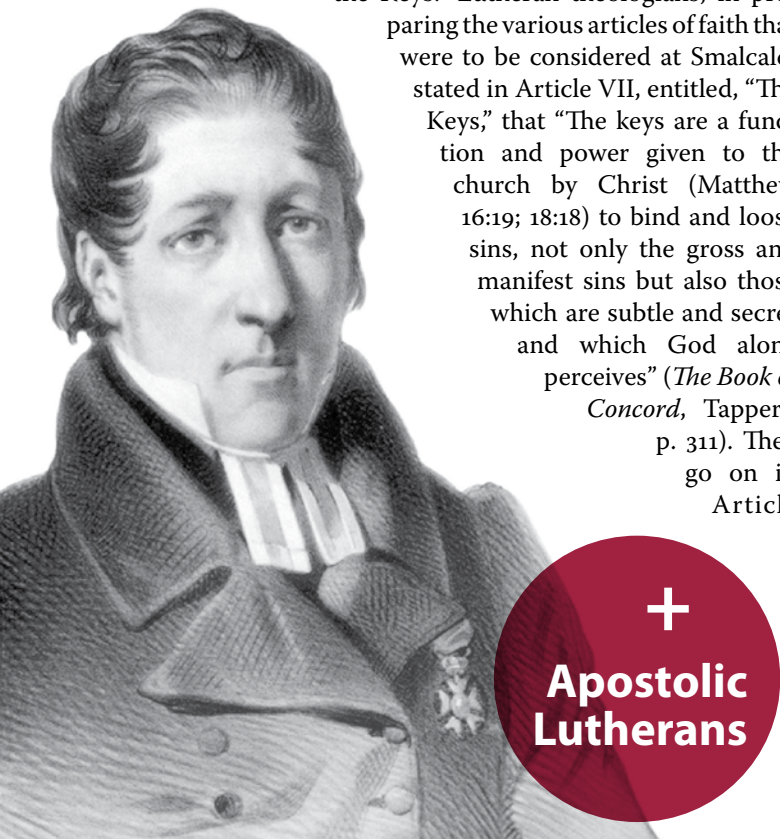
VIII (Confession) as follows: "Since absolution or the power of the keys ... is a consolation and help against sin and a bad conscience, confession and absolution should by no means be allowed to fall into disuse in the church, especially for the sake of timid consciences ..." (p. 312, *ibid*).

The first recorded use of the keys, or absolution, among the Laestadians occurred when Johann Raattamaa, a contemporary of Pastor Laestadius, was appointed by Laestadius to serve as a teacher in the Lainio Mission School. While studying Luther's *Church Postil*, the third sermon on the Gospel text of the first Sunday after Easter, Raattamaa noted that Luther gave instructions regarding the Power of the Keys saying: "... a minister, or any other Christian, should lay his hands upon the penitent sinner and pronounce absolution or forgiveness of sins upon him, and that these words be believed as if Christ Himself personally pronounced them." Following these instructions, Raattamaa pronounced absolution to "a female servant who was burdened by her sins ... She was released at once and began to praise God" (*The History of the Apostolic Lutheran Church of America*, Dr. Uuras Saarnivaara, p. 15).

Dr. Saarnivaara writes in the preface of his booklet, *The Power of the Keys*, "The Lutheran Church of our time has almost lost its consciousness of the power of the Keys, or at least it has been lost from practical Christianity; many Lutherans do not even understand the meaning of such a thing as the 'power of the Keys.' And yet the words of Luther to timid, weak, sin-troubled consciences who have difficulty in finding true peace in God, apply also to our time" (Saarnivaara, *The Power of the Keys*, p. 4).

Luther states in his *Large Catechism*: "... by divine ordinance Christ himself has entrusted absolution to his Christian church and commanded us to absolve one another from sins. So if there is a heart that feels its sin and desires consolation, it has here a sure refuge when it hears in God's Word that through a man God looses and absolves him from his sins" (Tappert, *ibid.*, p. 458). Since the use of the keys is biblical and Luther encouraged its use, this practice in the Apostolic Lutheran Church of America is an important contribution of soul care that I and other Apostolic Lutherans bring to the membership in the various congregations of the AFLC.

*Juntunen, a retired AFLC pastor, lives in Esko, Minn.  
Pictured at left is Lars Levi Laestadius.*







+ Suomi  
Synod

# LEARNING TO WORSHIP THE MOST HIGH GOD

BY GLORIA PERONTO

**I**n 1890 a group of Finnish immigrants formed the Finnish American Evangelical Lutheran Church, also called the Suomi Synod, during a meeting in Calumet, Mich. Suomi College had been established in Hancock, Mich., to train pastors for the congregations within the Synod and the Hancock Finnish Lutheran Book Concern provided printed Christian materials.

I grew up in Covington Township, Mich., with a population of about 900. The Apostolic Lutheran Church (known as the Michaelson group), the Finnish National Lutheran Church, and the Suomi Synod all stood as beacons of Christ's light in our community. People came donning their Sunday best: women in modest dresses, hats or a *huivi* (scarf), and men in the only suit each one owned.

The Lord used the interior of my childhood church (Covington Evangelical Lutheran) to instill in me an appreciation of those He has gifted with artistic abilities that made our worship of the most High God not only an auditory, but a visual celebration. Professor Elmer Forsberg of the Chicago Institute of Art had transformed the sanctuary with wood carvings of Peter and John and a triptych painting of the Lord's Supper by J.T. Johnson. There are no words to describe the presence of the Lord as one entered the sanctuary with a sense of reverence.

"Be still and know that I am God" became a reality in the hush of it all, as one took a space in a pew and each worshiper bowed in silent prayer. The bell in the steeple rang, the organist began to play, and the clerical-collared pastor in his robe and vestment announced the opening hymn, after which the congregation rose and the minister proclaimed, "In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." A general confession followed with the words of absolution by the pastor. The service would consist of the Gloria Patria, the Kyrie, the Hallelujah, the Lord's Prayer, the Apostle's Creed, and the Old Testament, Epistle, and Gospel texts. The sermon began with the words, "Grace and peace be unto you ..." Prayer was offered by the pastor before the altar for the nation's leaders and needs of the congregation. The service ended with the Aaronic blessing and the

doxology, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

For a time worship took place every other Sunday because we had to share a pastor with a neighboring parish. Later, Dr. Armas Holmio, the history professor of Suomi College in Hancock, took it upon himself to come the distance every Sunday. There were both Finnish and English services. I recall a few evening services with a pastor from Finland garbed in all black, complete with high black boots and chopped hair preaching a fiery message.

Our church used the Augustana Publishing House's Sunday school books, which contained the catechism and their meanings for memorization. My favorite was my 7th grade book, *The March of Faith*, which taught church history for the 12-year-old mind. At Christmas each child had a recitation they had to memorize. I realize now how important public speaking was at each program.

My upbringing in the Suomi Synod has given me a hunger for the Word. I loved church activities. At Bible camp at the age of 14, I made a public profession of faith. After being confirmed, our beloved Sunday school superintendent had me teaching a class of youngsters. Since then, sharing the Word with others has been my blessing.

Some of the Suomi Synod pastors and missionaries at those camps who invested into us were: Florence Elson (missionary to Japan), Pastor Henry Aukee, Pastor Leslie Niemi, Pastor Herb Franz, and Pastor A. Lepisto.

Two of the highlights of my youth were Luther League rallies in the Michigan communities of Ishpeming, Republic, Trout Creek, Hancock, and Kaleva, and time spent at St. Olaf's College in St. Paul, when we sang George Frideric Handel's "Messiah" in the choir of the Lutheran World Federation. Lifetime friendships were formed then that continue today.

*Peronto is a member of Hope Free Evangelical Lutheran, Ishpeming, Mich. Thanks to Pastor Micah Hjermstad for his work on this article. Pictured is Bethany Lutheran, Covington, Mich., formerly called Covington Evangelical Lutheran.*





Missouri  
Synod



# AN APPRECIATION FOR GOD'S WORD, SERVICE, AND INDEPENDENT CONGREGATIONS

BY PASTOR DAVID FRUEHAUF

**M**y acquaintance with the Lutheran Church began as a child with a friend. Even though we didn't always pay attention, I learned the basics of many Bible stories. Soon the pastor took me under his wing and I grew quite close to him. That relationship greatly influenced my decision to study for the pastoral ministry after completing a four-year university mathematics and philosophy degree.

I left the Missouri Synod seminary with several settled convictions: The Scriptures are the inspired Word of God, infallible in the original writings, without error, having been God-breathed word for word to the prophets and apostles. The Word had convinced me of humankind's universal bondage to sin, separation from God and our complete inability to come to God on our own. I now was convinced that God must first come to us to raise us up from spiritual death. The seminary emphasis on scholarship and continuing study remains with me to this day.

The Missouri Synod's emphasis on the authority of individual congregations allowed some freedom to vary individual practices in the local congregation: The importance of seeing God act through His Word in all the various ways such as listening, speaking and singing.

I learned more about the tangible ways God uses to bring His Word in specific personal ways to each one in water Baptism and the Lord's Supper. I became convinced that all glory belongs to God, for it is He who does it all to reconcile

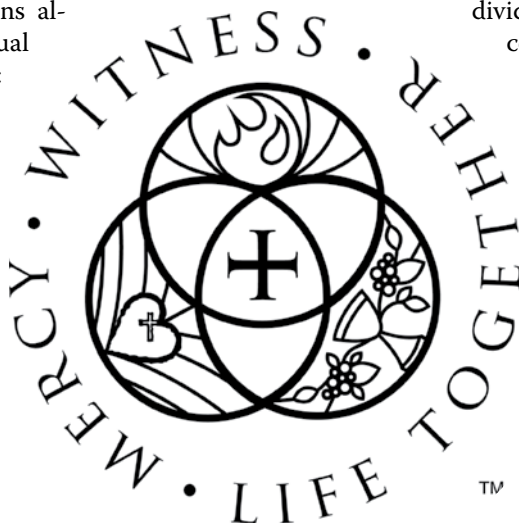
us to Himself.

At the university I considered evolution theory to explain where everything came from. I studied creation science alongside the adamant claims of university textbooks, professors and fellow classmates. Seminary education renewed my commitment to biblical creation, and I have a continued interest in the study of the creation and evolution controversy.

I found all of these teachings strongly held within the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations. But there was something else: an enthusiastic encouragement to personally serve Christ. Closely allied to this servanthood is a very real spirit of friendship and caring. Prayers offered for others in a particular need seem so much a part of life in AFLC congregations and in the seminary, Bible school and administrative offices. Comfort and encouragement can be found in this visible manifestation of the Body of Christ. The sense of personal, individual value is supported by the AFLC's commitment to a democratic model of government which

retains and practices the importance of the individual person and authority of the local congregation. The annual conferences of the AFLC illustrate the respect for the individual, democratic practices, seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the love between brothers and sisters in Christ.

*Fruehauf, a retired AFLC pastor, lives in Maple Grove, Minn. Pictured above left are J.A.O. Preus (LCMS), Fredrik Schiotz (TALC), and Robert Marshall (LCA), meeting in 1969. (ELCA Archives)*



# REMEMBERING THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

— BY PASTOR DENNIS GRAY

**M**y home congregation was Springdale Lutheran Church (Evangelical Lutheran Church), located east of Sioux Falls, S.D. It was there that I received instruction in God's Word through the Sunday school and confirmation classes, and I was confirmed by Pastor James Asp (who many years later joined the AFLC). My mother's family had roots in First Lutheran Church of Sioux Falls (where Dr. Alvin Rogness, who would become the president of Luther Seminary, served for several years); West Nidaros, Baltic, S.D.; and Renner Lutheran, Renner, S.D., all of which were ELC congregations.

The ELC operated educational institutions in Sioux Falls and Canton, S.D.: Augustana College and Augustana Academy. The former Sioux Valley Hospital in Sioux Falls was a ministry of our synod, and my mother was a graduate of its nursing school.

My experiences with the ELC are limited to my first 18 or 19 years. Our district Bible camp was located at Lake Shetek near Pipestone, Minn. Here we heard men like Dr. Theodore Huggenvik, a teacher at St. Olaf College and Bible scholar. This was a good experience for me, and the camp was used by the Lord.

One of the most interesting conferences for me was the Luther League Leadership Schools. These took place at Luther Seminary and involved Luther League officers from the various congregations. Another worthwhile venture was the "Men for the Ministry" sessions. Young men were encouraged to attend and to prayerfully consider becoming pastors.

The ELC sent out college students to be counselors at the various Bible camps. I especially remember Rev. L. David Brown, who was one of the trainers and leaders. This was very positive. These groups also traveled to various congregations to help with youth programs and to encourage youth to be faithful to the Lord and to the Lutheran Church. There was a lot of cooperation between all the synods. *ONE Magazine* for youth was an example. I believe that Rev. Brown, Dr. Wilton Bergstrand from Augustana Synod, and Dr. Merton Strommen and Rev. Calvin Storley from the Lutheran Free Church cooperated in this effort.

The publication department of our synod printed numerous tracts and books, some of which I have in my personal library. These books are excellent and on target with Bible doctrine, which is in reality Lutheran doctrine.

The Lutheran Bible Institute in Minneapolis, where

I studied, was an inter-Lutheran ministry serving the ELC and others. My training there led to ministry as a youth director. When I found liberalism beginning to permeate the youth meetings I sent my young people to attend, eventually I had to do all the training myself.

I joined the AFLC in 1968, graduating from AFLTS in 1971, and have never regretted it. I should have come sooner.

I remember that in the South Dakota district of the ELC many folks were evangelical—meaning sticking to the Word of God—and evangelistic—meaning soul winners. I remember J. O. Gisselquist from my youth. He was pastor at Skrefsrud Lutheran Church near Beresford, S.D., and at Immanuel Lutheran near Centerville, S.D. (both are now AFLC). It was men like him who served at St. Paul's Lutheran on Portland Avenue in Minneapolis, for example, which was a mission-minded congregation. It supported the Global Gospel Mission, where Rev. Gerald Mundfrom (who later joined the AFLC) was part of the fellowship. Many ELC pastors and congregations were part of the Lutheran Evangelistic Movement with its Deeper Life camps and conferences.

My experiences in the ELC were very positive. The pastors we had at Springdale were very good and preached the Word. They emphasized a personal relationship with Jesus. I especially remember the two people who asked me if I was saved. One was Florence Anderson at LBI and the other was Pastor Harold Bailey. And this is an important question, don't you think?

*Gray serves Alma Lutheran, Argyle, Minn.*



Pictured above is Pastor James Asp in 1952, an ELC pastor who later joined the AFLC. (ELCA Archives)

The Evangelical Lutheran Church, formerly the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America—organized in 1917 through a merger of the United Norwegian Lutheran Church, the Hauge Synod, and the Norwegian Synod—became part of The American Lutheran Church in 1960.

# GIFTS & THE BODY OF CHRIST

BY JOAN CULLER

In his first letter to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul tells us that each person has at least one spiritual gift (12:7), and that every gift is valuable and equally important to the body of Christ (12:21-30).

In our humanness we may find this hard to accept. I have always admired (and if the truth be told, sometimes envied) those who have one spiritual gift that stands out and defines their Christian journey of sanctification and service. These people are the long distance runners of the Church—folks like the church musicians who sing in the choir or play the organ for a lifetime; the dedicated teachers who serve in the Sunday school for years and years, praying for and inspiring their students; or the talented workers who can paint, build or fix almost anything around the church building.

I guess I'm more of a sprinter. In my years as a Christian and active church member I've done all sorts of jobs, big and small. I've served on the church council and cooked soup for Lenten dinners; I've led Sunday school classes for children and retreats for adults; I've been an altar guild member and a newsletter editor. I do a task for a while and then my gift cluster or my life circumstances seem to morph and change and I feel compelled to move onto something else. Yet there is a part of me that wants to find my one true vocation and stick to it.



Recently I was bemoaning this to my husband. "Why can't I find that special gift that God wants me to use?" I asked.

Terry thought about that for a while and finally said, "Honey, maybe you should think of yourself as a utility player."

Not being a big sports fan, I had to look into what a utility player is. Here's what I found out. Utility players are seldom stars, but they are competent at a number of things. They can fill in at different areas as needed and do just fine. Utility players may not be well known to the fans, but they can be extremely valuable to the coach. They help keep the team going, especially when a key player is injured or unable to play.


Since then, I've felt better about my role. Saint Paul was right: we need long distance run-

ners, but we also need sprinters. We need amazing batters and pitchers, and we need competent utility players. A free and living congregation needs us all.

"But in fact, God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be?" (I Corinthians 12: 18-19).

*Culler is a member of St. Paul's Evangelical Free Lutheran, Hagerstown, Md., where her husband serves as pastor.*





# OCTOBER 31 WATERS IN THE WILDERNESS

“For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:17).

**M**oses gave the Ten Commandments to Israel in the wilderness; these reflect God’s will to men. Down through the years chronicled in the Old Testament, the Jews developed more than 600 sub-commandments dealing with how the original ten should be observed. The people became completely entangled in all the myriad of precepts and regulations so that religion became a burden. It was perhaps for this reason that Habakkuk reminded the people of his day that “the just shall live by faith.”

The Apostle Paul quoted Habakkuk in our verse today. And today is Reformation Day. Justification by faith is the central theme of the Reformation.

It was indeed fortunate that this truth of the gospel was redis-

covered in the 16th century. While there undoubtedly were people throughout the ages prior to Luther’s day who somehow believed this truth, it was still pushed into the background so that few grasped it.

Christ is our righteousness, and He is in heaven. Whosoever believes in Christ has His righteousness. It is beyond our power to add to this righteousness; it is perfect. We cannot detract from it or destroy it; it is in God’s safe keeping. The fullness of the gospel is that all of this righteousness belongs to him who believes. By faith we are justified.

*Pastor Henry Johansen, now retired, served AFLC churches in Virginia, Willmar and Cloquet, Minn. He lives in Carlton, Minn.*

*Waters in the Wilderness* is a daily devotional published by the AFLC Board of Parish Education in 1971 with Dr. Iver Olson, editor. All 365 meditations were contributed by AFLC members from many walks of life. “Here, they offer each a glass of cool and refreshing water each day to thirsting souls,” wrote Olson in the preface. Reprinted by permission. The volume is out of print.





## AFLC World Missions team visits AFLC-India

AFLC World Missions Director Pastor Del Palmer led a team to visit the AFLC-India work this summer. Also on the team were Karen Palmer, missionary candidates Brent and Emily Raan, Andrew Abel (videographer) and World Missions Committee member Scott Erickson (pictured with D. Luther Sastry on top left of page 17). The team visited AFLC-India churches throughout southern India, and saw construction under way on the new school and administrative building in Chirala.









# Grace through our inadequacy

BY PASTOR ANDY COYLE

*"Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant" (II Corinthians 3:5-6).*

**W**ebster defines inadequacy as the state or condition of not being adequate or sufficient. Inadequacy.

Those feelings have always been part of my experience in ministry. However, that reality has grown exponentially over the past few months. This past summer, I found myself preparing to give lectures at a youth/young adult conference here in Ukraine. My topics dealt with serious issues within the Christian faith such as the fall, the problem of evil, judgment and hell, and the exclusivity of Jesus.

Leading up to the conference, I continued to imagine my audience. I was told that many of these 15-30 year olds were not believers. I was excited. What an opportunity to present the truths of Christianity over and against all the mush and contradiction the world offers. Yet as the time drew closer, the more I became overwhelmed with the gravity of the situation. This might be the first and perhaps only time some of these young people would hear the truths of Christianity. Many questions flooded my mind: What should I say? What did these students need to hear? What approach should I take? Most of all, who am I to do this? Inadequacy. This reality hit me once again like a wrecking ball. It was exactly what I needed.

Have you been there? Have you ever felt so completely unworthy of being able to share your faith and God's Word to people? Have you ever felt totally inadequate for this mission? Have you ever been paralyzed by the gravity of this task?

Before my lectures, much time was spent in prayer. These could be described as prayers of submission. Prayers that pleaded for God to come, take control, and do His work. Submission. Dependence. The result was peace, clarity, and boldness. Despite my inadequacy and fear, the Lord did his work, using me.

I believe this is a microcosm of our lives as believers. Every day each of us receive our calling to "make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you" (1 Peter



Students talk during the Gloria Fest Christian Youth Music Festival in Ukraine, where Coyle had an opportunity to give several lectures on current Christian topics.

3:15). Every day we are called to share Christ to a lost and hopeless world. Upon reflection, this is a staggering responsibility. What do we say? What approach do we take? Most of all, who are we to do this? Inadequacy.

The beauty of coming to this realization is that our Lord meets us and reveals Himself to us. He comes to us and says, "I am all you need. I am totally sufficient. Proclaim my Word. Proclaim my truth and I will take care of it. I've got this."

It is dangerously easy to believe that our skill or lack of skill is the determining factor in mission. One leads to pride; the other leads to paralysis. The gracious truth is that God has given each of His children specific gifts to use for His service. He has placed each of us in special vocations that best use our gifts. But best of all, despite the reality of our inadequacy, when His Word is proclaimed, His Spirit is unleashed to call and gather His children. There is no greater joy than to witness, as well as share in, God's gracious work.

*Coyle and his family are AFLC missionaries on loan to East European Missions Network in Odessa, Ukraine.*

# Looking forward

BY LYNN WELLUMSON

As the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations continues to celebrate its year of jubilee, I can't help but think of my home church, Bethel Free Lutheran Church, in Faith, S.D. In 1962 they were served by Pastor Jay Erickson, who was dearly loved by the congregation. He courageously informed the congregation of the news that the church body they currently were a part of was turning from its solid footing of biblical inerrancy. He felt called by God to join the newly forming AFLC and asked that a vote be taken whether to withdraw and join the AFLC. He also informed the group that if the vote wasn't unanimous he would be resigning, as he did not want to be a source of division among the congregation. The vote was taken and all voted to withdraw and join the AFLC with one lone "no" vote. There was but a brief silent moment after the vote was announced and a man walked to the front of the church and announced that he had misunderstood the motion and wished to change his vote. It was unanimous.

I would love to share that I spoke eloquent words, waxed poetic, or had anything to do with the vote, but I was 4 years old at the time and was waiting for Pastor Erickson to finish the meeting so we could continue playing dolls.

My husband, Jon, has the privilege of serving Emmanuel Free Lutheran Church in Williston, N.D. They were a Home Missions church when we arrived eight years into their existence. The church became self-supporting and has now had five seminary students spend year-long internships to finish their seminary training. Jon also serves Beaver Creek Lutheran Church, rural Ray, whose history began in 1889, predating the statehood of North Dakota.

I trust you have had the opportunity to pass on to your family and fellow parishioners the history and leading of God in your congregation. Every congregation and every believer has moments to share where crossroads were met and with God's help the straight and narrow path was chosen.

The WMF has a rich history of supporting World Missions, Home Missions, and Parish Education. This support has not been just financial. We have, through the years, used our talents on the mission fields at home and abroad, editing and writing for the parish education department, and decorating and furnishing buildings for our schools, just to name a few of our projects.

While traditions sometimes limit us to what has been done in the past, we want to strive to be open to new ideas as to where and how God will use us. Our longing is to see women in all of



our churches active and working together in continuing support of the ministries of the AFLC and challenging each other to see where God is opening doors for further ministry. In our local congregations, districts, and nationally, "Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:24-25 NASB).

*Wellumson, a member of Emmanuel Free Lutheran, Williston, N.D., is the newly elected president of the WMF.*



# Worship and leadership conference

Pastors, worship leaders and teams, and AFLC church members are invited to join us for ADORATION: a worship leadership conference Oct. 26-27 at Emmaus Lutheran, Bloomington, Minn.

Friday, Oct. 26: 7 p.m., night of worship. Full band, organ, brass, and worship choir. All are welcome.

Saturday, Oct. 27: 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m., worship and leadership ministry workshops for artists, pastors, leaders, and teams. A \$30 registration fee applies. Pastors are welcome to attend for free.

Author, artist, and Bethel University jazz professor Jason Harms is our guest teacher Saturday morning, leading a session on "The Affections of the Heart in Art." To download a free copy of his book, go to <http://bit.ly/TS8LrZ>.

- Pastors: We want to bless you. Attend the Saturday workshops for free.
- Worship leaders: We want to encourage you and your team. Come, learn, and worship in an environment where you don't have to plan or lead anything.
- Artists: When you create, you reflect the image of the Creator. We know you'll register the day of the conference, and you'll be 10 minutes late. We understand. We love artists. Come and learn about God's heart for you.

We are one church, lifting up one Name, for one reason: to be people who adore Jesus. Come and hear how God has made and gifted you for His glory.

For more information or to register for the Saturday workshops, visit our web site at [adorationconference.com](http://adorationconference.com). Or e-mail with questions to [info@adorationconference.com](mailto:info@adorationconference.com).



## Historic church building undergoes renovations

The bell tower and steeple at Timberland Ringebu Free Lutheran in Barronett, Wis., is removed as construction crews make way for an addition to the sanctuary. With a growing membership, the congregation approved the building project, which will allow seating for an additional 40-50 people in the sanctuary. The congregation is served by Pastor Al Bedard.

## Congregation dedicates new church building



Members of Good Shepherd Free Lutheran, an AFLC Home Missions congregation in Brainerd, Minn., dedicated a new church building on August 12. The new building includes a sanctuary, classrooms, office, kitchen and fellowship room. The congregation is served by Pastor Gary Jorgenson.





# At work in ALASKA

BY CHUCK VUKONICH

*"Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters" (Isaiah 55:1).*

**W**ith Isaiah 55:1 as our premise for ministering to the people of Naknek, Alaska, this past July God faithfully supplied the resources, people, and spiritual gifts for a group of us to make this journey. Our goals were focused on construction and helping teach young people about Jesus.

Our group included eight members from the Dalton (Minn.) Free Lutheran Parish and two from Grace Free Lutheran in Valley City, N.D. Under the instruction of Eldwyn VanBruggen, Gary Sorenson, and Tim Hanson, our outfit of mostly amateur carpenters constructed a 40-by-48-foot garage. This new structure is adjacent to the KAKN Christian radio station in Naknek and will provide much-needed space to store and maintain vehicles and add dormitory housing for future mission teams.

The Lutheran Mission Society began serving the people of Naknek more than 50 years ago. More recently, AFLC ministers have served churches in Naknek and South Naknek under the direction of the Mission Society. In 1985 a radio station was built, which continues to provide Christian broadcasting and fishing reports to the many thousands of fisherman and cannery workers who come to Naknek annually from all parts of the world.

The radio station, church building, hangar and an airplane were turned over to the AFLC in 2008. Pastors in this remote fly-in only area—Jeff Swanson, Bob Lee, and Jeremy Crowell—are currently serving the people of Naknek and the tiny fishing village of Ekwok located a short 30-minute flight from Naknek.

Each morning before breakfast our day began with devotions and prayer. It was inspiring to see how God would daily manifest His presence and accomplish His work in this remote place. Within our small group God assembled work leaders, carpenters, an overseer to monitor the proper use and placement of materials, and eager vacation Bible school instructors.

The first few days of our trip, it rained and drizzled and the wind blew as poles were set and the rafters and purlins were nailed in place. Should we have been surprised when, after praying for good weather to put on the slippery-when-wet tin roof, we were blessed with two full days of calmer dry weather? Absolutely not! He caringly kept us all safe each day as we climbed ladders, straddled rafters, and used our various power tools.

Most heartening, however, was that as we were being thanked



Eight people from two AFLC parishes traveled to Naknek, Alaska, this summer to help construct a building and teach VBS.

by the people of Naknek for being there, in actuality, we were being ministered to even more abundantly by the people of Naknek. At praise and prayer time during the Sunday evening church service, we listened as a teenage Pilipino man, Michael, told us how he chose to carry his Bible and trust in God's Word at the price of being forever disowned by his family for becoming a Christian.

We heard how an exhausted female cannery worker was sustained with renewed energy as she read from her Bible. We listened to people profess a love for God through the personal testimonies of local church members Richard, Martha, George, and others. And we saw in a place where alcoholism, delinquency, and tragedy are all too frequent, how our pastors and their families model what family life should look like.

The greatest episode of all was during VBS. As the hope in Jesus was explained, ten youths committed their lives to Christ and accepted Him as their Savior.

Many are thirsty near the waters of Naknek and all continents and lands around the world. The truth is that in Him we are all full-time missionaries for Christ. I Corinthians 3:9 says, "For we are all God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building." And we need not travel to Naknek or Africa. A foundation leading to salvation can be laid as near as our neighbor next door.

*Vukonich is a member of Tordenskjold Free Lutheran, Underwood, Minn.*

## AFLC memorials: August

### AFLBS

Joe Milton (3)  
Ruth Claus  
Carol Boyd  
Ragnhild Herset (18)

### AFLTS

Esther Johnson  
Ronald Gravgaard  
Dorothy Presteng  
Carol Boyd

### FLAPS

Hank Koch

### General Fund

Doris Nesland

### Home Missions

Doris Nesland  
Sally Oie

### World Missions

Pastor Lowell Sheldahl  
Alfie Whitaker  
Dale Monnier  
Dr. Ernest Thorsgard

... in honor of

### Miriam Infant Home

Pastor Connely Dyrud

## Oregon congregation celebrates fifty years

Members of Trinity Lutheran, Brookings, Ore., will celebrate the congregation's 50th anniversary during a special service on Oct. 28.

Two former pastors will take part in the event. And Pastor David Nelson, who recently accepted a call to serve Trinity Lutheran, will be installed.

A special song commissioned for the celebration will be performed by the choir for the first time at the service.

## Grade six curriculum to be published

The AFLC Board of Publications plans to publish new grade six curriculum, *Journey Through the New Testament*, in the fall of 2012. Contact Ambassador Publications for more details at 763-545-5631 or e-mail [parished@aflc.org](mailto:parished@aflc.org).

## People and Places

**Pastor David Johnson** has accepted a call to serve Living Faith Lutheran, Boyertown, Pa., and Disciple Lutheran Fellowship, Reading, Pa. He has resigned from St. Paul's Lutheran, Cloquet, Minn.

**Pastor Tom Tuura** has accepted a call to serve Christ Lutheran, Stover, Mo. Tuura was installed Aug. 26 by Pastor Tonnes Pollestad. Tuura has served Living Word, Windom, Minn., for the past ten years. The Stover congregation has been served during the summer months by seminarian George Winston.

**Pastor Rich Carr** has accepted a call to serve Norman Lutheran and Zion Lutheran, Tioga, N.D. Carr has served Christ Community Church, Hagerstown, Md.

**Correction:** Pastor Michael Brandt is not serving as interim pastor at Helmar Lutheran, rural Newark, Ill.

Members of **Living Word Lutheran**, Sioux Falls, S.D., celebrated the congregation's 10th anniversary with a special service on Aug. 12. The congregation, served by Pastor Wade Mobley, began as a church plant by nearby Abiding Savior Free Lutheran.

Members of the AFLC World Missions Committee have accepted **Josh and Ruth Wagner** as AFLC missionaries on loan to Lutheran Bible Translators. The Wagners have been called to Sierra Leone, and hope to be part of a team reestablishing literacy and Bible translation work there beginning in the summer of 2013. In the mean time, they are finishing linguistic training at the Graduate Institute of Applied Linguistics in Dallas. Ruth is the daughter of AFLC Pastor Bob and Margaret Lee, serving in Naknek, Alaska.

**Dean Franz** has resigned as lay pastor of Maranatha, Chassell, and Grace, Pelkie, Michigan, where he has served since 1995 (Maranatha) and 2000 (Grace).

Members of the Association Retreat Center Corporation elected two members to the ARC Board. **Pastor Eric Westlake**, Zumbrota, Minn., was reelected to a five-year term and serves as chairman of the board. **Roger Van Someren**, Amery, Wis., was elected to complete a one-year term.

The conference dates have been set for June 11-14, 2013, for the annual conference at the Association Retreat Center, located near Osceola, Wis.



Pastor Jon Benson (center) was installed July 22 at Trinity Free Lutheran, Janesville, Wis.





## Arizona congregation breaks ground

Members & friends of Abiding Savior Free Lutheran in Tucson, Ariz., broke ground on Aug. 19 for their planned new addition, which will include an enclosed foyer, office space and a classroom/conference room. Construction will begin soon with volunteer help from around the country. Contact Pastor Paul Kneeland if you would like to help with this project this fall, winter or spring.



## Grong celebrates 140th anniversary

Members of Grong Free Lutheran Church of rural Hawley (Rollag), Minn., celebrated the congregation's 140th anniversary on July 15. An outdoor service was planned but due to threatening weather the service was held inside. Jamin Krause produced a brief history of the church and sang. His mother played a foot-pedaled pump organ. Cake and coffee were served.

The congregation is thankful for the Lord's blessing and looks forward to continually serving the area.

## Church meets community needs with food pantry

Members of Helmar Lutheran open church gym to needy families

Kendall, County, Illinois, was the fastest-growing county in the United States a few years ago, but today it has the highest number of home foreclosures in the nation. Members of Helmar Lutheran Church, rural Newark, have responded to the challenge by sponsoring a food pantry twice a month for the past four years. Utilizing the church's Family Life Center gymnasium, about 20 people assist the almost 90 families who are regularly served by the ministry. When the people are greeted, they are asked if there are any special prayer requests, and some take advantage of the spiritual resources available, too.





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*association retreat center*

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# Are you ready for battle?

BY MIKE FISK

*"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 6:12, NIV).*

Several weeks ago I was taken aback by a news story carried on NBC News Nightline. The story was about a camp that had a focus on atheism. The commentator shared that the camp was like any other, complete with games and other activities for the kids. But unlike Christian Bible camps, the kids would get together for group sessions to talk about their feelings. They were given counsel that they should be free to make their own way in life. God wasn't important; in fact He didn't exist at all.

Although not word-for-word accurate, here is the gist of some of the comments I heard on the Nightline special:

"Some of my friends believe in God and I suppose that's nice for them, especially if someone dies. But I don't like the idea of believing in something that there is no proof of."

Another commented: "I suppose I could believe in God if he were to do something really special, you know."

And a parent's comment: "We don't want to force Josh into believing in something that is of no value. It's unfortunate that they get teased and bullied by Christians, but they need to make their own way in life. We want them to have the choice."

As director of marketing at the ARC, I've talked with several

other camp directors who have seen trends similar to what we are seeing at the ARC. More and more churches are bypassing camps and retreats for other activities. In the meantime, camps devoted to atheism are thriving.

The tag line for the ARC is "Come away and rest awhile." Jesus said these words to His disciples in Mark 6 in the midst of an incredibly busy time in ministry, when they didn't even have time to eat. He realized the importance of getting away to rest and refresh ourselves for the battle. The disciples were in the midst of ministry. People were "like sheep without a shepherd," yet Jesus took them out of the heat of battle for a time of refreshment and prayer. Times of solitude allow us to remove ourselves from the stress and noise of society and allow the Holy Spirit to speak to us clearly.

Peter likens the enemy to a roaring lion who is ready to attack (I Peter 5:8). We are in the midst of a battle against the enemy. Are you preparing yourself for attack? Whether it's at the ARC or some other Christian retreat, you will be better prepared for the battle ahead by spending time alone with God. The best way to prepare for coming attacks is to "come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest awhile." (Mark 6:31).

*Fisk is the director of development for the Association Retreat Center, located near Osceola, Wis.*