

THE 

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LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR



**Mission
transitions**



THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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ENCOURAGING
WORD

ON MISSION FOR CHRIST

BY PASTOR TOM PARRISH

I have sat in many congregational meetings where the leadership struggled to come to consensus on its mission and vision. While it seemed like a good exercise, I have come to wonder why we did it at all. The churches I served were all biblically focused and desired to abide in the truth. I am most amazed that we, and all too many churches, have somehow overlooked the very clear mission statement written in II Corinthians 5:18-21: "All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

Consider the clear definition of our mission:

- God the Father took the initiative in His beloved son to restore us to Himself (vs. 18).
- As a direct result our ministry has been given to us through Jesus (vs. 18).
- This broken world of people is restored by the voluntary gift of Jesus (vs. 19).
- We have a very clear message of Jesus' sacrificial life and resurrection (vs. 19).
- We are declared ambassadors for Christ, we have the authority to speak for Jesus (vs. 20).

- Our ambassadorship is to represent God the Father calling all sinners to Jesus (vs. 20).

And then consider the content of our message from verses 20-21: Jesus did it all by His shed blood and death on the cross, and our mission is to passionately call others to faith and lifelong discipleship in Him.

Every church has the exact same mission revealed in these verses. How each one specifically carries out that mission within the context of its location is as varied as its membership. However, the goal is identical: to call all people to reconciliation with God in Jesus Christ. Believers are the only ones who have that specific mission. Believers are the only people who reveal the Jesus of the Bible to a lost world. Believers are the only people who can accurately proclaim the Word of God.

Every church that believes in the Word of God and Jesus Christ as Savior needs to make II Corinthians 5:18-21 its mission statement. These verses need to be taught over and over to the church. Leadership needs to make sure that everything we do as the church is founded on, centered on, and executed from these verses. When we get the mission right, then we, as the body of Christ, will be united and the most powerful force in the world in the hands of Jesus Christ.

Parrish, Mendota Heights, Minn., operates Stepping Into Eternity Ministries, which develops discipleship materials and seminars (toeternity.org).

But marvelous, unbelievable as it is, God was in the flesh, reconciling the world unto Himself. He has sent word of this reconciliation and sent us along the world's pathways with this word.

—T.F. Gullickson

Others without the motivation of Christian compassion are sometimes involved in helping their fellow human beings. But the Christian goes into the world with an extra dimension in his social concern. We go in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

—Billy Graham

If there is no passionate love for Christ at the center of everything, we will only jingle and jangle our way across the world, merely making a noise as we go.

—William Wilberforce

God is a God of missions. He wills missions. He commands missions. He demands missions. He made missions possible through His Son. He made missions actual in sending the Holy Spirit.

—George Peters

We must be global Christians with a global vision because our God is a global God.

—John Stott



by Megan Hedstrom

It was May 17, 2011. My family and I had arrived in Maple Grove, Minn., late the night before to begin an unexpected furlough in a country that I had not lived in since early childhood. For my family, the furlough was temporary, but for me it was the end of my life as a missionary kid and the beginning of my re-entry into America. As I looked out the window that morning at my new suburban “home,” I took in with dismay the rows of identical beige townhouses,

experienced was on that morning in Maple Grove.

Growing up, I never identified America as home in any sense of the word. Though I was a citizen of the country, I had spent my entire life in Mexico. Most missionary kids (MKs) adopt behaviors and attitudes from the countries we grow up in, and probably understand the cultures of those countries better than we understand American culture. Yet MKs are so adept at blending into different cultures that our American peers may not realize that we don’t understand their culture—at least until we give ourselves away by asking what a popular phrase means, or not recognizing a famous song. To many of us, America feels like a foreign country.

I can’t speak for all missionary kids, but some of us struggle to find where or how to use the gifts God has given us in ways that are needed and helpful in an American context.

the shockingly green lawns, the uncomfortable quietness of the neighborhood, and the various people on the street whose fair skin and blonde hair looked remarkably like mine.

By age 17, I had been to seven countries and crossed international borders countless times; however, the greatest culture shock I have ever

Though we may look, talk, or act like Americans, we feel like immigrants.

Being hidden immigrants can cause re-entry into American life to be deeply painful because few people understand how hard it is. As we struggle to adapt to a new culture and miss the countries we grew up in, we appreciate when people take an interest in our experiences. When people asked me what I missed most about Mexico, what the hardest part of transition was, or how hard it must have been to live so far away

from my family, I realized that people could and did understand. At age 17, I needed to know that.

Missionary kids experience different reactions to re-entry. Some fear that they will lose their cross-cultural heritage by adapting to American culture. Thus, they hold on to their international or MK identity in ways that may seem uncalled for or even disrespectful to their American peers. Others have an identity crisis when they realize that they no longer stand out.

For MKs who grew up looking very different from the nationals who surrounded them, blending in can be uncomfortable and hard to get used to. As a result, some MKs try to find unique ways to stand out from

their American peers. Many MKs experience depression as they feel utterly lost in a new world and are thousands of miles away from their families. Most of us probably experience all these reactions to some degree.

Though these emotions are real and deep, not all MKs vocalize them, often because we assume our peers will not understand. However, our emotions seep through into our words, thoughts, and actions, making us prone to sins of which so many MKs are guilty like hypocrisy,

Reentry

Real talk from a missionary kid about the struggles of transition.



self-centeredness, and pride. While we long for our peers to take an interest in our lives and understand our experiences, we are slow to show genuine interest in theirs. Though we are adept at navigating different cultures, we do not always apply that skill to our country of origin. Holding it to a different standard than the rest of the world, we criticize its faults and all too often ignore its values. We can take such pride in our cross-cultural knowledge and experience that we make others feel inferior. We are sinners, and that can become blatantly obvious during our re-entry period.

Yet growing up on the mission field has also given us skills, knowledge, and abilities that are unique to MKs. Put us in a cross-cultural context, ask us to translate, or seek out our opinions and knowledge about ministry, and we will feel useful and valuable. I can't speak for all MKs, but some of us struggle to find where or how to use the gifts God has given us in ways that are needed and helpful in an American context.

Five years after I began my transition to

the United States, I understand more clearly what being a missionary kid means. At age 17, I clung to my identity as an MK. Now, I see that "missionary kid" is not who I am, but part of who I am. Who I am is a child of God, a child who God chose to give the privilege and burden of growing up on the mission field. During re-entry, we MKs can lose sight of our true identity as we either cling to our MKness or try to disassociate ourselves from it. However, being an MK is an integral part of who we are and always will be.

On behalf of the AFLC missionary kids, thank you. Thank you for upholding us in prayer for our entire lives. Thank you for your patience with us as we adjust to our new lives in America. Thank you for loving us even though we may be hard to understand. Although we may not always express it, especially when we are in the

throes of transition, we deeply appreciate how much the AFLC has supported and prayed for us and our families, and we do not take it for granted.

Hedstrom, a 2014 graduate of the Association Free Lutheran Bible School, is the daughter of AFLC missionaries to Mexico, Pastor Todd and Barb Schierkolk. She lives in South Minneapolis.

by Emily Raan

Seven years ago, my husband, Brent, and I met with Pastor Del Palmer, the AFLC World Missions director, about the prospect of being missionaries “someday, somewhere.” At the time that we asked to meet with him, we had no idea that meeting would be the start of a more than six-year journey that would take us to Asia twice on mission/vision trips, including a five-month internship in Africa and then back to South Asia as full-time workers. At that very first meeting, Pastor Palmer asked us what we thought about serving in Asia. Even at that time, South Asia was the field that had the greatest need for a missionary within the AFLC. And so our journey to South Asia began.

For anyone considering full-time, cross-cultural ministry within the AFLC, I’d like to give you an inside look into the process.

Your journey will begin with an extensive application process, which includes written statements of belief on 15 doctrinal principles, a background check, and several references. Once the application and references are submitted to the AFLC World Missions Committee, its members will then decide at one of their regular meetings “whether the applicant should be accepted as a Missionary Candidate” (Section 403*). In order to qualify as a missionary candidate, each applicant must demonstrate spiritual, educational, and experiential qualities—meaning, do you have relevant work and/or ministry experience in your past? Or are you currently involved in training, jobs, volunteer work, etc., that would meet the committee’s qualifications?

Once you are accepted as a missionary candidate, more paperwork awaits you, particularly a written statement of personal history and testimony and a signed code of ethics (Section 406). Once this information is submitted to the World Missions Committee and the candidate is ready for an assignment, he/she must appear before the committee and give an oral testimony (Section 407). Following this testimony, the committee must unanimously vote on the acceptance of the candidate before a letter of call is sent to the missionary (Section 408). And, finally, once the letter of call is sent and accepted by the missionary candidate, they are no longer considered a candidate but a full-time AFLC missionary. The full-time missionary status is made official at a formal commissioning service.

At the time of writing this, there are currently four families who have missionary candidate status. Some candidates may never become full-time AFLC missionaries, some may wait, and still others may go through the process of candidacy to full-time status much quicker than our six-year process. There are many reasons for this.

Some apply with the AFLC World Missions depart-

ment having no intention of working on an AFLC field, but instead wanting to be on-loan with another organization. The reasons for this are usually because those applicants have a desire to partner with the AFLC, but do not feel called to an AFLC field. Or, they may feel a sense of call to a particular area of work, such as Bible translation, in which the AFLC does not have adequate resources or experience. Currently, three families are AFLC missionaries on-loan to other organizations, including Lutheran Bible Translators, Wycliffe Bible Translators, and Wycliffe Associates. We greatly value their partnership and friendship within our denomination!

There are a variety of reasons why a candidate may wait, possibly even removing their name from the candidacy list for a time, or may be removed from candidacy permanently. Maybe it became evident that this candidate is not qualified. Possibly the candidate wants some ministry experience within the States prior to going to the field. In the past, the World Missions Committee required that a candidate serve in a congregation prior to leaving for their field.

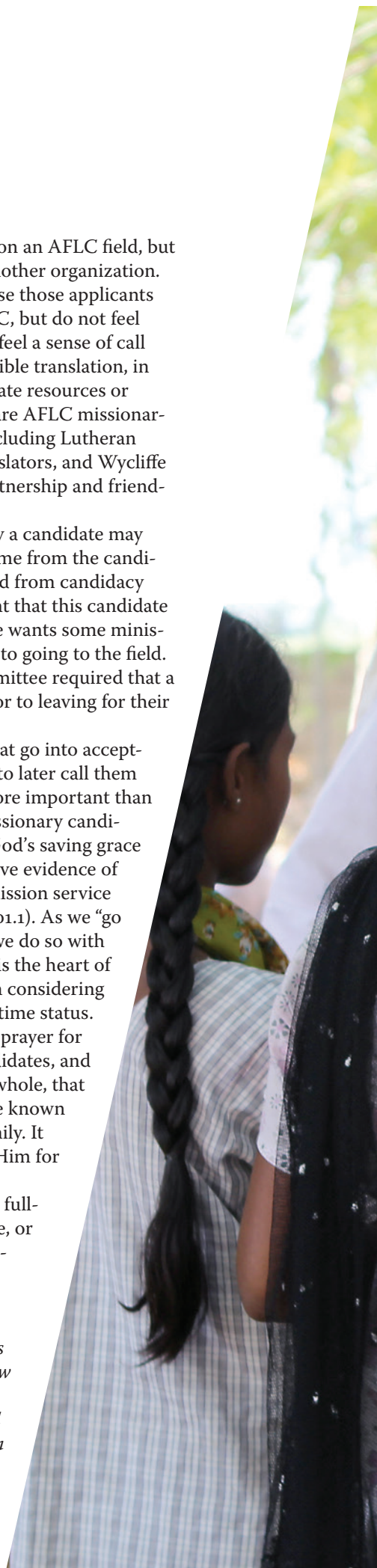
Though there are many factors that go into accepting someone as a candidate and then to later call them as full-time missionaries, none are more important than the spiritual qualifications. “Every missionary candidate must have a vital experience of God’s saving grace in Jesus Christ. The candidate must give evidence of a divine call to cross cultural/world mission service and a concern for the lost” (Section 301.1). As we “go into all the world” (Mark 16:15), may we do so with prayer and careful discernment. This is the heart of the World Missions department when considering someone for candidacy and then full-time status.

I ask that you would all join us in prayer for our missionaries, the missionary candidates, and the World Missions department as a whole, that God would continue to lead and make known His good will for each person and family. It is, after all, His work—and we praise Him for that!

For more information about each full-time missionary, missionary candidate, or missionary on-loan, you may visit aflc-worldmissions.org.

Raan and her husband, Pastor Brent Raan, are full-time AFLC missionaries serving in South Asia. Photo by Andrew Abel.

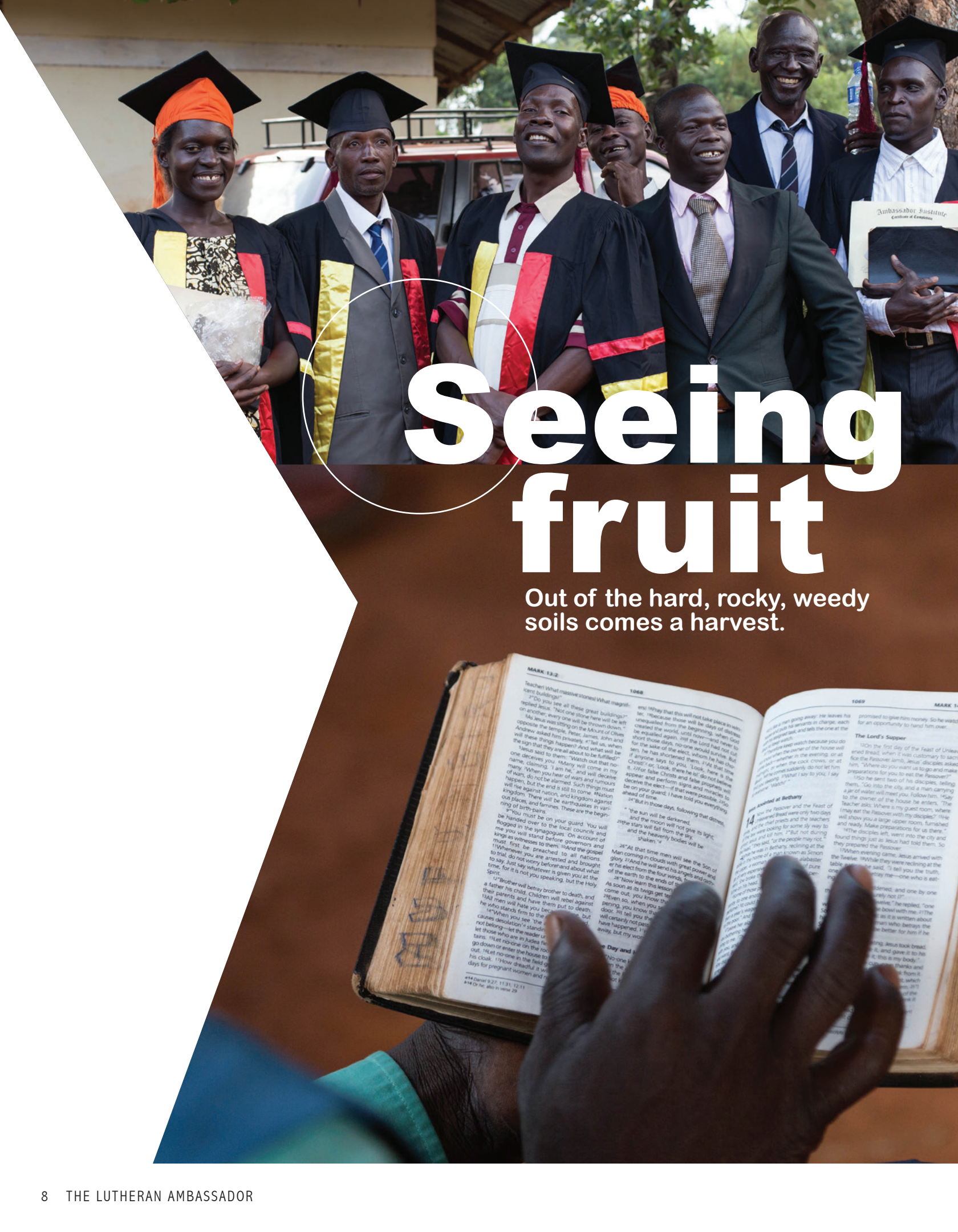
**Policies and Regulations of the World Missions Committee of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations.*





What it takes to become
a missionary.

Getting there



Seeing fruit

Out of the hard, rocky, weedy
soils comes a harvest.



by Pastor Kevin Olson

It was a full schedule with three graduations in five days. The three graduations represented seven classes from three areas of Uganda. Six teachers had invested two years of their time to teach these 45 students. The students themselves had studied 84 lessons and memorized 2,200 verses of the Bible. Now it was time to receive their certificate, time to wear the graduation cap and gown, time to be acknowledged before their family and friends, and time to share what the Lord had done in their hearts.

At each of the graduations I shared Jesus' parable of the farmer who went out to sow his seed found in Matthew 13:1-23. The generosity of the Lord with His Word stood out to me. Seed is precious and even expensive, yet instead of putting each seed in a designated hole, Jesus said that the farmer was scattering the seed and allowing some of it to fall on the path, on the rocks, and in the weeds. The Ambassador Institute students come from hard, rocky, and weedy backgrounds, but they still produced a bountiful harvest.

Some seed fell along the hard path

One graduation was in Pastor Richard Wambiro's home area. Originally, he had been against the Ambassador Institute training, but his attitude had changed as he had watched students who had been in the classes. He saw that those in the training were always talking about the Lord; they were enjoying fellowship with each other and having a cheerful spirit. They were positive toward other people and were reaching those who were far away from the Lord. He encouraged the members of his church to start an Ambassador Institute class because he had seen the harvest.

Some seed fell among the rocks

Another graduation was held in Galilaya District. In Uganda, it is important to invite the local leaders to big events so that everyone knows it is public and does not appear secretive in nature. The chairman of the district gets many invitations, and it is his job to watch over all of the various religious or political events to keep the peace. At this particular event, the chairman had come to watch the graduation ceremony. When he stood up to speak he said, "We have never had anything like this in our district. I want to be the first one to sign up for the next class that is held here." That statement carried a lot of weight in an area where animism and demons are the primary religion. He saw the harvest.

Some seed fell among the weeds

The third graduation was an eight-hour journey away from the other training centers. Wilson, the ministry team chairman, had taught that class. He traveled there twice a month and taught for two days before returning home. He traveled there every month for two years. Now it was graduation day, the harvest at the end of the season. Nasamba was the first one to greet the car full of people arriving for the event. She had been given over to demons and directly confronted those of us who had come for this special day. After an extended time of prayer for Nasamba and her mother, they both stated their desire to give their lives to Jesus. That day two more were added to the harvest.

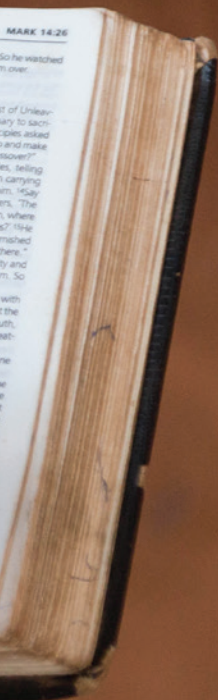
The Lord has been generous with his Word. Out of the hard, rocky, and weedy fields He has produced a harvest of 100, 60, and 30 times what has been sown.

New ground is being prepared for sowing the seed of God's Word in the northeastern area of Uganda, located in Kotido, in the Karamoja district. Micah and Famke Berger, AFLC missionaries serving in Uganda, are learning the Karamajong language and living among the mostly unreached Karamoja people.

Micah has already been teaching with the Ambassador Institute for five years in Uganda. On December 31, 2014, he met Famke Hekkenberg at The Keep cafe in Jinja, Uganda. That first conversation grew into a friendship and the two were married on June 4, 2015. Famke, who is from the Netherlands, had been working with a ministry based out of the Netherlands. Four years prior to meeting Micah, Famke had adopted a Ugandan infant daughter who had been orphaned. A year after becoming a three-culture family, the Bergers have moved from Jinja to Kotido to begin planting seed in a fourth culture, which is the next new field of the Ambassador Institute.

Praise the Lord for His generosity in sowing the seed of His Word. He is the Lord of the harvest even in the previously hard, rocky, and weedy soils of our lives.

Olson, a member of Emmaus Free Lutheran, Bloomington, Minn., is the department head for the Ambassador Institute. Photos by Andrew Abel.



A beginning

by Timothy Larson

T“The cause of foreign missions must become dear and precious to every member of the congregation, from the child to the old man, so that they all love the cause, live for it, suffer for it, read about it, save for it, sacrifice for it. All, all in active work for the cause of Jesus Christ.”

This quotation from Lutheran Free Church founder Georg Sverdrup conveys how everyone in a congregation can be involved in the work of world missions.

The latest publication in the Heritage Series by Ambassador Publications is *Footprints of the Faithful: Fifty Years of the AFLC Mission in Brazil*. It is a true gem many years in the making, as author Loiell Dyrud explains in his preface. Even though the printing of this volume was put off for some time, it is fitting that it was recently published as members of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations celebrated its 50th anniversary several years ago and this year mark 50 years of the AFLC’s work in Brazil.

The AFLC as we know it today is a continuation of the Lutheran Free Church, which ceased to exist when it merged with The American Lutheran Church in early 1963. Even at the very first organizational meeting in 1962 for those interested in continuing their LFC heritage, God was stirring in the hearts of those who were to eventually serve the AFLC in

Brazil throughout the following years and decades.

Dyrud’s work on the fourth volume of the Heritage Series is written in three parts based on I Corinthians 3:6. The first part, *Sowing the Seed in Brazil*, takes on the statement by the Apostle Paul, “I planted.” The second part, *Sustaining the Mission in Brazil*, focuses on the continuing work of those who are sent by God through Paul’s understanding that, “Apollos watered.” And the third part, *The Fruit of the Mission in Brazil*, acknowledges the increase that God has provided through Paul’s recognition that “God was causing the growth.”

The first chapters of the book set the stage for the mission work in Brazil well, giving a brief background on the formation of the AFLC. These chapters also convey that a zeal for missions was present even at the very beginning of the AFLC. Dyrud includes this quote from the first AFLC Bible conference, “A church without missions is a church without a mission” (Roy Mohagen, lay pastor). What truth this short phrase holds!

Throughout the book,



Dyrud does an excellent job of combining missionary letters and articles with his commentary on the work in Brazil; readers will be blessed by these actual accounts from the mission field. It is obvious that much time was spent pouring over early issues of *The Lutheran Ambassador*.

Early on in the book, Dyrud writes a brief history on the country of Brazil and comparisons are made with the United States. There are many similarities, including how both were established by Europeans, and both countries were founded by colonizers landing on the east coasts of their respective continents. The westward expansion of Brazil, however, didn't begin until nearly 75 years after a similar period in the United States. It was in this western frontier area where Pastor John and Ruby Abel and their family began

working in 1964.

The Abels joined the AFLC after their own church body, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, merged with The American Lutheran Church. As a result of the merger, the Abels found that there was a lack of an emphasis on pietism and their seminary's theology became more and more liberal.

At the first annual conference of the AFLC held in 1963, the enthusiasm for missions amongst attendees was extremely high when mission resolutions came to the floor. A formational resolution was passed which directed the World Missions department to send three missionary couples to a foreign field in 1964, and that foreign field was designated as Brazil. The Abels would be one of those designated couples. And to surprise of those attending the conference, Alvin and Frances Grothe were introduced as possible candidates for full-time mission

work, as well. These two couples would be commissioned at the annual conference held in Valley City, N.D., in 1964.

The chapters that follow in this first portion of the book cover the development of the work in Brazil, including why the area of Campo Mourão was chosen. These chapters also chronicle the ups and downs of the initial work. The Abel family served for many years in Brazil, and have passed that legacy on to several of their children and grandchildren. Meanwhile, the Alvin Grothe family served for a few years on the field but were forced to leave due to Frances' health problems. When they arrived back in the United States, she passed on to heaven's glory. Eventually, Pastor George and Helen Knapp and their family, and Pastor Connely and Carolyn Dyrud and their family joined the work with the AFLC mission, as well.

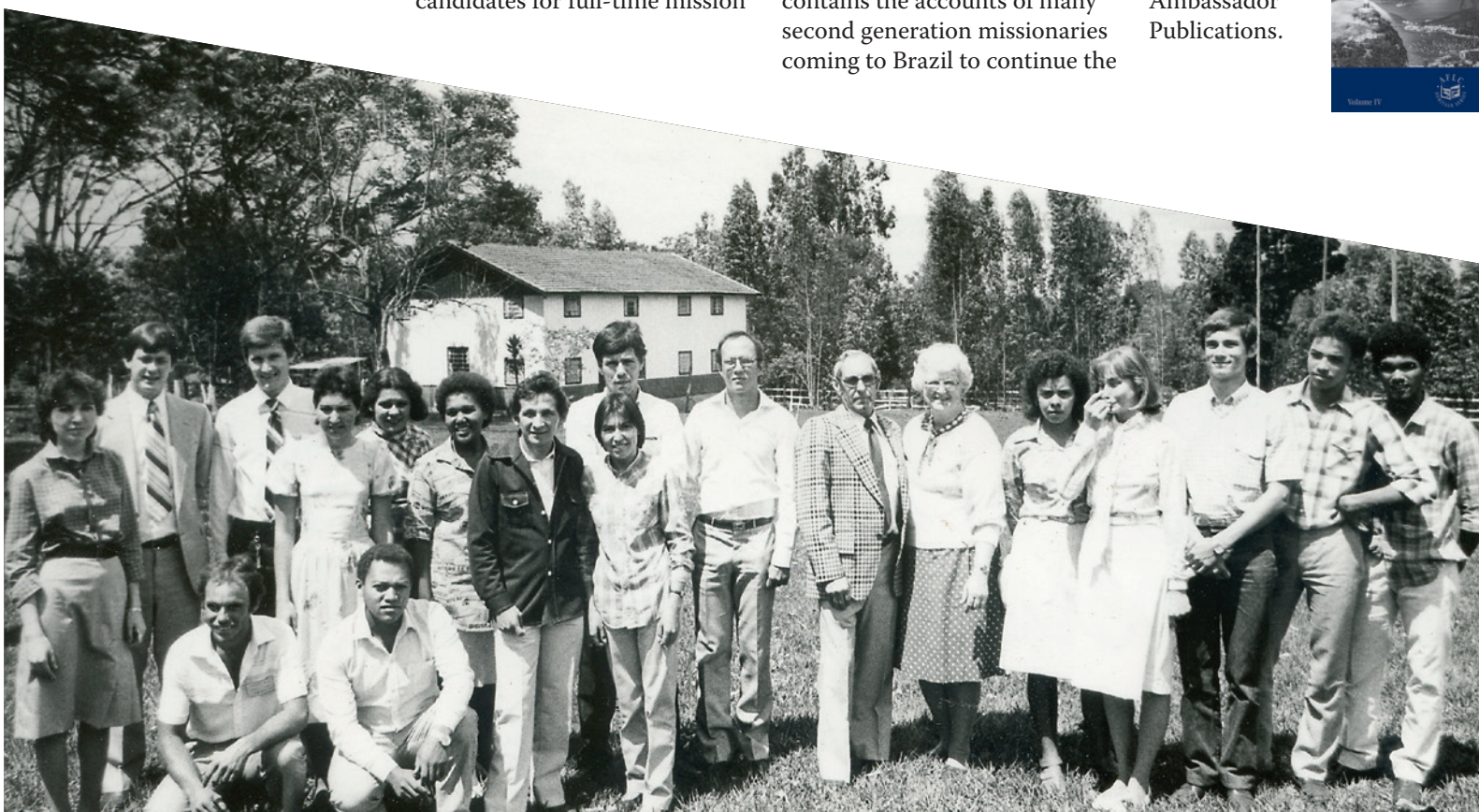
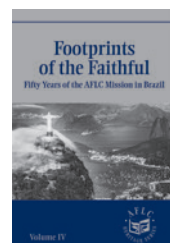
Part two of the book contains the accounts of many second generation missionaries coming to Brazil to continue the


work their parents began. The establishment of the Miriam Infant Home is also covered toward the end of this section. And the third part contains interviews with Brazilian nationals, a timeline of the work in Brazil, the first AFLC Mission Corporation, AFLC churches in Brazil, and families of original missionaries to Brazil.

May this brief review encourage you to read this latest publication to gain a better understanding of the AFLC work in Brazil. Perhaps God is calling you to the mission field somewhere.

Larson, from Osakis, Minn., is a 2009 graduate of AFLBS.

Volume IV in the AFLC Heritage Series, *Footprints of the Faithful: Fifty Years of the AFLC Mission in Brazil*, is available through Ambassador Publications.





Journey to Brazil

Journey Missions hosted a student short-term missions trip this summer to visit and work with several AFLC ministries in Brazil. Team members, who came from churches in Montana, Minnesota, North and South Dakota, and Ohio, helped lead youth camps, volunteered at youth outreach events, led vacation Bible school, and ministered by completing several service projects.

The team traveled to Brazil July 12 through August 2, spending time in Bateias, Curitiba, Campo Mourão and Foz do Iguaçu. While there, they worked with missionaries Pastor Paul and Becky Abel, Pastor Jonathan and Tamba Abel, Jonni Sliver, and Matthew and Ednay Abel.

Journey Missions will host an inter-generational trip to Brazil in November, as the AFLC-Brazil celebrates 50 years.



Members of the Journey Missions team included Heidi Nelson, Golden Valley, Minn.; Rebekah Olson, Lakeville, Minn.; Tehya Craig, Tioga, N.D.; Justin Nelson, Plymouth, Minn.; Emma Hornby, Kalispell, Mont.; Jon Nelson, Journey Missions department head; Hallie Nikunen, Kalispell; Tyler Richardson, Canal Winchester, Ohio; Emily Herset, Kalispell; Gunner St. John, Arlington, S.D.; Avery Andersen, Kalispell; Wilson Bernards, Brooklyn Park, Minn.; Julia Nelson, Plymouth, Minn.; Kory Rachac, Shakopee, Minn.; and Jessica Green, Kalispell.

► EMILY HERSET

We had just gotten to the farm in Campo Mourão, Brazil, to help at the winter youth camp. By the time we arrived, Brazilian students were already socializing, buying candy in the canteen, and playing volleyball. We lugged our suitcases up the stairs to the dorm room that would be our home for the weekend. Nine girls were housed in one room with one bathroom to share. The bathroom had a toilet and a shower with no curtain. “Hmmm ... that’s different”—the thought ran through all of our minds.

I hadn’t even set all my things down before I heard unfamiliar voices calling for me: “Emalee? Emalee?”

Three teenage girls stood outside our room with big smiles, hoping to meet me.

“How do they know who I am?” I thought.

The rest of the weekend these girls were by my side. They walked with me after sessions, tried to get a seat by me at meals, and took me on adventures around the camp. They couldn’t speak very much English, and they laughed at my attempts to speak Portuguese, but we quickly bonded. Later I found out the three girls lived at the Miriam Home and were some of the kids I had unknowingly been praying for with my youth group for the last two years. I was amazed! It felt too easy connecting with them, but God showed me the power He gives through going where He’s asking you to go.

I prayed about going to Brazil, I went, and God gave me a gift by providing the opportunity to love those I had been praying for.

Now that I’m back home in Kalispell, Mont., I continue to pray. I’m thankful to know that my prayers are making an impact around the world. What a gift to have been able to receive.

Herset is the minister of discipleship and youth at Faith Free Lutheran, Kalispell, Mont.

► JESSICA GREEN

This summer I had the opportunity to go to Brazil on the Journey Missions student trip. One of the main things I experienced was seeing God’s love and joy all around me.

At the Miriam Home in Campo Mourão, the kids were full of joy and loved all the attention that we were able to give them. There was play, laughter, and fun, even though they were going through a rough time of transition.

One night some members of our team had the opportunity to lead devotions with the kids. I was able to share some Bible verses that were on my heart. I was honored to be able to tell them about the amazing plans God has for their lives and how trusting in Him about an uncertain future would bring them peace.

Being able to share the Word of God like this gave me a chance to relate on a deeper level with the kids at the Miriam Home. I believe that it impacted many of them, especially the older kids as this short devotional fit with the hard circumstances they have in their lives at this time.

My time at the Miriam Home gave me a glimpse of the joy God provides and how He wants us to love each other. This trip to Brazil overall showed our team that we are deeply loved and that joy comes from God by living the life that He has made for us. I look forward to seeing how I am able to use this love and joy in the plans God has for my future.

Green is a member of the Faith Free Lutheran youth group, Kalispell, Mont.



TOP: The team worked at the AFLC-Brazil church in Foz do Iguaçu, damaged recently by softball-sized hail, which tore through the roof, broke windows, and damaged flooring. The team painted window frames, removed flooring in an attached apartment, and helped with other projects.

MIDDLE: Tehya Craig, Tioga, N.D., shows boys from the Miriam Home in Campo Mourão how to make a friendship bracelet.

ABOVE: When a local fisherman had engine trouble, the team pitched in to help him bring in his boat.



TOP: Avery Andersen, Kalispell, Mont., spent time with a young student while the team helped with a vacation Bible school at Jardim da Esperança, in Campo Mourão. MIDDLE: Wilson Bernardes, a member of Hope Lutheran in Minneapolis, helps paint at the Campo Mourão campus. ABOVE: AFLC missionaries Pastor Jonathan, Matthew and Pastor Paul Abel. CENTER: Reitor, Cacha, Edwarda, and Julia opened their home to Julia and Justin Nelson.



► JULIA NELSON

My perspective of Brazilians and their culture changed after my father and I were adopted by a Brazilian family for a day. Our day included being taken around the family's neighborhood, going to their supermarket, eating amazing home cooked meals, getting to know the family, and sharing the gospel because they were not Christians.

The family we spent this amazing day with was extremely kind and hospitable. I noticed that friendliness and sharing is a huge part of Brazilian culture. The generous aspect of their culture had a major impact on me since this is something that, in America, we don't see a lot.

Changing the perception of what this family thought of America and Americans was one of the many highlights of being adopted. Reitor, the father, Cacha, the mother, and their two daughters, Edwarda and Julia, had this idea that America was a utopia. It was an interesting conversation because what this family knew about America was only from movies.

When we talked about my dad being in seminary, Reitor asked, "When all the bad stuff in America and in the world happens, where's God?" This conversation progressed into my dad being able to share his testimony, which was another highlight of the entire trip because he got to unexpectedly witness to this family.

I had so many other incredible days while in Brazil, but this was by far my favorite. I am so blessed and thankful that I was able to go. I am grateful for everyone who prayed for and supported me.

Nelson, who lives in Plymouth, Minn., is a member of Faith Free Lutheran, Kalispell, Mont.

When I think about my trip to Brazil with Journey Missions this summer many things come to mind. I think of the beautiful sunsets, the wonderful food, the hospitality and generosity of the Brazilian people. I can truly say that it was a life-changing experience and one that I will never forget. The one thing that sticks out the most for me was the fact that no matter where we travel in the world, no matter what language we speak or what culture we are from, we all worship the same God. No matter what we have or do not have, God is always with us.

I was humbled when our group walked the streets of the neighborhood surrounding the ARCA in Curitiba. This is where we met Teré.

Teré is a woman who occasionally attends the AFLC church in Bateias. She invited us into her house to show us around. Her house was very modest; she and her husband worked on it as they could afford it while raising their family there. By American standards, Teré and her family lived in extreme poverty.

Through our interpreter we found out that Teré had a pretty rough life. Her husband was an alcoholic and often beat her. Despite her circumstances, Teré appeared to have a contentment that was unexplainable. Before we left we asked her if we could pray for anything specific for her and her family. She told us that she did not need anything, that God gives her everything that she needs. She has a house, food, and healthy children.

I felt convicted and thought about how many times I ask God for completely meaningless things. I realized at that moment that I have never had to depend on God for everything as this woman does. Her faith is astounding. Teré taught me in a real life situation what the Apostle Paul said in Philippians 4:11-13: "... for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me." Teré will probably never know the impact she had on my life, but because of her total dependence on God and contentment in all circumstances, my life will be changed forever.

Nelson, a second-year student at the Free Lutheran Seminary, is a member of Faith Free Lutheran, Kalispell, Mont.



ABOVE: Emma Hornby (left) and Hallie Nikunen, both of Kalispell, Mont., play with a couple of girls from the Miriam Home in Campo Mourão.

BELOW: A group from the Journey Missions team spent time with Teré (center, in orange) in her home. Pictured are (from left) Emily Herset, Kory Rachac, Allan Gwin, Teré, Justin Nelson, Rebekah Olson, Tehya Craig, and Teré's children.





hen Jesus instructed His disciples to proclaim the “good news” of His resur-

rection, He said in Acts 1:8, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

When the Apostle Paul prioritized the gospel, he made clear in Romans 1:16 that the good news was to go forth, first to God’s chosen people. He wrote, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”

According to the writers of the New Testament, proclaiming the gospel to Israel was the priority of the early church. Should there be any wonder, on our part, that the heart of God for Israel and the proclamation of the gospel to His people should be any less significant today?

Later in his letter to the Roman church, the Apostle Paul further explained to Gentile believers their standing before the Lord, a picture of His heart for Israel, and their attitude toward the proclamation of the gospel to the Jews as the people of God. In this passage, Paul warned Gentile believers to guard against conceitedness in their own standing with God.

“... Do not be arrogant toward the [natural] branches.

GOOD NEWS FOR ISRAEL

BY PASTOR NICK DYRUD

If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you. Then you will say, ‘Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.’ That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God’s kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off” (11:18-22).

Growing up in a community with a high population of Jewish people impressed upon me at a young age both the need and the desire to reach God’s chosen people with the gospel of Jesus Christ. From very positive influences in the Christian school I attended in St. Louis Park, Minn., to the relationships my family had in our

own neighborhood, God was certainly laying the groundwork in my own heart for involvement in an independent mission and ministry called Good News for Israel (GNFI).

GNFI was founded by a group of people associated with the ministry of Hans Nielsen Hauge (1771-1824), a layman whom God used powerfully in a great spiritual revival among the people of Norway in the early 1800s. As a result of this spiritual awakening, the Zion Society for Israel was formed in 1878, which was later renamed GNFI in 1975.

GNFI is a ministry organization seeking to proclaim the gospel, first to God’s chosen people, and then to the Gentiles. We believe that the Bible is the inspired and inerrant Word of God, and through the proclamation of the gospel, God is calling His people to Himself just as the

Scriptures testify He will do in the last days. We believe that Jesus is the promised Messiah of Israel, and the simple message of His death and resurrection has the power to transform lives.

What does this mean for the Twin Cities and the local congregation? First, Good News for Israel has been organized to help equip the church in Jewish evangelism. In the climate of our culture, this is a challenging endeavor. However, we continue to see in-roads to the gospel here in the Upper Midwest and overseas in the land of Israel. Second, GNFI is ministering to churches by showing them how a better appreciation of the Jewish roots of the Christian faith can enrich their understanding and their proclamation of God’s Word. Partnership with GNFI also provides opportunities for ministry beyond our church walls, reaching people for the gospel in our local communities and beyond through short-term and long-term missions to Jerusalem.

As a member of the GNFI board, I am pleased to announce as of July 1, GNFI is now functioning as the Minnesota branch of Chosen People Ministries. Our headquarters remains in the Twin Cities, located at 6408 Minnetonka Blvd., St. Louis Park, MN 55426. Trevor Rubenstein and Chris Heeb will continue to serve as the local outreach workers here in Minnesota. Chosen People Ministries serves in 16 countries across the globe. Its outreach programs include evangelism and discipleship, Messianic centers and congregations, the equipping of the local church for Jewish evangelism, print and web publications, and benevolence work.

Perhaps you would be interested in learning more about the ministry of GNFI. If you would like to get in touch with Trevor Rubenstein you can do so by email at gnfi@chosenpeople.com or call the ministry office at 952-926-7369.

Dyrud, a member of the board of directors for Good News for Israel, serves Emmaus Lutheran, Bloomington, Minn.





MARKING 500 YEARS

BY PASTOR CRAIG JOHNSON

opportunity to learn more about the great work God did in the Reformation will be taking place in July 2017. A tour of sights significant in the history of the Reformation is being planned for July 18-28, 2017.

The tour group will travel through Germany, visiting places where Luther and the other reformers lived and worked. At the various spots we'll be thinking about what the Lord did in those places 500 years ago and why it matters today. We'll be visiting places important in the history of the Lutheran church and also some that are particularly meaningful in the heritage of our Association of Free Lutheran Congregations.

The goal of the trip is to do more than just walk where Luther walked. By going to these places together, we hope to learn a little more about what happened 500 years ago and to consider how God used ordinary people living in ordinary places to do extraordinary things. A goal of the trip is to grow in our appreciation of what God has done in the past and, as a result, grow in our faith and confidence in what God can do today.

AFLC Pastors Ken Moland and Craig Johnson will be leading the group. AFLBS graduate Bill Kroll, with ITG Travel, is the travel agent working on the organization of the trip. A website with more details about the trip is at: www.aflc.org/luther-tour. You can also contact Pastor Moland at 425-821-2424 or kenmoland@hotmail.com and Pastor Johnson at 503-440-3131 or craigj@teleport.com. It'd be great to have you join us in Germany next July.



For more information about the tour, including a complete itinerary and costs, visit the web page at:

• aflc.org/luther-tour

Johnson serves Bethany Free Lutheran, Astoria, Ore.

In 1517 Martin Luther posted 95 theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany, proposing debate on issues that were of great concern to him. Luther's study of Scripture had convinced him that the church of his day had strayed from God's Word. Those 95 theses are looked at as the start of what became one of the most significant events in the history of the Church and the world: the Protestant Reformation.

Next year will be the 500th anniversary of the beginning of the Reformation. An



Members of the 2016-17 student body of the Association Free Lutheran Bible School began classes on Sept. 7 following a weekend of orientation and worship-focused events. A total of 107 students enrolled for the year, including 38 returning seniors and 69 juniors.

Schools to host banquet for friends and alumni

The AFLC Schools will host a banquet for alumni and friends at 6 p.m. on Nov. 10 at the Plymouth, Minn., campus. The event will feature a catered dinner and program that will update attendees on the ongoing work at the Bible school and seminary.

Hosted in Heritage Hall, the banquet will include a keynote address by Pastor Robert Lee, former AFLC president and current professor of biblical history and practical theology at the AFLC Schools. Pastor Wade Mobley, dean of the seminary and president of the Schools, will present an update on the ministry and mission of the Bible school and seminary. And singer and songwriter Katy Dahl, an alumnus and student at the University of Northwestern—St. Paul, will perform music from her first album project.

Ticket prices include: \$25/individual, \$50/couple and \$200 to sponsor a table for seven. Seating is limited. To register, contact Marilee Johnson at (763) 544-9501 or register online at aflbs.org.

Trustees begin process to hire seminary dean

Members of the AFLC Schools Board of Trustees have voted unanimously to begin the call process for a dean of the seminary. The position is currently held in a dual role by Pastor Wade Mobley, who also serves as president of the AFLC Schools. Following the hiring of a dean, Mobley will continue to hold the position of president, and as such will serve as the spiritual leader and chief administrator of both schools, with some classroom teaching responsibilities.

“... the decision to separate the role of dean of AFLTS from the role of the president of AFLC Schools reflects the need and desire to have the deans of both schools (AFLTS and AFLBS) focus more on teaching, program direction, and student needs; and less on administration,” said Steve Jankord, chairman of the board.

Board members defined the job description for the position of dean of the seminary in their July 28 meeting. As proposed at the 2016 annual conference, the bylaws were changed by members of the Schools Corporation so that the positions of deans (both AFLBS and AFLTS) will follow the same hiring process as a regular full-time faculty position. The position of president of the schools, on the other hand, will remain under the historical process which requires election by the annual conference.

The board expects the hiring process to take several months as they interview potential candidates, conduct interviews, and pray for guidance. Jankord has expressed a desire by the board to accept names for the dean’s position. To do so, email him at sjankord@gmail.com.

“We encourage you to pray with your Schools board, administration, and faculty as we begin the process of seeking God’s man for the position of dean of the seminary,” said Jankord. “The most critical aspect of all this is seeking God’s person for this position. Again, we encourage you pray for us as we seek the Lord, for the man of His choosing, for this important role.”

**WMF**WOMEN'S
MISSIONARY
FEDERATION

THERE IS A CHOICE TO MAKE

"You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve.

John 6:67

BY ALMA OSE

It was a tense moment for the Twelve. There stood Jesus, and one by one the disciples turned their backs upon Him and walked away. Then came the question from Jesus to the Twelve who were left alone with Him, "You don't want to leave me too, do you?" They could go if they wanted to. The opportunity was present, either to go or to remain, but it was their own choice.

Previous to this incident, Jesus had fed the 5,000 and had declared, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven" (vs. 51). Many of His disciples had then been offended and

said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?" (vs 60). And they walked away, and it said they went back and walked no more with Him. It was then He turned to the Twelve and said, "You don't want to leave me too, do you?"

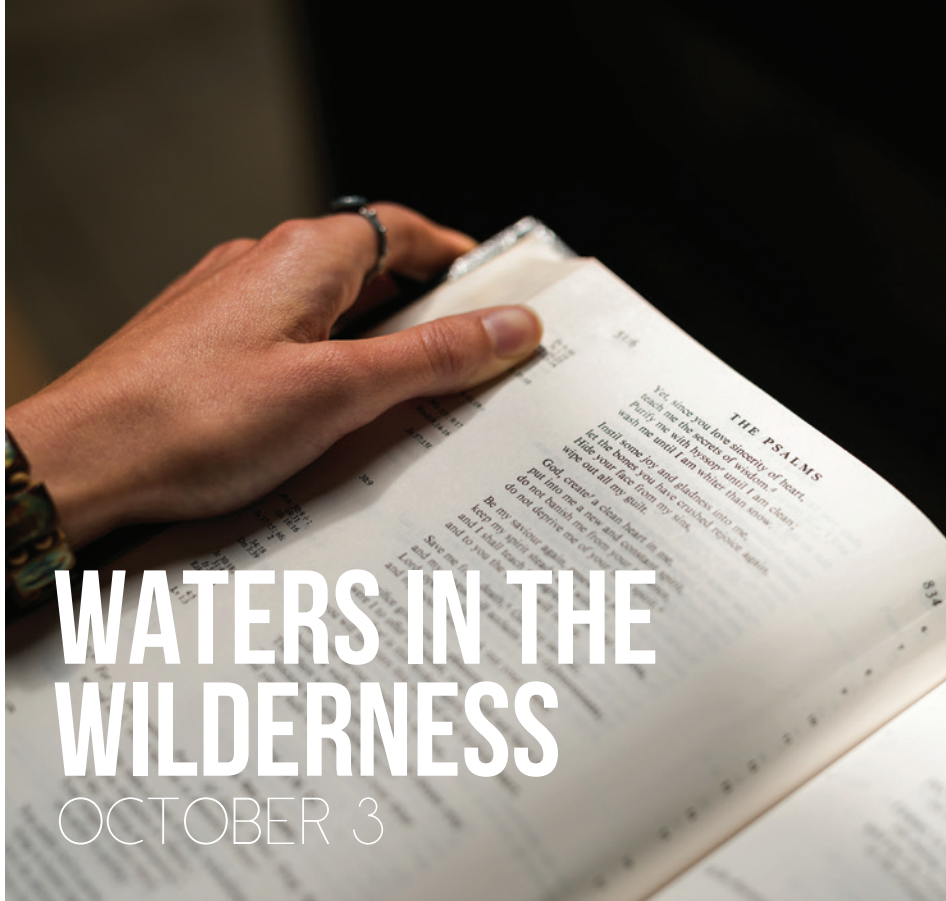
Here there was a division, and it was among the disciples of Jesus. What caused it? What was the deciding factor? Was it not Jesus? Was it not because Jesus claimed to be divine and that He lived by the Father and said, " ... so the one who feeds on me will live because of me" (vs. 57).

Peter and the eleven may have pondered the same question: Shall we follow the rest? Shall we give it up? But the thought of going away gave rise to other questions: To whom shall we go? To this lifeless formalism? To the wretched traditions of men? No, there is no hope in it. So Peter spoke for all: "To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God" (vs. 68-69).

Perhaps no time in our lives has this question

been as real and as serious as today. Perhaps it has never been so complicated, either. And the choice we make may determine our future destiny. For the temptations are so subtle. Our faith may be put in jeopardy over confusing spirits and tongues, over teachings, over methods of work in church and schools. The self life is being exalted and encouraged and we know not that this is to go away from Jesus. Nor do we give it a thought that there is no eternal life in it. To whom shall we go? We **MUST** go back to Jesus. "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Ose, Mrs. Ole K., was the first president of the Women's Missionary Federation. Reprinted from the March 12, 1963 issue of The Lutheran Ambassador.



PEOPLE & PLACES

Members of **Good Shepherd Free Lutheran**, Madison, S.D., celebrated the burning of their building mortgage on Sept. 11.

Anja Ferkinghoff, a 2015 graduate of the Free Lutheran Bible School, has accepted a position as a short-term mission assistant to Pastor Brent and Emily Raan, serving in South Asia. Ferkinghoff, from Germany, recently worked as an AFLBS recruiter.



The **AFLC Pastors and Wives Retreat** was held Sept. 13-15 at the Association Retreat Center, near Osceola, Wis. The event focused on Psalm 73:26, "God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." Several AFLC pastors presented sessions related to the theme, and cardiologist Dr. Andrew Chiu presented a special session titled, "Strengthening Your Physical Heart." Evening speaker Pastor Michael Brandt spoke on, "Strengthening Your Spiritual Heart."

The Association Retreat Center will host several AFLC events this fall and winter:

- Women's Retreat: Nov. 4-6
- New Year's Eve Ski and Snowboarding Party: Dec. 30-Jan. 1. Includes events at nearby Trollhaugen Outdoor Recreational Area.

For more information on these events, including the cost, please visit the ARC website at arc-aflc.org.

Pastor George Winston has accepted a call to serve St. John's Lutheran, Newark, Ohio. He leaves Grace Lutheran, Bruce, S.D.

Pastor Tom Gillman was installed Sept. 11 at Redeemer Free Lutheran, Canton, S.D., with Pastor Lyndon Korhonen officiating.

Pastor David Ryerson was installed Sept. 25 at Hope Free Evangelical Lutheran, Ishpeming, Mich., with Pastor Lyndon Korhonen officiating.

"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Romans 10:17).

T

his is a short verse in the number of words. Yet the very existence of God's only revelation to man—the Word of God—is wrapped up in this verse. The whole plan of salvation and the finished work of Christ would be of no avail if it had not been made known to us through the Scriptures.

There are many examples of well-known men coming to faith through the reading of the Word. Augustine was converted by reading the Bible. Jacob DeShazer, during World War II, was converted in a prison cell in Japan. John Nobel was saved while studying the Bible in a Russian prison. Martin Luther believed in God and the Bible, not alone because the church said so, but because in its pages he came face to face with God.

"Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Revival begins by the reading of the Word. The day John Wesley was converted, he attended three different meetings in which the emphasis was on the reading of the Word of God. "For by grace are ye saved, through faith, not of works, lest any many should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). Salvation cannot be earned, bought, borrowed or inherited; we can never become good enough to be worthy of it; it can only be received. It is offered to us in the Word as we hear it. Even faith, which is the hand that received salvation, is a gift of God conferred to us through hearing.

Robert Dietsche, Osceola, Wis., is a member of Amery Free Lutheran, Amery, Wis.

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.



SERVING IN ALASKA

BY AMELIA OLSON

This summer I had the incredible opportunity to spend two months in Alaska teaching vacation Bible school in seven different villages with three other team members: Heather Hansen, and Kyle and Marli Arneson.

Alaska is a place of great beauty and brokenness. There are many people in need of Christ and the freedom found in Him alone. Alcoholism, fear, depression, and harmful relationships are a sad reality. Most of the villages have a church building, but lack a pastor or anyone to lead a service. However, it was a joy that the kids attending VBS got to hear how much Jesus loves them. We had the opportunity to give these children Bibles—many had never owned one—and pray with the kids to accept Jesus into their hearts. God is so good.

Our first week, there was a sweet, 10-year-old girl named Annie whom I met on the playground one afternoon. She told me about all her fears and worries. For such a young girl, she carried a huge weight on her heart. Our team prayed for her that evening, and the next day she came to VBS. I still see her sitting up front writing down our theme Bible verse in her notebook: “When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life’” (John 8:12). It was beautiful to see her excitement and joy as the Lord worked in her heart.

In Naknek, our missionaries—Pastor Jeremy

and Lacy Crowell, Pastor Bob and Margaret Lee, and Pastor Jeff and Jane Swanson—along with several summer volunteers quickly became family to my team. I saw firsthand how the ministries there have impacted lives in a great way.

KAKN radio station, an AFLC Home Missions ministry based in Naknek, reaches the fishermen and surrounding villages with uplifting music and gospel-based programming,

The Net coffee shop, a seasonal ministry in Naknek, overflowed with fishermen and cannery workers from all over the world who are in town for the salmon run. We had the opportunity to listen to their life stories, struggles, and joys. It was sweet to build friendships and share about the Lord over cups of steaming coffee and fresh baked cookies.

I saw the body of Christ at work meeting people with the hope and love of Jesus: whether holding a bilingual church service at Hilltop Christian Fellowship, helping



someone who just lost their job, or comforting a man whose brother just died back home. It was common to see people both physically tired from long, hard work hours, and also soul weary. How incredible to witness men and women leaving with more than what they came for—besides a paycheck and shipping containers of salmon, many returned home filled with hope and new life.

Thanks to all of you who have faithfully kept this ministry and our brothers and sisters in your prayers. God is at work. I would challenge you to consider how the Lord would lead you to further support the mission there, whether financially or even going to serve and see Alaska for yourself. May the Lord richly bless you.

Olson is a member of Abiding Savior Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D.

Mission trip opportunities

Journey Missions will host several upcoming short-term mission trips for intergenerational groups. They include:

Brazil: Intergenerational Missions

Members of this team will travel to Brazil Nov. 16-30, and work with AFLC missionaries Pastor Paul and Becky Abel. The team will work on various work projects at the ARCA before traveling to Campo Mourão to take part in the 50th anniversary celebration of the work in Brazil.

Ecuador: Intergenerational Missions

Members of this team will travel Feb. 10-21 to Cuenca, Ecuador, to work with AFLC missionaries Justo and Tricia Pillman. The team will take part in several work projects, and may help in assisting a new church plant. Cost is \$2,200/person.

Brazil: Intergenerational Missions

Members of this team will travel to Brazil in June 2017 to work with missionaries Pastor Paul and Becky Abel. The team will participate in work projects at the ARCA, as well as at the Miriam home and Bible school and seminary campus in Campo Mourão. Cost is \$3,000.

Asia: Intergenerational Missions

Members of this team will travel to South Asia to work with missionaries Pastor Brent and Emily Raan. The team will be involved in church outreach, as well as local ministries.

For more information about these trips, email journeymissions@aflc.org.

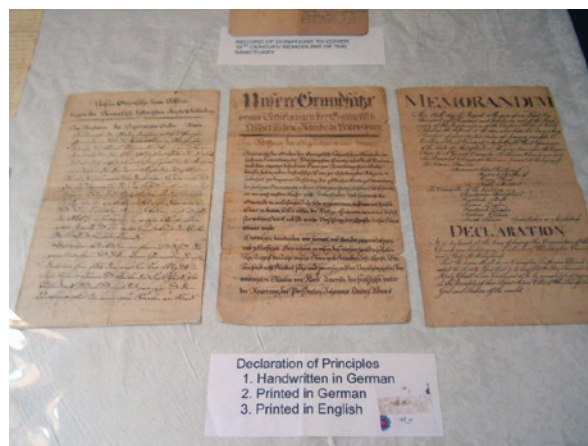
Congregation celebrates 190 years

St. Paul's Evangelical Free Lutheran was founded in 1826

Members of St. Paul's Evangelical Free Lutheran Church, Leitersburg, Md., celebrated the congregation's 190th anniversary of spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ during a special service on Aug. 7.

Past and current members of the congregation gathered together to worship and enjoy the luncheon following the service. The sermon, given by Pastor Lyndon Korhonen, AFLC president, was titled "Perseverance" and centered on Jude 17-23, one of the Bible texts that was used when the church was founded. After the service, the attendees were given the opportunity to view historical pictures and memorabilia about the congregation that were put on display. Also, a church history was compiled and given to each family attending the service, which outlined the church's early and recent history. Families were also given a booklet of favorite memories by members. Fellowship and memories were enjoyed by all during the luncheon following the service.

~Submitted by Michele Edgel



TOP: Pastor Terry Culler and Pastor Lyndon Korhonen took part in the service. ABOVE: Historical documents.

AUGUST MEMORIALS

AFLBS

Thelma Johnson
David Tillgren
Earl Lovro
Curtis Stahl
Ruth Claus
Verniz Jore
Adeline Kvam
Lorraine Kvam
Kenneth Rolf (2)
Myron Haugen (2)

AFLTS

Sandra Mershon

World Missions

Rodney Johnson
Verniz Jore
Pastor Leroy
Anenson

Bernette Gerlach

Home Missions

Kenneth Rolf
Carol Mackey
Adeline Kvam

WMF

Doris Nelson
Thordis Kleager
Thelma Haabak
Adeline Kvam (2)
Margaret Lindroth

... in honor of

AFLBS

Irmy Haugen

FLAPS

Pastor Brian
Davidson

AFLC BENEVOLENCES January 1-Aug. 31, 2016

FUND	REC'D IN AUGUST	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$36,623	\$240,075	\$231,256
Evangelism	13,617	86,473	94,570
Youth Ministries	7,741	70,153	73,624
Parish Education	11,791	100,657	83,219
Seminary	21,568	161,232	179,084
Bible School	41,747	348,443	351,441
Home Missions	50,806	309,719	280,102
World Missions	42,274	344,260	265,742
Personal Support	43,097	395,744	350,490
TOTALS	\$269,264	\$2,056,757	\$1,909,528
Contact the individual departments for further information about specific financial needs.			

THE CHRISTIAN AS CITIZEN

It's only a matter of weeks now before the United States will have a national election, and for most of us the main choice on the ballot will be for the office of president. Your editor has been privileged to vote for more than 40 years, but certainly cannot remember a more difficult and troubling campaign season. If the polls are to be



Pastor Robert Lee

believed, the majority of voters simply do not trust the candidate of either major party, and third party campaigns have a long history of failure. What should we do?

Christians, it is comforting to know that our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20), isn't it? A present reality and future hope, our heavenly citizenship causes us to feel a certain sense of alienation from what is happening here and now. The Bible, in fact, calls us "aliens and strangers," (I Peter 2:11). Yet after counseling believers to remember the importance of the witness of their lives among unbelievers, the very next verses (v. 13f) command us to submit to our earthly authorities. In other words, brothers and sisters, we aren't in heaven yet.

This is not an easy balance to keep. Martin Luther, the 16th century reformer, is often associated with a teaching called the Two Kingdoms doctrine. God rules in two ways, the reformer taught. There is His order of creation, including such institutions as government and family, which are used by God to restrain the wicked and to maintain peace. This is the left-hand kingdom of law and the sword, which is necessary due to humanity's fallen nature, and it must be retained until the end of the world. The right-hand kingdom of Christ, in contrast, is a gospel kingdom, governed and grown through the means of grace in the power of the Holy Spirit. The first is primarily for unbelievers, while the second consists only

of true Christians.

What guidance are we able to draw from this two-kingdom distinction that might apply to the election of 2016?

First, the Christian citizen is called to support his government, and this certainly includes voting. "Political participation is not optional for the Christian; it is his God-given duty" (G.W. Forell). It also may include serving in government positions if one is qualified. "Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and to God what belongs to God" (Mark 12:17), and "Let every soul be subject to the governing authority, for there is no authority except from God; the authority which everywhere exists has been ordained by God" (Romans 13:1).

Second, the Christian citizen recognizes that his government is an expression of the first kingdom, not the second. We do not confuse the two, even when Christians are serving in political office, for our government should not be expected to be a reflection of God's kingdom. Because government is primarily for the unbeliever, fair and firm law enforcement is a necessity and ultimately a mercy. If one attempted to rule the world by the gospel, Luther wrote, the result would be loosening the ropes and chains of wild beasts and letting them bite and mangle everyone.

There is another command of Scripture that must be remembered concerning the citizenship of the Christian: "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). Peter was commanded by the high priest and his council not to teach in the name of Jesus, and he disobeyed due to his allegiance to a higher authority. When the worldly king-

dom authority tries to usurp the authority of God's kingdom over the believers, then we must resist, regardless of the cost, as others have done so faithfully and sacrificially over the centuries. Luther was not optimistic concerning the rulers of his day, describing them generally as "the biggest fools or the worst scoundrels on earth," and we should expect the worst from them, especially in divine matters that pertain to the salvation of souls (from *Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed*).

Finally, we should encourage one another to watch our words and hold our tongue (Proverbs 21:23) during this time in our nation's history when feelings seem to be running so high. Remember and seek to guide our words by the meaning of the Eighth Commandment: "We should fear

A present reality and future hope, our heavenly citizenship causes us to feel a certain sense of alienation from what is happening here and now.

and love God so that we do not deceitfully lie about, betray, backbite, nor slander our neighbor but defend him, speak well of him, and put the most charitable construction on all that he does."

Be informed as much as possible, and pray much, that God will guide our voting as well as the future of our nation.

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

Periodicals

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

association retreat center

A FOCUS ON PRAYER

BY PASTOR KARL ANDERSON

In the prayer that Jesus taught us in Matthew 6 and Luke 11, there are seven requests. The Small Catechism calls them petitions. It is tempting to rattle them off without thinking as we recite the Lord's Prayer in church on Sunday or at other times. On the other hand, when we pray on our own, most of our prayers tend to center on our earthly needs such as sickness and other issues of life. Those prayers are covered in the fourth petition, "Give us this day our daily bread." Yet there are six other petitions that Jesus gave us to pray.

To overcome that temptation to focus nearly all our prayers in only one petition it may be helpful to look at the seven petitions as seven topics for prayer. It's good to purposely think about the other petitions in order that we may expand our prayer life beyond our earthly needs. When we move on from focusing on our earthly needs by asking for daily bread we find that the final three petitions address our spiritual needs—forgiveness, guidance, and deliverance. Here we recognize the basic

message of the gospel: Sin has separated us from God; Jesus has died to pay the price of sin. Through contrition and repentance, we recognize our need and the greatness of his gift. Through these requests we call upon our heavenly Father to help us overcome the challenges we face living in a fallen world.

Though they are easily neglected, the first three petitions lay the foundation of our faith. In the third petition we pray that His will would be done. His will is revealed in two ways in Scripture. One is through the commandments that show how He desires us to live. The second is through the gospel summarized in passages such as I Timothy 2:4, which tells us that even though we have not followed His will in keeping the commandments, yet He "desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." We recognize God's desire that all be saved when we pray, "Thy kingdom come." In this third petition we are asking for people to enter into His Kingdom by faith.

Perhaps the most foundational petition of all is the first, where we ask that his name be hallowed. To hallow means to consider

something holy. Here we pray not that God changes to become holy, but that people change to recognize His holiness. This is the first petition because it is here where our prayers must begin. It is only when we consider God holy that we will desire His will be done, seek first the Kingdom of God, look to Him for daily bread, ask His forgiveness, request His guidance, and depend upon His deliverance.

We begin the prayer by addressing God as our heavenly Father. We have a special relationship with Him as His adopted children. By looking at the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer as seven topics for our daily prayers, we are reminded of the greatness of our heavenly Father, of our need to rely upon Him, and the blessings we experience because of His wonderful mercy and love.

Please be in prayer for the ministry of the Association Retreat Center.

Anderson serves the McIntosh, Minn., parish of Mount Carmel and Trinity Lutheran.