

THE 

OCTOBER 2015

LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR



the
MISSIONS
issue



THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

OCTOBER 2015
VOL. 53 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.

SUBSCRIPTION CHANGES AND INFORMATION

3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.,
Plymouth, MN 55441.
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SUBSCRIPTION RATES

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

POSTMASTER

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

Cover photo by Andrew Abel.

ENCOURAGING WORD

NOW IS THE TIME

BY DORIS STENSLAND

Each season has its own benefits and joys. In spring the world awakens from its winter sleep. Summer has been abloom, and nature's clock is chiming. Now we enter a new season: autumn has arrived.

Everyone is rushing to put away the produce from their fields and gardens. Now is the time. The squirrels are putting away food for the coming winter. Gardeners have been busy in the kitchen putting up fruits and vegetables. We see their brightly colored jars of jellies and jams. This will be a way of hanging on to summer during the long winter months.

Memories are like this, too. They are a way of "putting up" some of life's special experiences, and saving these happy times. Later, when these come to mind, we can enjoy them again.

But the most important "putting up" is what Jesus advised: "... but put up for yourselves treasures in heaven ... for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:19-20). Giving ourselves to the Lord and pleasing Him today: these are treasures that will be enjoyed in eternity. But now is the time to prepare, the putting-up time if we hope to get the results we look forward to in the future. Even giving a cup of water in Jesus' name will bring a reward (Matthew 10:42).

Did you know that nothing we do in this life will ever matter unless it is about loving God and loving the people He has made? God measures our lives based on how we love. According to God, we are here on this earth to love. Jesus said, "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me" (Matthew 25:40). We are to share our food with the hungry

and provide the poor wanderer with shelter; and when we see the naked, we are to clothe them. No work done in Jesus' name is wasted in light of eternal glory and reward.

Jesus clearly states that His followers will be about His business—to show love to the unloved and needy and to the hurting. We approach every day on the lookout to encourage others. In every conversation and encounter we try to do something or say something kind. We are to bless others by being thoughtful, considerate, gentle, and encouraging.

If we believe the only thing that will matter in heaven will be what we have done for Christ here on earth, then the vast majority of the time and money that goes through our hands will not count for much except what has been given to build Christ's Kingdom. God has one plan for saving the world, and we, His people, get to be a part of that plan.

One day we may hear, "Who did you bring?" May that include the people we loved, prayed over, and influenced—especially our families. That will be the treasures in heaven we hope to see some day.

"Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life" (1 Timothy 6:18-19).

Stensland, a charter member of Redeemer Free Lutheran, Canton, S.D., lives in Sioux Falls with her husband, Hans.

Wherever the Gospel is advancing, there is the front line. Wherever lives are being transformed by the love of Jesus, there is the leading edge of the Kingdom.

—Jonathan Trotter

It is more important that you should know about the reverses than about the successes of the war. We shall have all eternity to celebrate the victories, but we have only the few hours before sunset in which to win them. We are not winning them as we should, because the fact of the reverses is so little realized, and the needed reinforcements are not forthcoming ...

—Amy Carmichael

Next to the preaching of the Gospel (whereby God speaks to us and offers to give us all His grace and blessings) the highest and foremost work is prayer.

—Martin Luther

It is our unspeakable prerogative as liberated and released Christians that we may go out into the world of captives with the gospel whose mystery is the divine Word which creates what it bespeaks.

—Sverre Norborg

The Bible is not the basis of missions; missions is the basis of the Bible.

—Ralph Winter

Missions is the overflow of our delight in God because missions is the overflow of God's delight in being God.

—John Piper

Intergenerational MISSIONS

BY STEPHEN DEYSHER

Growing up on my family's farm in rural southeast Pennsylvania was quite a blessing. We all worshiped at the local Lutheran church, where more than six generations of my family lie in the cemetery. I was baptized and confirmed in that church, as were my parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, great-great-grandparents, and so on.

During my two years in confirmation classes, we studied many Bible verses. One verse in particular, Matthew 28:19—"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations ..."—while not making a great impression on me during that time, sure did become important to me when I returned from my first mission trip.

Some 15 years ago there was a presentation in church for an upcoming medical mission trip to Jamaica. My teenaged-daughter Sarah said to me, "Dad, I'm going!" I immediately thought, "This is a medical trip. What can my daughter do? She is too young. It's too dangerous." When I voiced my concerns to the doctor leading the trip, my very close friend, he told me I

that I had skills to offer for this mission trip, too. Well, Sarah wasn't going without her father protecting her, so off we went.

The Jamaican mission team was made up of doctors, nurses, dentists, pharmacists, physical therapists, and general helpers. We arrived in Jamaica, traveled to the southwest corner of the island, and settled into a Bible camp for the week. Our various small medical teams went out into rural Jamaica setting up daily clinics at a church or other gathering point for a village.

Most times when we arrived at a village, singing crowds were waiting for us. We set up shop in the church, many times having to hang up sheets on ropes to create walls for additional examining rooms. Medical care provided included pulling teeth, providing pain relievers and other medications, and stitching up injuries. By around 4 p.m., we had to pack up and get back to our camp before dark. It was hard to leave the church when there were still people to be seen.

Much ministry happened during those days in Jamaica. Perhaps most importantly, the prayers we prayed with the Jamaicans provided the most healing. We prayed and sang with all those gathered at the church before medical care was offered. Doctors, nurses, therapists, and pharmacists prayed with people before serving them. Those of us who felt we had no medical skills to offer for this trip suddenly realized as we prayed with those waiting: "This why I was called to be on this medical mission team."

I watched Sarah play with the young people. They marveled at her white skin and braided her long brown hair. With lots of smiles and giggles, there was no language barrier here. Was this why Sarah was called to go on this trip?

When I came home and saw my wife, Karen,

I burst into tears. I wasn't sad, but words couldn't describe my many feelings. They were tears of overwhelming thankfulness and joy for what God had given me. Sarah was asked to speak at our church about her experience. Normally a very well-spoken teenager who is talented at translating her feelings into words, she instead shed tears similar to mine.

Suddenly, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations ..." had more meaning to me. I realized that missions is not an option, it is a command. And I realized that I can do it. God gave me the gift of prayer early in my life when my parents taught me how to pray as soon as I could talk. I now knew I could use this gift to bring others to Christ—whether I am next door or as far away as Jamaica.

I have had the opportunity to go on several mission trips to Jamaica, Appalachia, Tanzania, and our local neighborhoods, traveling with my daughter, wife, and our son, Paul. Families serving together on a mission trip builds the family's





relationship in Christ, strengthening the bond between father and child, mother and child, and child and parent.

This past summer Karen and I had the opportunity to serve with the AFLC's intergenerational mission team which traveled to Brazil. We gathered at Chicago O'Hare airport flying in from our home churches in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Pennsylvania. Young women, teenagers, a family of four (mom, dad, young daughter, young son), a married couple who celebrated their one-year anniversary on the trip, and Karen and I—the old married couple—made up this varied intergenerational mission team. Our leader and final member of our team was a very competent young man who could speak Portuguese, the language of Brazil.

I immediately saw my son and daughter in the faces of the youths who were on our trip. I observed the family of four as mom and dad interacted with their children and between themselves. The youth of the trip learned from

the young married couple. We came together as a family as we served together in Brazil.

Many people ask what we did in Brazil. I could tell you about all the work projects we accomplished, like pouring a concrete floor of a new horse stable and garage, splitting and stacking firewood, or installing a window in the home of a member of the church. But did we touch people's lives and bring them closer to Christ? Only God knows for sure. But we spent time at the Miriam Children's Home playing with the kids, changing diapers, and celebrating birthdays. And we supported the Bible school, seminary and the staff. And we worshiped and prayed with the Brazilians and supported our AFLC missionary families.

Going on mission trips has taught me that everyone has a different group of skills that can be used by God. I've learned that you can go on a mission trip by walking down your street and helping your neighbor. My father taught me that. When I was about 6 years old, he took me with him as we walked one cold January day to

the neighbor's farm. Annie, a widow, lived in the farmhouse. The house had no running water and the outside water pump had frozen shut. We worked the pump free and pumped water for Annie into two buckets and carried them inside for her to use.

A woman said of my father at his funeral, "He never met a stranger." Reflecting on that statement, she was right; my father cared about everyone he met. Thank God our Heavenly Father has never met a stranger, either.

Deysher is a member of Living Faith Lutheran, Boyertown, Pa.

Photo by Andrew Abel.



BY PASTOR DEL PALMER

M

issions is an integral part of the fabric and DNA of the Association of

Free Lutheran Congregations. Even at the outset of the AFLC's foundation, missions took on an important role when, during the organizing conference of the AFLC in 1962, members formed the Missions Corporation as the first legal entity within the AFLC.

Flash forward nearly 46 years to Wednesday, June 21, 2006—another day that stands out in the history of AFLC World Missions. The setting was the Annual Conference at Warm Beach Camp and Conference Center in Stanwood, Wash. The WMF missions festival service was about to begin and there was an excitement in the air. The AFLC had not called a missionary for more than a decade. But that night two missionary families, Nate and Rhoda Jore and Tomasz and Miriam Chmiel, were about to be commissioned. The lights were dimmed so that the PowerPoint could be clearly seen as Nate spoke, explaining how God walked with him up to the point of becoming a missionary. Even though the lights were low, there was

electricity in the air as these two families were sent out as AFLC missionaries.

In the last decade, AFLC World Missions has since called 14 full-time individuals or families and placed them in service at home and on the foreign field. God has been at work through these missionaries, and they are daily examples of how our missions department is totally dependent on God's power and provision to reach the world.

We depend on God to provide our missionaries. A few years before 2006, many people in the AFLC were concerned when we had gone so many years without new missionaries. That concern caused us to pray for missionaries, much as Jesus instructed His disciples to pray, "The har-



DEPENDING ON GOD

Photo by Andrew Abel.

vest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field” (Luke 2:10).

We are so thankful that God has answered these prayers, calling missionaries through His Word and Spirit. Our missionaries have come from various backgrounds and programs within the AFLC: some from our Short-Term Assistant program, some from the former AFLBS Missionary Training Institute, some from our seminary, as well as other places. Those He called have gone through a lengthy process by

first becoming official candidates and then many spending years in preparation. We’ve called upon the Lord and depended upon Him through each step. He has been faithful.

Each missionary family that we send out requires an enormous amount of prayer and resources dedicated to them from us. When we multiply the needs by the number of workers God has provided and is preparing, the responsibility is overwhelming. We look at the needs and ask if it is more than the AFLC can provide. Actually, the physical and spiritual needs are far more than we can provide.

That’s the very point. Just as we are dependent on God to provide the missionaries, we are dependent on Him to provide the resources.

The Great Commission promises that the One who has all authority will go with us as we carry the gospel to all nations. Jesus reminds us that our Heavenly Father knows what we need, therefore we can focus on carrying out His will.

Consider Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 6:31-34: “So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

He calls us to reach the nations. We depend on Him to do it through us.

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

On making

DISCIPLES

BY PASTOR KEVIN OLSON

Biblical education is more than knowledge about the Bible, because the Word of God is more than a textbook. It is more than the memorization of Scripture, because God's Word is "living and active" (Hebrews 4:12). Biblical education is a process of discipleship; it must affect the whole person.

First, education belongs to the realm of gaining knowledge. The reason that we know about God is that He has revealed Himself and made Himself known. Second, biblical education focuses on molding the character of a person. Jesus said to Simon and Andrew, "Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Mark 1:17). Jesus was transforming the disciples as much as He was teaching them. Third, the end result of biblical education is action. It is training that demands a response. In Luke 10, an expert in the law asked Jesus, "Who is my neighbor?" (v. 29). In response, Jesus replied with the story of the Good Samaritan and concluded by saying, "Go and do likewise" (vs. 30-37).

Biblical education must

affect the head, for without knowledge we know nothing about God. It must affect the heart, because it is the heart that holds values. And it must affect our actions, so that ministry becomes the overflow from what is inside of us. If any one of the three is missing, the education is not complete.

KNOWLEDGE

One aspect of the Ambassador Institute training is the use of the parables to pass on the knowledge of the Word of God. God's Word must become a part of the student. The teachers at an Ambassador Institute oral training event in Uganda were questioned about the doctrines of salvation, baptism, the nature of man, and the nature of God. One by one, they answered these topics by sharing the stories that they had learned and how it revealed God and His work. They knew God's Word. It had become a part of them and sharing it was their natural response.

The knowledge of God and Christian doctrine are described throughout the Bible in the narratives, each one revealing further aspects about the kingdom and each narrative building on a previous one. Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." Jesus replied, "The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me" (John 14:8-9, NIV). The words of Jesus revealed the nature of God the Father, they exposed the heart of man, and they described the kingdom of heaven and the way of salvation.

CHARACTER

If someone gains the knowledge of God, it must affect his or her character. Students in Uganda who had studied the stories of the Bible were interviewed regarding the training they had



received. One student, David, was not home when a visiting team stopped at his house, so they asked his wife if the training had been helpful to him.

She said, "I have identified a change in his life, a change in his ministry, and a total change in his character."

Character can be best measured by what people say about you when you are not around. For David, the change had become obvious to his wife, so she also joined the Ambassador Institute training program.

In Matthew 18:1-4, Jesus corrected the disciples as a group when they argued about who was going to be first in the kingdom of heaven. Jesus used a child as the example of humility and challenged them to become like a child to be great in



the kingdom of heaven. From that point on, every child was a visual reminder of their selfish desire to be great and Jesus' instruction on humility.

MINISTRY

When the character of a person has changed, it will be reflected in his or her life and ministry. Fredrick is a milk distributor in Uganda. He is well known over a large area because the milk for the district goes through his office; he is full of joy and has a great reputation. A Muslim man talked to Fredrick about the training that he had received, asking, "How can we get this training as well?"

Fredrick said, "We can train you as well, but instead of meeting in the mosque, we can meet under the mango tree."

Outreach, ministry, and concern for unbe-

lievers are evidence of God's movement in the heart of a disciple. The parables are unique in their non-threatening approach to evangelism, which makes outreach a natural response.

The parables from Scripture had a threefold effect: they passed on the knowledge the disciples needed, they directed the disciple's character into a new way of thinking, and they changed the way the disciples lived. Making disciples is about walking through life with people in such a way that they gain the knowledge of God's Word, their character reflects their Lord, and the way that they live is patterned after Jesus. Luke 6:40 says, "Everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher."

It is possible to educate people so that they

know God's Word, understand doctrine, pass tests, and train others, yet miss the goal of making disciples. But making disciples was central to the work that Jesus was doing. A disciple is more than one who knows about Jesus; a disciple is one who is becoming like Jesus.

Olson, who is the department head of the Ambassador Institute, is a member of Emmaus Lutheran, Bloomington, Minn.

Photo by Andrew Abel.

JOURNEY MISSIONS TRAVELS TO INDIA

Team reflects on God's work

► RACHEL DRYBURGH

A lone Muslim, filling the village with his call to prayer, shattered the early morning silence. Later that first morning, while I was having devotions on the balcony, multitudes of cries for peace and prayers for healing—longings for comfort, for rain, for prosperity—rose with the saturating heat. The Hindus called out to their 300 million gods, to the statues in their windowsills. Muslims called out to Allah. They are so lost. Their cries fall on stone ears that can't understand, as useless for listening as a rock on the road.

"Those who lavish gold from the purse and weigh silver on the scale hire a goldsmith and he makes it into a god; They bow down, indeed they worship it. They lift it upon the shoul-

der and carry it. They set it in its place and it stands there, it does not move from its place. Though one may cry to it, it cannot answer. It cannot deliver him from his distresses" (Isaiah 46:6-7).

Coming to India with only the head knowledge of how many people don't know Christ, I didn't feel hopeless. "Two percent of 1.3 billion people? Not terrible statistics," I thought.

We arrived in Chirala, and as I began to take in all the temples and mosques, or the idols in what seems like every home we drove by, that mindset changed. Add on top of that the caste system, which demotes the lowest category of people—the untouchables—to almost less than human, or that

women are nowhere close to equal with men, it can be pretty overwhelming. That day on the balcony, a despairing thought overtook me: what in the world could I possibly do to even start reaching out to these people, let alone show them Christ?

The numbers seem impossible if we forget to factor in how great our God is. Before Jesus was sent to die, He knew how lost our world was. God knew the statistics and saw the darkness in the heart of every man and He still sent a Savior, planning Jesus' redemption before the world was made.

We heard of the work He is already doing in India, like the villages where many churches reside, spreading the message of the radical grace of Jesus to

the untouchables and giving them wonderful hope. We heard of a church in Agra where 300 first-generation converts from Hinduism can be found praising Him and where those from the highest caste are attending. We heard children at school singing of how Jesus never fails.

On mission trips, we love to hear of the miracles God works in other cultures, of how the paralyzed can walk or a cancer patient was healed. Though these are awesome, nothing can compare to the miracle of how He's making dead people, dead hearts, live. Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

Dryburgh, of Bethel Free Lutheran, Grafton, N.D., is a junior at AFLBS.

► MARQUELLE DAHL

I paused, my fingers still in the process of mixing together a heaping plate of Indian food. Five seconds earlier, I had eagerly scooped a handful of rice and curry into my mouth, but suddenly it tasted sour. I compelled myself to keep my lips tight, and forced a smile at Jon, our leader. He smiled back, oblivious of what I was experiencing. Slowly, I swallowed and finished the entire plate of food, counting down from three in my head every time I took a bite.

When I thought about missions before I went to India, I had a slim picture of what it really was. I thought about sharing the gospel 24/7, experiencing people coming to Christ left and right, and being on a spiritual high with everyone with whom I was working. Don't get me wrong, those things can happen, but mission work is hard. I loved India, but the cultural differences I experienced—high temperatures, strange clothes, strange food, and many other things—gave me a new perspective on missions.

I have a new admiration for full-time missionaries. We're all called to make disciples, but God gives us all different missions in our lives. Mission work is very rewarding, but can be very tough. When we weren't sharing about Jesus, we were still giving our time and energy to helping the ministry in different ways. I am motivated to support those on the mission field more than I ever have before. I'd encourage everyone to find a missionary to thank today, to pray for them, and to support them financially if able.

Isaiah 52:7 says, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns.'"

Dahl, a member of Our Saviour's Lutheran, Thief River Falls, Minn., is a junior at AFLBS.

► REBEKAH JORDAN

Wandanamaloo was one of the first words in Telegu we learned at training as we were preparing to go to India. It means "Praise the Lord," and is the traditional greeting in this part of India.

We arrived in Chirala, India, on August 1 and until we left on August 18, I could see the hand of God leading us and blessing us throughout this trip. While there we assisted Pastor Luther Dasari and his wife, Vardhini, who became our Indian parents. Working with the kids at St. Paul's Lutheran School and the Horeb Children's Home brought a joy to my heart.

While we were at the school we were given ten minutes in each class to teach Bible stories through an oral method. First we would tell the story and then have them act it out; the kids got a lot of laughs acting out the story. Then we would ask questions about the story. If we had time we would sing songs with them.

One day we went to the Bay of Bengal with the children from the Horeb Children's Home. That was an experience swimming in a punjabi! In the evenings we went to services in different congregations. Each member of the team gave a greeting and one of the guys on our team gave the sermon.

While there we experienced different celebrations like birthday parties and a baby shower. It was hard leaving Chirala and saying goodbye to the kids. We left and took the train to Agra, where we went to the Taj Mahal, Fort Agra, and the Mini Taj. Some even had a chance to ride a camel. I personally had a blast riding the camel.

I thank God for the ministry in India and I am blessed beyond words that I was able to take part in it.

Jordan is a member of Grace Free Lutheran, Valley City, N.D.



► JAYCE HALL

This trip has been extremely thought provoking and perspective altering. Through many experiences on the trip, ideas have been challenged, questions asked, and many questions answered. One experience in particular was interesting. We had a seminar with a group of people on the centrality of the Bible and having a biblical worldview. One particularly interesting man had an uncanny ability to stimulate your mind. He really understood a great deal of things and had great ideas to think about. One thing in particular that stood out to me was that we were talking about the Trinity and its necessity for Christianity, and he asked the question, “Why? Why is it necessary that it is a Trinity?”

I had never thought of that question before. I just believed that it was, simply because it was. But it really got us all thinking. And after giving our answers, he had some input. He talked about God not relying on mankind. In other religions, we see gods relying on man. But in Christianity we see God completely independent of man. For example, our God is a God of love, and love is a relationship. If God was just one then He would rely on us to love Him back. But because He is a Trinity, the Son can love the Father, through the



TOP: India Team members include (from left) Elizabeth Erickson, Rachel Dryburgh, Marquelle Dahl, Rebekah Jordan, Jack Jordan, Jayce Hall and Jon Nelson, department head of Journey Missions. ABOVE: The team visited the Taj Mahal on their way home.

Holy Spirit. What he was saying was that if God wasn't three in one, He would have to rely on man for things. That was extremely profound to me.

Hall, from Fargo, N.D., is a senior at AFLBS.

N

o. Never.
Not me, Lord.”
Those are
dangerous
words to say.
Moses found

that out the hard way. As did
Jonah. And Peter.

I’ve had a couple of memorable “No. Never. Not me, Lord” moments. One was my call into ministry. Another was my call from Home Missions to plant a church in the suburban sprawl surrounding the Gateway area of Mesa, Ariz. I had previously served Calvary Free Lutheran in Mesa as a parish builder and silently vowed as I left for seminary that I would never move back to Mesa or pastor a church here. I had no hard feelings. I loved the ministries, the tireless snow-bird congregation, the limitless hiking in the Superstition Wilderness, the gorgeous weather (eight months out of the year), and the wonderful Mexican burritos. But I was dead-set against returning. “No. Never. Not me, Lord.”

That was 2011. Plans for a church plant were already in the works. We spent time praying about the new work. We even held a few outreach events with the name *Gateway Gathering*. As I left for seminary, someone joked about the possibility of calling me in four years as pastor of the Gateway Gathering. I responded, piously, “For your sakes, I hope you find a pastor before then.” But I silently prayed, “No. Never. Not me, Lord.”

During seminary, I worked in the Home Missions office. We prayed that God would raise up a man to plant a church in Mesa. Call letters went out. I know this; I typed them up and sent them out! But none of the

BY PASTOR RYAN TONNESON

men felt the Lord’s leading toward Mesa. As I left the Home Missions office for my seminary internship, various individuals within Home Missions mentioned the possibility of calling me for the Gateway Gathering. Again, I expressed my hope that somebody else would set up and tackle the challenge. “No. Never. Not Me, Lord.”

March 1—the date that seminary interns could begin to consider calls—came quicker than expected. And sure enough, 14 congregational inquiries and nine interviews later, I had three letters of call on my desk, with a fourth on the way. The third letter was from the Home Missions office on behalf of the Gateway Gathering. So, one by one, in the order in which I received the letters of call, I prayed through them. I did not feel peace about the first, and so I declined. The same with the second. As I opened the letter from Home Missions, I prayed, “No. Never. Not me, Lord.”

However, the more I prayed about the call to plant the Gateway Gathering, the more at peace I felt. One by one, the Lord was answering my objections. Piece by piece, He was taking apart the wall that I had built. Gradually, my tune changed: “Here I am, Lord. Send me.”

In June, my wife, Liz, and I moved to Mesa. It has been a wild ride, both personally and ministry-wise. During the first full week of July, we moved into our house, hosted 32 children for vacation Bible school at an area charter school, and our daughter was born. Yes, it was a busy week.

Things have slowed down since then, but we are still pressing on. Weekly home Bible studies began in September. A community open house for the Gateway Gathering was held at the end of September at the charter school. We had have food for the families and games for the

children. We also gave away information about the Gateway Gathering, Home Missions, and the AFLC to promote this new church plant.

Looking ahead, we have two outreach events planned at the charter school. In October, the Gateway Gathering will host a family night, and in November, we will have our harvest festival, in which we hope to draw in more than 500 people.

Most importantly, however, we desire to begin worship services in January. The Valley of the Sun is a spiritually dark place. Mormonism, with its empty promises, moralizing, and man-becoming-gods, is abundant. You could almost count the number of miles you’ve driven based on the number of Mormon meeting houses you pass. On the opposite end of the spectrum, Mesa is home to the down-and-out: people who have run out of options, those who have nowhere else to go. Both groups, and everyone in between, need to know that Jesus Christ died *for them*. The gospel needs to be shared.

In the few short months since I have relocated to Mesa, I have realized one important truth: The pastor cannot do it alone. Parish builders can play a vital role in the starting of new church plants. “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few” (Luke 10:2). Would you consider becoming a part of this new work as a parish builder? We need musicians, Sunday school teachers, and anyone who desires to see God’s Kingdom grow. One word of advice: Don’t ever say, “No. Never. Not me, Lord.” A much more appropriate phrase is, “Thy will be done.”

Tonneson, a 2015 graduate of AFLTS, serves the Gateway Gathering, a Home Missions church plant in Mesa, Ariz.



NO

NEVER.

NOT

ME

LORD.

The Net Stats

Visitors represented:

- 36 states
- 31 countries

Snacks baked:

- 667 dozen!



THE NET: MEETING THE NATIONS

BY ANJA FERKINGHOFF

Why am I able to evangelize on the mission field, but not easily at home? This puzzles me, especially when I notice nations crowding around me and naturally becoming a part of my daily life. It is a picture that almost blurs the line between a mission trip and a trip to the grocery store. The world has found a new home. And even though the term *missions* usually refers to the assignment of going out *into the world* and spreading our faith, I want to take a look at a mission where the world is coming to us.

In the long winter months, with its diminished population and its remote setting, this place seems small, innocent, and without much potential. But once the summer sun rises in the sky, it develops into the center of international encoun-

ters—Alaska. This mission field is unique in its diversity. When we arrived in remote Naknek, we found people from all nations coming together in a space-limited town: the Hispanic from California and the Muslim from Somalia, the poor mother from Honduras and the wealthier student from Norway. There were people who come to Alaska annually, and people who spontaneously made the trip. There were people at the end of their strength, their dreams, and money, and people with new dreams and plans.

The Net (a coffee shop ministry of the Alaska Mission) offers the perfect meeting place for all these people. There was, for example, a homeless woman warming herself with a cup of tea while hoping for a better future. And if it wasn't for this place to meet on the mission field, I would have not been

there to tell her of the hope she can have in Jesus.

Some may ask, "What do missionaries do all day anyway? Drink coffee?" The paradox seems to be that being on the mission field involves less preaching of the Word of God and more living the Word of God—in love. I learned what it means to live so that people ask questions. And the answer was always found in the Bible. In Alaska you sometimes communicate more with a heartfelt smile than a study on the Roman Road. Smiles leave an impression. Many visitors gave tribute to The Net and expressed their gratefulness for the generosity of the ministry: free cookies, coffee, and Wi-Fi. They also appreciated the welcoming and loving spirit that resides at The Net and noticed an unfamiliar peace that they couldn't explain. Those of us who volunteered time there

offered visitors free Bibles and were always available to talk.

Of course the Lord provides all the love for us to give away. How is it then that we can easily evangelize on the mission field but not at home? Maybe we have to become more aware of our individual surroundings that are mission fields and live out the Word of God in a more selfless manner. And if you want to begin reaching the unreached on a designated mission field, The Net in Naknek needs you and all of your friends next summer. Consider your calling; strive after the Lord. This was missions in only 500 words. Imagine what it could be in a whole summer.

After graduating from AFLBS this spring and volunteering in Alaska this summer, Ferkinghoff has returned to her home in Würzburg, Germany.

THE PRAYER LEAGUE

AFLC Mission Partners



BY MIRIAM RAMSE

The World Mission Prayer League (WMPL) exists because of Jesus! The love of God enables ministry to a world in need. Just as Jesus came to set this world right, WMPL responds to the commands of the Word of God to go and do likewise.

The mission statement of WMPL reads: “We are a Lutheran community committed to know Christ; pray for the advance of his kingdom; share the gospel and ourselves with those who do not know him; and encourage Christians everywhere in this global task.”

WMPL is evangelical, Lutheran, and confessional. Its history encompasses three predecessor bodies, the first dating back to 1891 with the founding of the American Board of the Santal Mission, merging into WMPL in 1972. The South American Mission Prayer League was founded in 1937, and the Lutheran World Crusade merged into WMPL in 1945.

WMPL has sent more than a thousand

missionaries through the years to more than 24 countries. At present, approximately 100 missionaries are at work in 20 countries around the world, involved in pioneering service and outreach ministries in Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe, and Latin America. We are a praying “league,” a community of men and women who are committed to prayer as the working methodology for advancing the gospel of Christ. There are about 6,000 committed praying members, as well as many congregations around the United States and Canada and elsewhere in the world.

In addition to prayer, WMPL distinctives are: the primacy of evangelism, Lutheran heritage, and undertaking mission as a community—whether lay or ordained, sharing the task together. It also includes commissioned living, simplified lifestyle, and non-solicitation, since God owns all and provides needs in answer to prayer.

The urgent challenge of sharing the good news of the life transforming power of Jesus is extended to the church at large. The

people of God join in fellowship to encourage and support the mission of God in the world. WMPL welcomes individuals and congregations to join in the mission endeavors of prayer, fellowship, and responding to the call to go and make disciples of all nations.

WMPL headquarters is located in Minneapolis. The office staff and members of the Council of the Prayer League prayerfully join together in serving God, guided by the Holy Spirit and strengthened through the fellowship of believers to the glory of God.

More information about the World Mission Prayer League can be found at wmpl.org.

Ramse, Lake Crystal, Minn., daughter of the late Pastor Lawrence and Gola Dynneson, served with her husband David as WMPL missionaries in Nepal. She is currently a member of the WMPL Home Council.

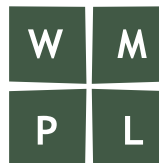


Photo provided by WMPL

TRAINING IN APOLOGETICS

*Mobley attends
Strasbourg academy*

Apologetics might be an unfamiliar word to some, and it might be an uncomfortable word to others. But it's an integral component of Christian living and an area where the Church has largely fallen short, says AFLTS Dean Pastor Wade Mobley.

Mobley attended the Academy of Apologetics, Evangelism, and Human Rights earlier this summer in order to reinforce his understanding of apologetics and philosophy. The academy was held over the course of two weeks last July in Strasbourg, France, and was directed by John Warwick Montgomery.

The academy focused on several different categories of apologetics.

Apologetics is a defense of Christian truth claims against false accusations by simplifying and explaining the nature of the Christian faith. Mobley believes

that answering those false accusations is vitally important.

"As attacks come against the Christian faith," Mobley said, "the answers to those attacks can become more complicated and profound as the attacks become more complicated and profound. If you do not answer those, eventually someone is going to interpret your silence as a lack of answer."

Mobley says that a collective Christian silence in response to many attacks has been costly.

"We are terribly under attack," Mobley said. "And one of the reasons these attacks have been so devastating to Christians in America is that we do not understand the basics of our faith."

One of the focuses of study during the week was an evaluation of the current state of apologetics. When Christians fail to respond to competing truth claims, this silence affects not only the world we live in, but also our households and our children.

"When we believe that stuff, or when we don't have an adequate defense for that we can't go on the offense," Mobley said. "So we typically just crawl back into our dark hole and shut our mouths and talk about how bad the culture is. And our children misinterpret our silence not as ignorance, but that we're wrong."

But apologetics can also benefit the lost. Apologetics and evangelism go hand-in-hand, says Mobley.

"The purpose of apologetics is evangelism," Mobley said. "When apologetics thrives, evangelism thrives."

Mobley appreciated the distinctively Lutheran approach the academy professors took regarding apologetics and evangelism. They taught that apologetics should start at the same place we start our theology: the foot of the cross.

The unbeliever might not regard the Gospels as sacred text, but if they instead approach it simply as purported biographies of Jesus they will put the documents to the same test as other biographical documents. And the evidence clearly shows that the Bible is substantially true and reliable.

"We want to get to the cross as quickly as possible," Mobley said.

Mobley hopes that by emphasizing apologetics and equipping believers to defend their faith and respond to the lies of the world, souls will be won and lives will be changed.

"Apologetics used appropriately fuels gospel conversation," Mobley said. "When we don't answer the questions that come our way, we're missing an opportunity."

Kneeland, a 2013 graduate of AFLBS, is a member of Atonement Free Lutheran, Arlington, Wash.

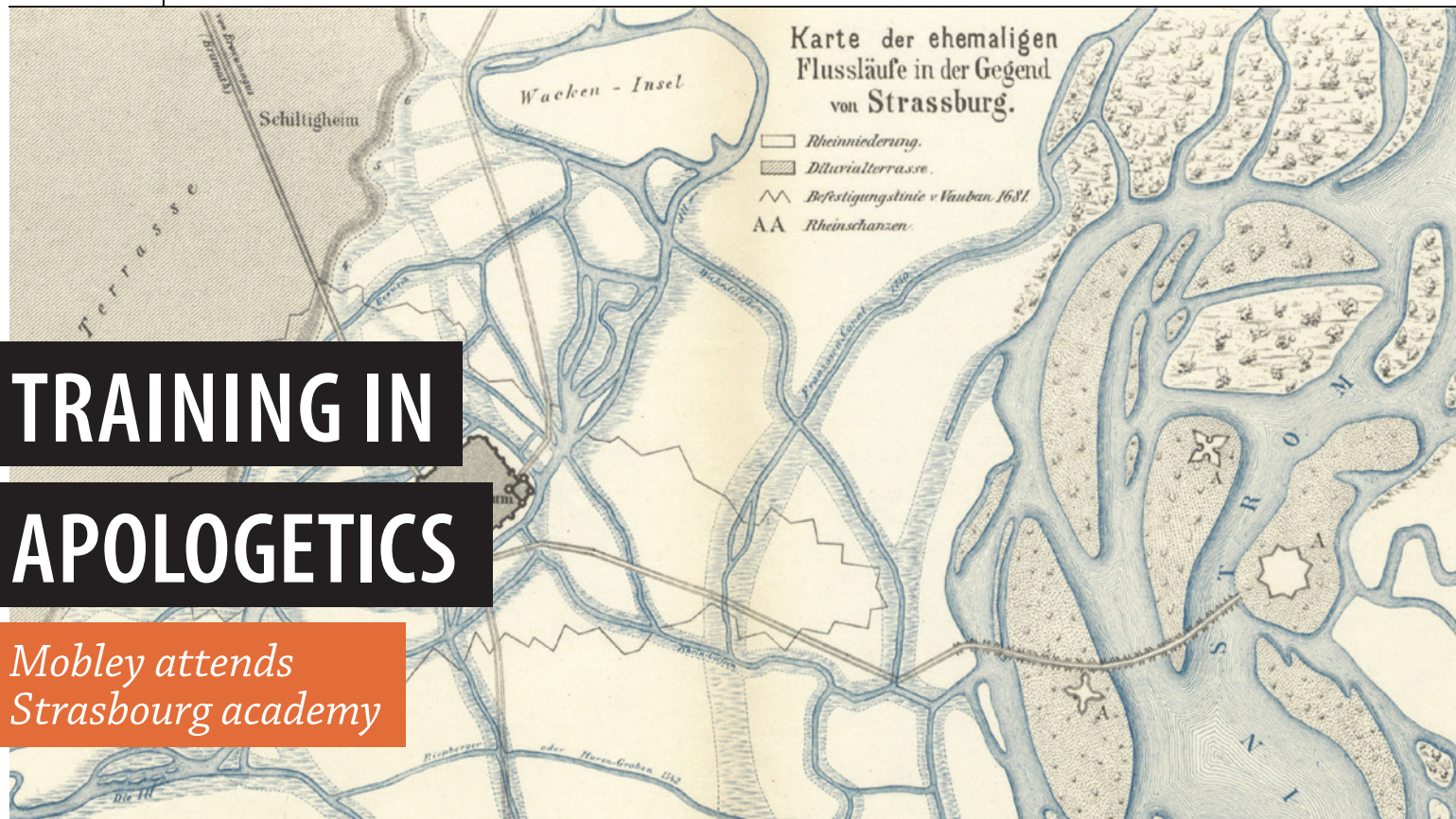


Photo provided by The British Library

BY ANDREW KNEELAND



During the last few months, the Lord has impressed upon me the importance of the concept of intentional evangelism. A quick word study helps me understand that the word *intentional* means deliberate, purposeful, or planned. The word *evangelism* means the preaching or declaration of the gospel. *Intentional evangelism*, then, is the deliberate and purposeful preaching or declaration of the gospel.

Jesus was an intentional evangelist. Over and over again in the Gospels, we see Jesus with and amongst the crowds. In Matthew 14:14, “He (Jesus) saw a large crowd, and felt compassion for them and healed their sick.” In another passage we see Jesus’ heart as He states that these crowds are like “sheep without a shepherd.” He was with the people so that they would be drawn to know Him and come to faith in Him. This was the mission that God had sent Him to do; He was to seek and save the lost.

In Mark 1:31, Jesus came to Simon’s mother-in-law who was ill. He met her in her need, raising her up and healing her. As the leper came to Jesus (Mark 1:40-41) in his need, Jesus

again was moved by compassion and healed him. One of the greatest examples of Jesus being an intentional evangelist is His encounter with the Samaritan woman in John 4. Here Jesus used a simple conversation to begin a relationship with a woman, which led to many in this Samaritan city believing in Jesus.

Am I an intentional evangelist? Am I taking every opportunity to be with people, to meet people, to build relationships with people, and to lead them to Jesus Christ?

Since confession is good for the soul, I will readily admit that the Holy Spirit has been convicting me of the many opportunities that I have had and completely blown. As God has been chiseling away at me, I have been praying for more opportunities to share. I have experienced the Lord opening door after door as I become more deliberate, purposeful, or intentional in evangelism.

For example, I spend a lot of time on commercial airlines and I am starting to pray for my seatmates when I buy that ticket. I am praying

that God will give me favor and opportunities to share with my seatmates. Guess what is happening? Recently I had the privilege of sitting with people from Jordan and behind them was a family of Jewish background. I was able to share my testimony. What was even more amazing is that I also had the opportunity of sharing my faith with a flight attendant. I later found out that this flight attendant was a new believer who had recently come to Christ as the result of the loss of her spouse. I was blessed as I shared.

What about that grocery clerk? Your fellow worker? Your neighbor? Who is sharing Jesus with them? Jesus commissioned us to go. There is no other plan. Begin by praying for them, look for ways to build that relationship with them, and watch God work as you seek to be an intentional evangelist.

Nash, a member of Solid Rock Free Lutheran, Anoka, Minn., is the director of Home Missions.

BEING INTENTIONAL

BY PASTOR PAUL NASH

Shiloh Free Lutheran meets at Terra Sancta



Shiloh Free Lutheran, an AFLC Home Missions church plant, is meeting at Terra Sancta Retreat Center, Rapid City, S.D.

The contract with Terra Sancta frees up staff from having to set up and tear down the sanctuary each Sunday. The retreat center is owned by the Catholic Diocese of Western South Dakota.

“Now that we have a regular, inviting place to worship, we can prayerfully concentrate on the work of inviting and bringing souls in,” said Pastor Michael Brandt, who is working with the congregation in its initial phase.

Pastor Andy and Monica Coyle have accepted a call to serve the congregation. They recently returned to the United States after serving in Odessa, Ukraine, with East European Missions Network.

The congregation meets at 10 a.m. Sundays. The retreat center is located at 2101 City Springs Road, Rapid City, S.D. 57702. For more information, contact Home Missions at (763) 545-5631.



The Terra Sancta Retreat Center, located in Rapid City, S.D., is the new home for Shiloh Free Lutheran.

WMF

WOMEN'S
MISSIONARY
FEDERATION



P

astor Appreciation Month reminds me of how much my husband's congregations appreciate

him and his ministry to them. It also reminds me of God's calling on Rodney's heart and my need to support him in this calling. Some speculate that this recognition of pastors will cause them to become proud and arrogant. And in doing so, they may begin to compromise biblical truth in an effort to attract the applause of people. On the other side, and in a beautiful way, Pastor Appreciation Month can foster a humble, servant attitude which will spur these men on to serve their congregations with a renewed fervor.

Truth be told, our congregations do encourage my husband and me each October, but they also refresh our spirits in the other months of the year. Our parishioners encourage us in a variety of ways such as pro-

APT APPRECIATION

BY CANDICE JOHNSON

viding meat from freshly butchered cattle, delivering warm cookies fresh from the oven, the gift of farm fresh eggs from the hen house and other produce, presenting us with a new table runner fresh off of the sewing machine, or offering refreshing hugs and prayers during some difficult days in the ministry. These unexpected acts of appreciation actually keep us humbly grateful for the privilege to serve such a caring group of God's people. God has provided for us through His precious people.

Last January I was reminded that God can provide more than just the bare essentials. The Scriptures state that God is "able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think (Ephesians 3:20). He can go *beyond* our basic needs and luxuriously—even extravagantly—provide for us. What happened last January? Well, in recognition of Rodney's 25 years of service to the congregations here in Stanley, N.D., we were gifted a cruise to Alaska. To us, that gift was beyond extravagant. It was luxurious. Since we

could never thank the congregations enough for this amazing gift, we thank God for a wonderful congregation in which to serve Him.

Let's be honest here. There wouldn't be a Pastor Appreciation Month if there wasn't a congregation for him to pastor. As admirable and encouraging as it is for a congregation to honor its pastor during this special occasion, it is vital to the work of the Lord that the pastor and his family appreciate the congregation, too. May the members of each congregation be appreciated for the ways they use their time and talents to serve the Lord.

Remember to express your appreciation when the opportunity arises.

Johnson, who has finished up a term on the Board of Publications and Parish Education, is a member of Our Savior's Free Lutheran, Stanley, N.D.

Living Hope congregation purchases church property

First services held in September in former Presbyterian church

In August, members of Living Hope Church, St. Michael, Minn., acquired a building outside of Rogers, Minn., for their ministry. The AFLC congregation has spent 13 years in the northwest suburbs of Minneapolis before the Lord led them to this property. The congregation now occupies a historic Episcopal facility with portions that are more than 100 years old. The congregation, which is currently served by Pastor Brian Ricke, began its worship services in the new home in September.



Forness installed at Pipestone



Nelson installed in Badger, MN

Pastor David Nelson was installed Aug. 23 at Badger Creek and Oiland Free Lutheran, Badger, Minn., with Pastor Terry Olson, assistant to the president, officiating. Pictured are (from left) Scott Erickson, Pastor Olson, Tina Erickson, Pastor Nelson, Joan Erickson, Gary Erickson, and Paul Robinson.

Illinois church hosts giveaway

Members of St. Petrie Evangelical Lutheran, Leland Ill., held their third Helping Hands, Loving Hearts giveaway on Aug. 8. Gently used clothing, toys, household items and new basic school supplies were given away to folks in need from several area towns. People were greeted and offered gospel tracts, cookies, and bottles of water. It was a wonderful opportunity to share Christ with others and have fellowship with church members.



Pastor Seth Forness was installed Sept. 13 as associate pastor of youth and families at Christ the King Free Lutheran, Pipestone, Minn., with Pastor Lyndon Korhonen, AFLC president, officiating. Pictured are (from left) Pastor Tim Johnson, Pastor Forness, his wife, Brittany, and daughter Annika, and Pastor Korhonen.

Solid Rock breaks ground for education wing



Members of Solid Rock Free Lutheran, Anoka, Minn., held a ground-breaking service on Aug. 2. The congregation's plans will add an educational wing to the current church building, which will include classrooms, office space, storage and restrooms. (Submitted photo)

Schools host Summer Institute of Theology



The Summer Institute of Theology was held Aug. 3-7 on the campus of the AFLC Schools in Plymouth, Minn. Attendees took part in four classes offered, including: "The Doctrine of Man," by Pastor Steve Mundfrom, "Studies in Galatians," by Dr. Phil Haugen, "Declaring and Explaining God's Word," by Pastor Jim Johnson, and "Illustrating and Applying God's Word," by Pastor Steve Lombardo.



In Memoriam

Florence Hiepler

Florence Lillian (Borstad) Hiepler, 94, of Camarillo, Calif., died Aug. 21. Born Nov. 19, 1920, in Tioga, N.D., she was the daughter of Adolph and Bertha Borstad. She married Pastor Orville Hiepler Aug. 22, 1945.

She attended Tioga High School and Augsburg College in Minneapolis, Minn., where she graduated with a degree in English education. She taught in McGregor and Tioga. After marriage, they served churches in Pasco, Wash., Sacramento, Hawthorne, Camarillo, and Oceanside, Calif. Her gifting of music and teaching greatly complimented her husband's work, and her passion for friendships and hospitality inspired their many parishioners to join tours that they led to the Holy Land, Africa and throughout Europe, including Norway her ancestral home. In 2010 they returned to Camarillo.

Surviving are her husband, one son, Mark (Michelle) Hiepler, Camarillo; two daughters, Dorene (Curt) McDougall, Golden Valley, Minn., and Ilene (Robert) Bradberry, Lake Forest, Calif.; one sister, Lorrayne Lindsoe, Fargo, N.D.; ten grandchildren; and eight great-grandchildren.

The service was held Aug. 29 at Good Shepherd Church, Camarillo and burial was at Conejo Mountain Memorial Park. In lieu of flowers, gifts may be given to the Florence Hiepler Memorial Scholarship Fund, C/O Orville Hiepler, 5021 Verdugo Way, Ste 105, P.O. Box 264, Camarillo, CA 93012.

PEOPLE & PLACES

Pastor David Tilney, Loxley, Ala., has accepted a call to be the associate pastor of St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church (AFLC), Cloquet, Minn., where he will serve together with Pastor Jerome Nikunen.

Pastor Harald Schoubye resigned from Living Word Lutheran, Vernon, British Columbia, and moved to Winnipeg where his wife, Cynthia, has been undergoing extensive cancer treatment.

Pastor Brian Smith has been installed at Bethel Lutheran Church, Frontier, Saskatchewan. Applying for membership on the AFLC-Canada clergy roster, he formerly served Rock of Ages Lutheran Brethren Church, Saskatoon.

Two AFLC-Canada congregations in Alberta, **St. Matthew's** in Edmonton and **CHRIST Centered Fellowship** in Camrose, have voted to withdraw from the AFLC and apply for membership in the Church of the Lutheran Brethren.

Pastor Daniel Antal was installed July 12 at Trinity Free Lutheran, Grand Forks, N.D., by Pastor Terry Olson, who served the congregation for the last ten years, officiating. Antal graduated from the Free Lutheran Seminary in May after serving a year-long internship under Olson at Trinity. He began his duties at Trinity in June.

Pastor Brad Novacek was ordained Sept. 25 at Our Saviour's Lutheran, Thief River Falls, with Pastor Lyndon Korhonen, AFLC president, officiating. Novacek, who has accepted a call to serve Mt. Sion Lutheran, Kasson, Minn., graduated from the Free Lutheran Seminary in May.

Pastor Mike Klenner has resigned from Immanuel Free Lutheran, Centerville, S.D., and Salem Free Lutheran, Freeman, S.D. He plans to relocate to the Houghton, Mich., area and await the Lord's leading.

Luke Tempte has accepted a call as the first full-time youth ministry director at Grace Free Lutheran, Maple Grove, Minn. He began his duties there in August. Luke and his wife Bethany (Papillon) are from Emmaus Lutheran, Bloomington, Minn., where he has worked with the youth for the past three years.

The church buildings of two AFLC-Brazil Free Lutheran congregations were recently heavily damaged. The building in **Lar Paraná**, Campo Mourão, was heavily damaged by a fire on Sept. 2. The building in **Iguaçu Falls** was also damaged by a hail storm.

The **Youth Ministries Department** has announced three upcoming events: The FLY Federation Council meeting will be held at 9 a.m. Oct. 17 on the campus of our AFLC Headquarters and Schools, Plymouth, Minn. Youth Workers Weekends will be held Jan. 8-10, 2016, and FLY Beyond will be held June 18-22, 2016. For more information on these events, visit the Youth Ministries website at aflc.org/youth.

The annual AFLC **Pastor's Retreat** was held Sept. 15-17 at the Association Retreat Center, located near Osceola, Wis. Dr. Richard Wells (pictured, left), president and professor of humanities at John Witherspoon College, Rapid City, S.D., was the featured speaker on the theme of "The Gift of Encouragement." Other speakers included Pastors Wayne Hjermstad, Paul Kneeland, Wade Mobley (pictured, right) and Terry Olson. The WMF also held a luncheon with Michele Mobley as guest speaker.



AUGUST MEMORIALS

AFLBS

John Steendahl

AFLTS

Becky Valdez (6)

Mildred Berge

Ruth Claus

Michael Smith

Evangelism

Payton Anderson

Home Missions

Darlene Davidson

Florence Hiepler

World Missions

Gale Valtinson

Vi Turner

... in honor of

AFLTS

Pastor Wade Mobley

Pastor Rick Long

AFLC BENEVOLENCES January 1-August 31, 2015

FUND	REC'D IN AUGUST	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$22,275	\$231,256	\$213,530
Evangelism	8,005	94,570	97,144
Youth Ministries	6,087	73,624	91,264
Parish Education	11,531	83,219	90,519
Seminary	14,075	179,084	192,347
Bible School	56,256	351,441	335,792
Home Missions	30,353	280,102	289,937
World Missions	29,826	265,742	316,888
Personal Support	43,223	350,490	288,696
TOTALS	\$221,632	\$1,909,528	\$1,916,117

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

IT'S TIME TO LIFT UP OUR EYES

“Did you not say, ‘There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest?’ Behold, I say to you, left up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest” (John 4:35).

Example One: Some will recall an all-boards meeting several years ago when the possibility of missionary outreach in Africa was introduced. Dr. Norvald Yri, a guest instructor from Norway, spoke of African fields that were white for harvest and reminded us what happens when the grain is not gathered in. “The harvest will be lost,” he declared.



Pastor Robert Lee

Example Two: A pastor told of a mission congregation that once grew and flourished mainly by means of neighborhood evangelism. Now the congregation is aging and declining, but seems to be comfortable with its mission emphasis ... to other parts of the world instead of to its own neighborhood.

Example Three: There’s an area of the Twin Cities where five Lutheran congregations once thrived. Today there is one small congregation. It no longer meets in any of the church buildings that formerly housed the older congregations, allegedly because they were too costly to heat and maintain. The neighborhoods are still full of people, and all the old church buildings are now the home of other denominations.

“Lift up your eyes,” Jesus said. What will we see? “Look to the fields, that they are white for harvest.” The people whom we see may not be like us, which could make us quite uncomfortable. It is striking to read the words in John’s gospel that precede the verse above, for they tell of a people, the Samaritans, with whom the Jews would have no dealings (v. 9), and of a woman with a bad reputation. Her life-changing encounter with Christ led others to seek Him, too, and it is in the midst of this account that He

tells His disciples to lift up their eyes and look to the fields.

We lift up our eyes and see a potential harvest in many lands where AFLC World Missions sponsors outreach: Brazil, Mexico, India, Uganda, and Ecuador. There has also been a partnership with mission agencies like World Mission Prayer League, East European Missions Network, Lutheran Bible Translators, Wycliffe Bible Translators/Distant Shores Media, Norwegian Lutheran Missions, and others. It’s encouraging, too, to hear of the outreach of the Lutheran Mission Society and our AFLC Home Missions missionaries through the radio ministry and to the scattered villages in southwestern Alaska.

Are we lifting up our eyes to see the potential harvest closer to home? A personal note: I once said to the seminary men that there was not an AFLC congregation without a mission field. A somewhat annoying student (who will go unnamed) challenged me, saying that I didn’t know all of the congregations and so there could be one. Accepting his challenge, I granted that theoretically there could be one ... but I didn’t believe it.

Our Fundamental Principles suggest that the harvest field *within* the congregation should not be forgotten. “Only preach to Christians tonight,” the pastor said to the guest evangelist, “because everyone here is a member of our church.” But members of the organized congregation are not, in every instance, believers, and may even be deriving false comfort from their church membership (Principle No. 4). Therefore, the “quickenings preaching” of the Word of God, with the law showing us our sin and the gospel showing us our Savior, is most needful. The sharp sword of the law is sadly too often used to spank, when its Spirit-

directed purpose is to kill.

Perhaps there are some Samaritans in our neighborhoods, as well. No, not literally, but the world has truly come to us in North America, and even our smaller communities have become home to people of different races and nationalities. Years ago the president of one of the Lutheran denominations stated that the ships weren’t coming anymore; in other words, that we could not count on cradle Lutherans coming from northern Europe. But the truth is that the ships are still coming, and if there are Lutherans among the passengers, they

Perhaps there are some Samaritans in our neighborhoods, as well. ... the world has truly come to us in North America.

are most likely Ethiopians or Liberians or Tanzanians or Namibians. And most of the passengers are probably not Christians. Do we see them? Jesus died and rose again for them, too.

May God grant us open eyes to see and willing hands to serve in the harvest!



International Days of Prayer for the Persecuted Church

- Nov. 1, 8, 15
- Visit idop.org for more information

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR
3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

Periodicals

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

association retreat center

IT'S NOT ABOUT ME

BY DAN SHILSON

The 2015 theme verse at the Association Retreat Center is Galatians 2:20, “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” We’ve boiled it down to a key phrase in our promotional material: “It’s not about me.”

God’s provision of volunteer workers here over the last year has been nothing short of inspiring. Many ARC volunteers—we call the missionaries—have sacrificed personal time cleaning, working in the kitchen, building, planting, etc. This missionary attitude was

exemplified at a record-setting Family Camp in August as dozens of campers stepped up to help in all areas of service for each other at camp. These selfless acts encourage the staff to live out Galatians 2:20, “It’s not about me.”

Digging into Paul’s word choice of “being crucified with Christ” not only inspires an end to my own selfish desires, but also turns my focus toward the cross.

The phrase, “I no longer live” does not deny the uniqueness God has created in each of us, but relinquishes control to Christ who “lives in me.” I am to serve others above my own wants, give others the benefit of the doubt, offer grace in all situations, and, above all, show

love to those whom I may find unlovely. Again, it’s not about me.

When I read, “The life I now live ... I live by faith,” I know I can trust Christ to never leave me. Instead, He will guide me. Can I ever live up to what God wants me to do? Yes, because through my weakness He shows His strength. Individuality remains intact, but my primary motivation for my life is radically changed. I keep my human body, but my selfish right has been destroyed: It’s not about me.

This new identity is fueled by the Holy Spirit. He enables me to let go of the old self so that I can grasp the new. God wants from me that which is so hard—even gut-wrenching at

times—to give up: my sin. In exchange for this, He gives me His complete redemption so that I can stand “inexpressibly pure, absolutely righteous, profoundly justified” (*My Utmost For His Highest*, Oswald Chambers) with abandoned devotion to Him. I can be His hands here on earth. It’s not about me.

On behalf of the ARC staff, we are thankful to be a part of this unique AFLC ministry. We are also very privileged to have you partner and serve us, and serve with us.

Shilson is the director of development, marketing and events for the ARC.