

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

SEPTEMBER 2017



ILLUMINATE

FLY 2017 » JOHN 8:12



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SALVATION IN CHRIST ALONE

BY PASTOR PETER FRANZ

A missionary was visiting a young Roman Catholic boy who didn't understand that only Christ alone can save us. After hearing the promises of God's Word that Jesus did everything necessary for our salvation, the boy said, "I always knew that what Jesus did on the cross was necessary. Now I realize that what He did is enough."

James Montgomery Boice, in his book, *Whatever Happened to the Gospel of Grace?*, gives a wonderful explanation of what it means to be justified because of Christ alone.

"Justification because of Christ alone (*solus Christus*) means that Jesus has done the necessary work of salvation utterly and completely, so that no merit on the part of man, no merit of the saints, no works of ours performed either here or later in purgatory, can add to his completed work. In fact, any attempt to add to Christ's work is a perversion of the gospel and indeed is no gospel at all (Galatians 1:6-9). To proclaim Christ alone is to proclaim him as the Christian's one and only sufficient Prophet, Priest, and King. We need no other prophets to reveal God's word or will. We need no other priests to mediate God's salvation and blessing. We need no other kings to control the thinking and lives of believers. Jesus is everything to us and for us in the gospel" (p.88).

When Jesus died on the cross He said, "It is finished" (John 19:30). Nothing more need be added nor can be added to what Jesus has done. Elvina M. Hall put it well in her famous hymn:

"Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe; sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow."

On Jan. 6, 1850, a snowstorm almost crippled the city of Colchester, England. A teenage boy was unable to get to the church he usually attended. So he made his way to a nearby Primitive Methodist chapel, where an ill-prepared layman was substituting for the absent preacher. His text was Isaiah 45:22, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."

For many months this young teenager had been miserable and under deep conviction. Though he had been reared in church (both his father and grandfather were preachers), he did not have the assurance of salvation. The unprepared substitute minister did not have much to say, so he kept repeating the text.

"A man need not go to college to learn to look," he shouted. "Anyone can look—a child can look!" About that time, he saw the visitor sitting to one side, and he pointed at him and said, "Young man, you look very miserable. Young man, look to Jesus Christ!"

The young man did look to Jesus, and that was how the great preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon was converted.

Christ alone is a simple message, but it is the only message that will bring salvation.

Franz, who is the vice president of the AFLC, serves Grace Free Lutheran, Maple Grove, Minn.

Walking anywhere outside of the light is darkness. And there is no fellowship outside the light. Our enemies try very hard to convince us otherwise.

—Micah Hjermstad

Your performance as a Christian is not what ultimately matters, it is being in a right relationship with God that matters.

—Ryan Patenaude

He rescued us from the domain of darkness, the dominion and the kingdom of darkness, and brought us into the kingdom of His beloved Son.

—Owen Parsley

It's hard to think about the light that we're talking about this week when the culture around us is overwhelming us with the message that steals that from us. ... You are fearfully and wonderfully made. ... You can have life in Jesus, you can live life fully, and you can shine because God is always with you.

—Tiger McLuen

While you have the light believe in the light that you may become sons of light. ... I want to beg you on behalf of Christ to be reconciled to Him.

—Wade Mobley



ILLUMINATE

FLY 2017

by Ruth Gunderson

Their steps were uncertain, taken cautiously as they emerged into the dark predawn hours. The mountain air was sharp in their lungs, taken in gasps too hard and too thin with oxygen to meet the drumming of their heartbeats.

They stopped, breathed, moved on. With each step they searched for the edges of light shining from their hands. Had they clicked the lights off, they would have seen the faint stars above the tree line, now just a smudge darker than the inky sky. But they pressed on, feet crunching on gravel, hushed voices accompanying their march upward.

As they climbed into the void, slowly they recognized the footholds that just minutes ago were lost in shadows. A soft glow of light began to wrap

itself around the world, golden and pink. They made their last push to the top. And there, on granite pillows and dusty tree branches turned rosy in the glow, they turned east and waited.

Streaks of light began to wing across the clouds, loud in their announcement of what was soon to come. Growing with each second, the half-moon of light intensified across the valley, until it seemed to have all of creation at attention. And just when the world couldn't hold it any longer, the light burst over the mountains, across the valley, and into the waiting eyes of its audience.

A split second had passed, but everything had changed. All shreds of darkness were now gone. The light had come, and darkness could not endure. They sang, pure joy. They prayed, in thankfulness. They bowed before the true Light.

Trekking back down the mountain, sure steps taken without thought, they entered back into camp life. But they were now changed by light.

Their week at FLY 2017 in Estes Park, Colo., was marked by contrast as they focused on the depths of darkness known to mankind, and the one Man, true Light, who reached down to save, forever overcoming the dominion of darkness. From worship to workshops, from

recreation to electives, and from Bible study to evening services, FLY 2017 focused on the theme "Illuminate," taken from John 8:12.

On Monday afternoon, July 3, a total of 1,809 students, staff, dorm room leaders, adults, and children arrived at the YMCA of the Rockies for the week. As the sun began its descent to the west, the Longhouse lit up with the message, "Darkness Encounters Light," taught by Tiger McLuen, who dug into John 1:1-5, 9-12. McLuen, president of Youth Leadership, walked students through what he called the "Four Ps"—aspects of life that work to make people forget about God: personal looks, performance, popularity, and possessions.

"Light is not found in the Four Ps," said McLuen. "In fact, that is where the thief is. ... It is hard to think about the light that we're talking about this week when the culture around us is overwhelming us with the message that steals that from us."

For those whose lives are darkened by any of these life-stealers, McLuen urged them to be filled with God's grace and light. "You want to shine? Then stand on the rock. Not because you are protected, but because you are sure."

With the lights dimmed, McLuen asked everyone to turn on their cell phone lights, facing



Christ in that role. And last, Jordan and Sarah Langness led separate sessions for guys and girls, with the guys digging into an open and honest discussion about sex in “Sexual Paradox,” and the girls discussing the cultural lies about sex and God’s plan in “Yada, Yada, Yada.”

“We considered the topics addressed in these workshops as dark areas in our culture—racism, a sexually-promiscuous culture, depression, suicide and other mental health issues—these all have a darkness to them that can only be illuminated by the Light of the World,” said FLY President Eric Rasmussen.

With 44 electives to choose from throughout the week, students had some major decisions to make each day during elective hour. Topics ranged from current cultural hot button issues such as social media, abortion, and racial equality, to topics addressing the call to missions, presentations by the AFLC Bible school, and challenges by speakers to live for Christ. Whatever the topic, the electives gave students and adults alike a chance to dig into the light of the gospel from many aspects of life.

Owen Parsley, a high school teacher from Flandreau, S.D., mirrored that thought during Tuesday’s evening service. Using John 3:16-21 as his text, he brought out three key points centered on darkness and light. First, Jesus, the only true light, came to graciously save us. Second, light and darkness are separate and don’t mix. Last, only God can change us and bring us to the light, and he urged students to seek God’s help.

“Be honest and real,” said Parsley, who urged students to turn to Christ. “Say to Him, ‘I need you Lord. Just help me.’ I promise you that God hears those prayers and that honest cry.”

Wednesday’s morning schedule began with the four groups of students shifting to a new workshop. Then, after students chose and attended an elective session, they headed for their second morning of Bible study, divided by junior and senior high. The senior high sessions were led by Pastor Luke Long, from Arlington, Wash., who focused on letting the light of Christ shine through our lives with the power of the gospel. He also offered practical training and real opportunities to begin gospel conversations.

“Students were stretched and challenged to take it home and prayerfully begin to see revival as they let God use their lives to illuminate their cities, schools, neighborhoods, and friend circles,” said Long.

The junior high sessions were taught by Michelle Olson, from Arlington, S.D. Using the camp theme Scripture, Olson demystified the idea that Bible study is only for pastors or church leaders by teaching multiple practical methods to study the Bible, including inductive, topical, thematic, or character studies. By the end of the week, students had a box full of useful tools to

them downward. A soft glow filled the room. Then, with the lights raised above their heads, the room shone with a powerful illustration of God’s ability to overcome darkness.

Following the opening NightLYE, featuring Doug the T-Rex and a game show format from the 1980s, students headed to their dorms for a night of sleep.

As morning dawned on Tuesday, students jumped into their first full day of events, beginning with a workshop. They were divided into four groups, and throughout the week they attended each of four workshops. Jeff Berryhill, who led the Conquering Challenges ministry team, talked about “Healing Light for the Things We Hide,” offering healthy ways to deal with those struggles that we often hide. Dr. Robert Loggins, a pastor, author, and racial unity advocate, led a session called “The Power of One: A Nation-Wide Movement,” where he urged young people to be ambassadors for Christ, bridging the racial divide in our nation, states, cities, and communities. Pastor Wade Mobley, president of the Free Lutheran Schools, taught a session on “Thinking Christianly in an Unchristian Culture.” While culture has great power to shape how people think and act, he urged his listeners to only allow



Videos from the FLY Convention can be found on the FLY website//

flyconvention.org

Content includes:

- Five evening sessions
- Five highlight videos



FLY 2017 attendance

- Teens: 1,099
- Staff: 159
- Dorm room leaders: 285
- Children: 75
- Adults: 177
- Day/Evening pass: 14

Total: 1,809



Resources

- Downloadable group photo (flyconvention.org)
- Facebook group to encourage and equip students to share the gospel (facebook.com/groups/FLYLetItShine)
- FLY theme song, “Light of Christ,” lyrics and chords (flyconvention.org)



1. Pastor Wade Mobley used three student volunteers to illustrate a point about God's power to ground you during his workshop.
2. Members of Beautiful Eulogy sang Wednesday evening.
3. The evening speakers brought engaging messages each evening.
4. Doug the T-Rex participated in a game show along with other student volunteers during Tuesday's NightLYF.
5. Michelle Olson's Bible study hour challenged students and youth leaders to dig into several Bible study methods.
6. The guys met in the Longhouse during Wednesday's service.
7. Tuesday afternoon's pie eating contest was a memorable event.

take home and dig into Scripture on their own.

Men and women met in separate services on Wednesday as two speakers led the evening services. The men's session focused on John 9 and the miraculous healing of a man born blind. Ryan Patenaude, a seminarian, used the story of the blind man encountering the light of Jesus to draw a picture of God's grace and mercy freely given to someone who could not act on his own behalf. Patenaude showed how the apostles and Pharisees used bad logic by tying the man's blindness to sin. While he agreed that there are earthly consequences to our actions, Patenaude urged his listeners to see that such logic robs people of hope when they suffer.

"Your righteousness, your faith in God, depends on one thing, and that is belief in Jesus Christ. It is trusting in the blood shed for you and that it covers your sin," said Patenaude.

Over in the Assembly Hall with the women, Kayla Russum, from Seattle, Wash., used Psalm 139 to focus on the theme, "Speak Lord, your servant is listening." Russum focused on four areas in which the Lord may be speaking to His people: First, He is with us in our mess, our darkness. Second, He loves us and He made us the way we are. Third, He wants to use our lives for His glory. And last, He wants to set us free from our sin, our offensive ways.

It was a message that was repeated that evening when all the students united in the Longhouse for a concert given by Beautiful Eulogy, a spoken-word and hip-hop group from Portland, Ore. With lights ablaze and an impassioned message of the gospel, the group sang Scripture-based messages of God's love and desire to be loved in return. "We used to fear the unknown 'til God made himself known and atoned, mending the relationship between God and men," they sang. "Giving His life as a ransom for many when He died and ascended. And in that one event the certainty of eternal death was circumvented"

Katy Dahl, who led worship throughout the week, also gave a short concert following the evening service on Friday. A singer and songwriter living in Minneapolis, and graduate of AFLBS, Dahl recently released her first EP of original songs titled, "Home."

Each afternoon, the opportunities for play ranged from competitions in basketball, ultimate Frisbee, volleyball, Frisbee golf, Dutch Blitz, and kickball, to a talent show, evangelism experiences, and ARTiculate, where students could express their love of art through photography, block printing, and coloring. If you wanted a spot to hang out, coffee house was set up in a quiet corner. And there was always an opportunity to hike in the surrounding park, taking in mountains and possibly a rain storm or two.

Thursday afternoon was dedicated to spending time with home youth groups.

Organized opportunities were available, including a volunteer service project to give back to the YMCA and a scavenger hunt. But many groups ventured into Estes Park for the afternoon, or visited adjacent Rocky Mountain National Park.

During the service that evening, Pastor Wade Mobley's message focused on the "Light of the World, Lifted Up," taken from John 12:31-36. His message challenged listeners to consider why Jesus came to earth—to glorify the Father, and how He accomplished this mission—by casting out the ruler of darkness and drawing all people to Himself.

"God glorifies His name most evidently in the saving of mankind," said Mobley, adding that the biggest lie told to mankind is that God is not good to us, or that He hasn't done enough to save us.

"The severity of the cross establishes the exclusivity of the cross. If sin wasn't that bad, or if there was any other way, what kind of god would send his son as an option or wish to endure that kind of death?" he asked. He closed by challenging listeners to walk in the light offered by Christ.

In place of NightLYF, students returned to their youth groups to spend time talking about the evening messages, how the workshops and electives were impacting their lives, and spending time in prayer asking God to continue to open their eyes to His light.

After a final morning of workshops, electives, and Bible studies, and a final afternoon to play in God's creation, the teens returned to the Longhouse for one final evening session. As they entered, the sun began its slow descent over the mountains, but inside, Pastor Micah Hjermsstad opened up God's Word to the light of the gospel in his message on I John 5:1-10. He began by drawing a distinction between truth and darkness, stating that not only does truth matter, but we are invited to be a part of truth and light.

"That truth means something to us, not only because of how great it is, but because God has made it possible for you to enjoy the truth of His light with Him. The perfection of heaven is for you, too," said Hjermsstad.

Separation from God, said Hjermsstad, comes from being in darkness. Any darkness. But the beauty of the gospel message is that Jesus made it possible to be in the light with Him through His sacrifice.

"Cling to the cross," he urged. "Never leave the cross. Because it is at the cross where you find satisfaction for your sins. It is where you find a perfect price that was paid on your behalf."

It was a beautiful, light-filled message to end the week. As students exited the Longhouse to begin their long treks back to their homes, they carried with them the Light of truth.

Gunderson is the managing editor of the Lutheran Ambassador.



1. Students were given times of worship each day.
2. A basketball tournament took place in the afternoon rec time.
3. Every afternoon, a bit of rain.
4. Girls pray for each other.

*"This is the message we have heard from him
and proclaim to you, that God is light,
and in him is no darkness at all." (1 John 1:15)*

LIGHT

by Megan Pickering

Jesus doesn't have any darkness in Him. Yet He who knew no sin became sin. God loves us so much that He sent His only son to die so that we may live through Jesus Christ. God saved us when the world was full of darkness. We have nothing to do with saving ourselves—it is what Jesus did for us on the cross that saves. Only God can change us and bring us to the light; He is the light and that light is truth.

When Thomas asked Jesus how he could follow Him, Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). We all need the light and truth; we all need Jesus. I learned this truth through a very dark time in my life. Here is my story.

I was 18 when I was introduced to New Age occult beliefs. It was a journey that led me down a dark path, where I was lifeless and knew no truth and had no light. When I first met Josh, the man I would marry, he was deeper into the

occult than I was and we started to feed off of each other. We got into dowsing (divination), reiki (energy healing), and witchcraft. When I first got into the occult I felt empowered and free. As time went on it felt more like I jumped into a hole and was free falling into darkness, not knowing how far down the hole was and wondering if I was going to be alive once I hit the bottom. The more I got into New Age beliefs, the more I became very sick and ill minded; I started to lose sense of reality. To be honest with you, I was starting to go insane.

At the time and with our limited

understanding of the spiritual world, we thought it was a good thing to get into. We thought that those who were teaching us understood what they were doing. In truth, we thought that we were our own gods and got into thinking that our power came from within us. In reality, we were not in control of what we were dipping our feet into.

Josh and I started to go to two music festivals near Minneapolis called Shangri-La and Revival. They were huge festivals where you could meet a lot of people who were into the occult. But one booth at the festivals, called the Prayer Station, played a big part in our coming to find Jesus as



BRINGS LIFE



our Savior. Josh met Hiland at the Prayer Station the first time that he went to a festival. Year after year, Hiland and those at the station would pray for us when we visited the booth.

September 2014 at Shangri-La was the moment that changed everything for the good. Jesus reached down through my darkness, grabbed my hand and pulled me through to His light and saved me. When Jesus saved me from the dark, the light that was now in me shined so bright I saw a dramatic change in my life. Everything became clear and Jesus taught me what was truth, and that what I learned in the

New Age was from Satan. This made me want to know more about who Jesus really was and to share with others this great news.

From that moment on, I changed as a person who was sad and angry all the time to someone who is now happy and so in love with Jesus. He is my joy. I have changed not because of myself, but of what Jesus has done in me.

Without Jesus there was no light, only darkness. But now the light of Jesus is in us! Jesus is the ONLY light that came to earth to save the world! "Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will

not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life'" (John 8:12).

I know that this little light is MINE, I'm going to let it shine!

Pickering, Minneapolis, Minn., is a senior at the Association Free Lutheran Bible School, Plymouth, Minn. (Photo by Abbie Berge)

A LIGHT IN



DARKNESS

by Owen Parsley

On July 4 I was speaking in front of a bunch of young bloods at the Free Lutheran Youth (FLY) Convention in Estes Park, Colo. It was my seventh FLY and I learned many a fun fact from my time in the Rockies. I discovered that hip-hop and rap are alive and well in the AFLC. Something else I realized is that a fidget spinner in the hands of Pastor Adam Osier becomes a dangerous weapon (he almost poked an eye out!). I also, unfortunately, found out that I have definitely lost a step or two (or seven) in ultimate Frisbee. But even Randy Moss had to retire, right? Most importantly, I was given a new and encouraging perspective on a familiar passage in John 3.

The theme for FLY 2017 was “Illuminate” and I was given the opportunity to speak on Tuesday night from John 3:16-21. This text explains how God loved us so much that He sent His Son, Jesus, the Light, to save us from the darkness and from eternal condemnation that we deserved due to our mistakes and evil hearts. Verses 16-18 highlight the compassion of God as well as the commitment and patience of Christ, showing the good news that Christ did not come to condemn but to save.

In contrast, as sinners we despise the Light and are not drawn to it at all. In fact, we hate the Light and love carrying out our sin in the darkness, as verses 19 and 20 so clearly describe. That really made me think about the mission of Jesus and how He willingly and lovingly came to a people who rejected and hated Him. Though Christ promises life, peace, and joy, this world would rather hold on to temporary pleasures and remain in the unsatisfying darkness.

Thankfully the passage doesn’t end there. The final verse in this section focuses on a life in darkness that is changed by Jesus. Verse 21 says, “But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.” The only way we can do anything right is by the power of God working in us to carry out something true and good. The start of our ability to walk in the light is Christ, and He continues to shine in us throughout our everyday lives. Though the darkness is strong, the Light is even stronger. We have been saved by the Light, now we must continue to walk in and live in the Light.

During the other nine months of the year when I’m not at FLY or walking beans on the farm, I’m a high school social studies teacher, I coach track and cross country, and my wife, Rachel, and I also help lead Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA) on Sunday nights. Rachel and I live in Flandreau, S.D., a town of approximately 2,300 people. Flandreau isn’t exactly Mayberry, USA, as it has a lot of darkness in its city limits. Compared to the gathering of fellow believers at FLY, Flandreau is definitely not a city on a hill. But in all, every person in Flandreau, and FLY, needs the mercy and grace of Christ, including me and Rachel. And only Jesus can illuminate the darkness of any place on earth, like Flandreau. Rachel and I agree that there are days when it can be hard to shine in this area,

whether it is dealing with a troublesome student, or a stubborn coworker, or a rude acquaintance or stranger. But that’s where my new perspective on Christ’s willingness to come to a stubborn people recently changed my outlook. Though it would be easy to give up, I have to stop and think about how Christ came to a people who rejected Him. That reminds me of the compassion of our Lord and the mercy and grace that He so kindly brought to us. I figure if Christ can be patient with me and shine in my life, He can enable me to do the same with others.

Now that we’re far beyond the comfort of FLY and entering another season of fall, may we be encouraged and motivated by the gospel. Maybe you have that family member or friend who is living in darkness. Perhaps it’s a fellow employee at your job who needs the light of Christ. It could be a classmate or casual acquaintance who is searching for the satisfying life only Jesus gives. Once you see the need, remember the good news of Jesus and how His light, not ours, is what changes others. And with that, continue to shine His light to others and it could surprise you who is watching.

After I spoke at FLY my evening talk was shared on the internet and I didn’t think much of it. But since then I have had people in my little town of Flandreau comment on it, from the teller at the bank, to the guy behind the counter at the hardware store, to the businesswoman at the beanbag tournament down at the city park. Praise God for the ability to shine His light, and may we always rely on His help and gladly share His hope with others. Now that we have been changed by Jesus, we have the ability and license to illuminate. Booya!

Parsley, a member of Christ the King Lutheran, Pipestone, Minn., was the Tuesday evening speaker at FLY 2017. (Photo by Abbie Berge)

OH! TO SEE

by Jack Laurila & Kyle Hooper

What does it mean to see? Not just to look with your eyes, but to really focus and comprehend, seeing as Jesus refers to it. Ryan Patenaude, FLY's Wednesday night speaker, pointed out that oftentimes we think that we see clearly when in fact we don't see at all. After all, in John 9 both the Pharisees and Jesus' disciples thought they could see clearly, but neither did. Ryan also brought attention to the fact that not only do we see unclearly and not know it, but we deny it. We do not like to be wrong.

In our culture, there's shame in being wrong. We do everything in our power to avoid this. Ryan told a story as an example. He went on a long hike with his family on a hot day. Ryan explained that he liked to conquer things, and this was something he and his family could conquer. It was a 3.5-mile hike one way to the tallest point in South Dakota. They had one water bottle to share with everyone. They soon found out that it was a mistake. Ryan told us that he was wrong in thinking that they could conquer that climb with one bottle of water.

This is a good anecdote to demonstrate how we can be wrong and not like to admit

it. The problem is, when we focus on avoiding imperfection too much, our focus is diverted from our Creator. We don't realize that we are all wrong. We're born wrong, and there's only one way to correct our wrongdoings. There's only one way for us to see the light.

Seeing, to simply put it, is believing. One of the interesting details of John 9 is that Jesus used mud to heal the blind man. This is the only place we found in Scripture where Jesus heals someone by means other than words or touch. In the context of John 8, Jesus is making claims that He is of God, and what better way to demonstrate this to those around than by taking the dirt on the ground to let a man see just as God used the dirt of the ground to initially create man.

We are first called to believe that Jesus is God, the very fact the Pharisees refused to believe. Without believing that God sent His only son Jesus Christ to die on the cross for our sins, we are blind. In today's culture, people try to disprove God, people don't listen to God, a lot of people don't believe in God, and a lot of people don't care either way. These people are blind, and it's our job to show them the light of Jesus Christ (however, it's essential to note that not even one of us sees 100 percent clearly all the time). Being a Christian and living in the light of our Lord in 2017 can be scary. This world we live in is so broken.

So that brings up the question: How can we live in the light in our culture? Our culture is very self-centered and mislead. In contrast, we're called to focus on both Christ and others, not just ourselves. We're called to be led by God (who, by the way, will not mislead). Because of our culture's egotistic nature, we tend to set our hearts upon other earthly possessions, or idols, like electronics, money, or anything that distracts us from the Lord. When we think this way as a culture, our entire mind-set shifts. People who

were once followers of Jesus are led astray by these idols. The more we do this, the further we stray from the light God into darkness.

We need to see beyond these secular tendencies. We can't do that without keeping our focus where it's meant to be held, that being on Christ. Think of it this way: You are living in a world full of blind people. The few who can see, through Christ, need to guide the blind or else they wander into danger. If you want to live in the light in a dark culture, you need to first make sure you're on the right track, then guide others who know no better than to walk off the ledge of righteousness and fall into sin. However, this idea, to a certain extent, is like the blind leading the blind, so we cannot do this alone. Through Christ, we both lead and are led.

The simple fact of the matter is there aren't any one-word answers as to how to live in the light in a dark culture. It's not something you look up at your local library. Even Google can't answer that. It comes down to a lifestyle that is learned by living in Christ. Living in the light of Christ is not something we can provide step-by-step instructions for. It can only be answered by letting Christ into your life, and letting Him give you the guidance you need to show others how to get rid of their blindness and see the Light.

If you're really seeking to live in the Light, as we all should be, the Word of God takes the highest authority, just like it does in each and every other situation. Think of God's Word as a flashlight. This is the only means by which we may see where we walk. And when you're called to follow Jesus in a pitch black world, you're *really* going to need that flashlight.

Laurila and Hooper are members of Hope Free Evangelical Lutheran, Ishpeming, Mich.

JESUS



WALK IN THE

by Emily Johnson

Always and never. Dead and alive. Short and tall. Obviously, these are examples of opposites. Light and darkness fit in the category of opposites, as well. If light and darkness are opposites, why do we often think we can have both light and darkness at the same time?

During the closing session on Friday evening at the FLY Convention, Pastor Micah Hjermstad preached from God's Word found in I John 1:5-9. This passage talks about walking in the light of Christ. There is a stark, undeniable difference between walking in the light of Christ and walking in the darkness of the world.

Whether we realize it or not, believers and unbelievers alike are searching for some sort of truth. Everyone desires to know truth. But there is only one place where we find real truth, and that is in Jesus. In our

culture, truth has become a relative term; culture often bases truth on whatever seems right at the time. It is a slippery slope because the enemy deceives people into believing that there can be a foundation for truth apart from God. This makes sense when we see so many people trying to find the truth in the darkness of the world, either in themselves or in other created beings. We try to find truth in the darkness, but it will never be found there.

The light of Christ comes into the darkness and exposes it for a lie. According to I John 1:5b, "God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all." Light equals real truth. And the truth is revealed in the light.

Why do we like to stay in darkness when we know that God is light and truth? We like it because it is more comfortable there. The darkness is the lies that we use to hide the truth. We often think it is easier to hide in the darkness of lies because we think it is safer. But in fact, it is the most dangerous place to hide our lies. It is a place where lies fester and grow. The more we hide these lies that the devil places in our minds, the more we start to believe them as being truth. Remember, all people are searching for truth wherever they can find it. When people believe truth is in the darkness, it is actually a false truth. The light of truth hurts those in darkness because

the lies they believe are open and exposed as false.

As stated in I John 1:5b, there is no darkness in God at all. God is the perfect light. Because of our sin, we can't know what perfect is yet. But Jesus, by dying and rising on the third day, has made it possible for us to experience the perfection of heaven (1 John 1:7). In heaven God's unfiltered presence resides. And He has made it possible for us to walk in His light. Isn't that the most exciting news of all? As Christians, we have the hope of eternal life and walking in the true light of heaven.

Unfortunately, we have a sin problem. This started when Adam and Eve fell from the light into sin, and mankind has been marked with darkness ever since. Because of sin, it is easy





LIGHT

for us to want to stay in our darkness. In 1 John 1:8 it says, “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” Jesus came to save sinners. When we don’t see our sin as incredibly serious, we won’t be able to see the beautiful sweetness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. There is freedom in Christ when the darkness of sin is exposed in our own lives, and that is only possible through the gift of Jesus. Not only does Jesus love to forgive, He is faithful and just to forgive (1 John 1:9). We are graciously forgiven in Christ.

We are called to cling to the cross of Jesus, where we find satisfaction for our sins. Remember, we cannot and will not find the true light apart from Christ, so set your gaze on Jesus.

The moment we fix our eyes on ourselves is the moment we try to muster up enough strength solely through a sinful creature. When we set our gaze on Jesus, we find salvation with our eyes on the cross. We can know for sure that the penalty for our sin has been paid in full at the cross—every single sin forgiven in Jesus.

How does this change how we live our lives? We have this amazing opportunity to share this life-changing news with those around us. It is an incredibly humbling thought to see that God uses us to share the gospel despite ourselves. This amplifies the fact that it is God working through us, and it is not our own doing. We are called to have eyes to see (Matthew 13:16), this means having eyes to see people in our lives who need

to be lifted from the darkness of sin and brought into the light of Jesus. Who can you show the light of Christ to today, tomorrow, and the next? Pray for these opportunities, and God will show you.

Johnson, a 2016 graduate of AFLBS, is a member of the Dalton Free Lutheran Parish, Dalton, Minn.



From top: Ryan Jones played guitar for the worship team. Students had a chance to get creative during ARTiculate. Lots of games were available in the afternoon. RIGHT: Tiger McLuen used a pop can in an illustration.

From top: Owen Parsley started with a rap to celebrate Independence Day before his message on July 4. Students had to choose from 44 different electives, each of which challenged them to interact with other students. Katy Dahl led the worship during the women's service on Wednesday evening. Bus loads of students arrived on Monday afternoon after many of them traveled more than 15 hours.

POWER IN RELATIONSHIPS

BY DANIEL KEINANEN

David's eyes were filled with amazement as he walked off the stage. It was Thursday night during the 2017 FLY Convention and David, a speaker from Compassion International, had finished his presentation. As he came off stage, I asked David if that had happened before. He said, "No, I haven't seen that before."

The strength of the FLY Convention relies on relationships. The first is our relationship with God. Has our relationship with God been strengthened or renewed? Have new relationships with God been birthed? Our relationship with God produces a desire to follow Jesus. As we listen to His direction and follow His lead, our relationship with Him is strengthened. There is no question that God was speaking to us at FLY. And students were responding to Him.

Relationships we have each other are also important in following Jesus. We need others to accomplish His work. He has given His followers helpers who come alongside one another for support, encouragement, and prayer. The strength of our FLY staff depends on the relationships we have with each other. As followers of Jesus and friends with each other, the staff becomes more effective because they are intent on one purpose.

The 2017 FLY Convention has come and gone, and there are many stories to tell about our relationships with God and others. Many of those stories are positive and speak of what God did in a person's life.

David grew up in Kenya as an orphan whose parents died when he was 8. He became bitter toward the Lord and wondered if there could be

someone who would love him. When he was 9, an 8-year-old boy in Florida took it upon himself to support David. This boy in Florida heard God speak to Him and decided to make a difference in a person's life. As David received support, God continued to speak to him. He saw how God had a plan for his life and the provision He gave to help David; he then gave his life over to Jesus.

Later in life David met the boy who had supported him and expressed his gratitude. Today, David lives in America, working for Compassion, hoping to give back to others as this boy did for him. When David spoke from the stage on Thursday night, he challenged and invited the students in attendance to make the same difference in another child's life as a boy did for him. Ushers went through the crowd with packets containing information about children in need, giving them to people as they raised their hands. As packets were being handed out, more hands were going up. David said, "Oh we're

out of packets; that's a good problem to have." Both David and the Compassion International rep, Gary, told me they had not seen that before, where all the packets were taken. The response was overwhelming. Close to 100 sponsors from the FLY Convention signed up to support a child.

This isn't about Compassion International, nor is it about the people who responded that night. This is about the strength of your relationships with God and with others. It's about obedience to His leading. It's about how you show love toward others. Thursday night was one moment during the week where we saw God moving and speaking to us. How will you respond when you hear God speaking to you?

Keinanen, the youth and worship pastor at Christ Is Lord Free Lutheran, La Crosse, Wis., is the FLY Convention coordinator. (Photo by Abbie Berge)



FLY

FREE
LUTHERAN
YOUTH



May God bestow on us his grace

Luther's hymn, "May God Bestow on Us His Grace," is the first mission hymn of the Lutheran Reformation. It is based on Psalm 67 and as such is a fitting psalm of blessing for the close of the worship service after the benediction.

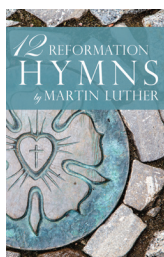
In the third stanza, there is a beautiful benediction of the Holy Trinity, calling upon all the world to praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost alone. And then, in a remarkable close, the "Amen" is built into the third stanza: "Now let our hearts say, Amen."

~Pastor Gordon Waterman
Crown of Life Lutheran
Tomball, Texas

1. May God bestow on us His grace,
With blessings rich provide us,
And may the brightness of His face
To life eternal guide us
That we His saving health may know,
His gracious will and pleasure,
And also to the heathen show
Christ's riches without measure
And unto God convert them.
2. Thine over all shall be the praise
And thanks of ev'ry nation,
And all the world with joy shall raise
The voice of exultation;
For Thou shalt judge the earth, O Lord,

Nor suffer sin to flourish;
Thy people's pasture is Thy Word,
Their souls to feed and nourish,
In righteous paths to keep them.

3. Oh, let the people praise Thy worth,
In all good works increasing;
The land shall plenteous fruit bring forth,
Thy Word is rich in blessing.
May God the Father, God the Son,
And God the Spirit bless us!
Let all the world praise Him alone;
Let solemn awe possess us.
Now let our hearts say, Amen.



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

WMF

WOMEN'S
MISSIONARY
FEDERATION



ELECTED LEADERS

BY DEB BENSON, TREASURER

I was blessed to be raised in a Christian home and nurtured in my faith by my parents and church family. After high school, I attended AFLBS where I met my husband, Craig. We have been married for 36 years and have four adult children and two grandchildren. I live in South Dakota where my husband serves two AFLC churches as pastor and I work part time.

I have the privilege of being active in two WMF groups and cherish the time spent with other believers studying the Word and fellowshiping together. I appreciate the women in the AFLC who are willing to share their time and insight as they write the Bible studies.

It was a joy to travel to Brazil last November as part of a Journey Missions team and I am thankful for the missionaries who serve so faithfully. The Lord opened my eyes to see the work to be done and my need to be diligent in my giving and prayer. It was exciting to see how the gifts given for missions through the national WMF are being used on the mission field.

It is a blessing to serve as national WMF treasurer and I am thankful for the opportunity to serve alongside the other officers. Their love for the women of the AFLC and heart for missions is an encouragement to me in my walk with Jesus.

Benson, who lives in Armour, S.D., was reelected as treasurer during the 2017 Annual Conference.

BY TAMI DEMO, SECOND VICE PRESIDENT

I am excited for the opportunity to work with the ministries of the AFLC in the WMF. I have been married for 17 years and have 4 kids (14, 12, and 10-year-old twins). I graduated from AFLBS in 1997 and am a member of Solid Rock Free Lutheran in

Anoka, Minn., where I currently serve as the president of our women's ministry group. I have served in many different areas of the church and I have found that encouraging women is where my heart is. I hope that as a member of the WMF board I can truly make a difference and encourage those in ministry for the AFLC.

There is a song currently playing on the radio by Colton Dixon and the words in the chorus are, "I have won and I have lost, I got it right sometimes, but sometimes I did not. Life's been a journey. I've seen joy, I've seen regret. Oh and You have been my God through all of it." These words perfectly describe my life so far. Whether I am walking alongside my daughter through her cancer diagnosis, speaking at a women's event, or prying my child out of a washing machine he got stuck in, God is with me. I pray that I can use all of my life stories in a way that points others to Jesus—to encourage women to be real in their faith, laugh along the way, and to love Jesus more. To God be the glory.

Demo, who lives in St. Michael, Minn., was elected to the office of second vice president during the 2017 Annual Conference.



Schools host summer institute

The Free Lutheran Schools hosted the Summer Institute of Theology in August, with classes and lectures focusing on the Reformation and the doctrine of justification by faith. Designed for pastors and lay people alike, SIT is an opportunity for continuing education and further learning that the AFLC Schools provides to its church body.

“This group of students is hungry to learn,” AFLC Schools President Wade Mobley said. “Some are learning to learn, some are here to fulfill licensing requirements, some are trying to get better at what they do. These are heroes to me, and I want to support them while I draw encouragement from them.”

Pastor Steve Mundfrom taught a class called “The Heart of the Reformation: Luther’s Doctrine of Justification.” The systematics professor presented what Martin Luther believed and taught about justification, and how his insights helped shape the development of Christian faith and life.

Dr. Dan Siedell, an art history professor at The King’s College in New York City, lectured on “Christ, Culture, and Art After the Reformation.” He examined modern and contemporary art and encouraged students to not blindly dismiss those areas of culture or art that are unfamiliar. Oftentimes people are only exposed to art or culture when something unusual or news-worthy takes place; there’s more to art and high culture than what is seen in news feeds, Siedell says, adding that too often Christians engage with culture by judging what to dismiss. Rather, Christians have a mandate from God to be creators and cultivators of culture.

“I think we have tendency to declare as unorthodox anything that we don’t understand or appreciate,” Mobley said. “If we don’t engage people and ideas past our comfort level, we will never be effective in Christ’s mission to the world around us.”

The afternoon class was taught by Dr. Craig Jennings, current pastor of Grace Lutheran Brethren in Bottineau, N.D., and former professor of historical theology at the AFLC Schools. Jennings taught “Reformation Perspective: Our Great Legacy of Faith,” and examined the history of the Reformation and the lessons that contemporary audiences can take home.

Additional activities included a worship and testimony service and a guided tour of the Minneapolis Institute of Art with Siedell. For information on more continuing education opportunities, visit aflbs.org.

~By Andrew Kneeland



TOP LEFT: Dr. Dan Siedell, art history professor, discussed the role of culture in art throughout history, and how faith contributes to and is shaped by art.

TOP: Dr. Craig Jennings, former faculty at the Free Lutheran Schools, led a session on the legacy of faith given through the Reformation.

MIDDLE: More than 40 students registered and attended the Summer Institute of Theology.

ABOVE: Pastor Steve Mundfrom, AFLC Schools faculty, led a workshop on Luther’s doctrine of Justification. (Photos by Andrew Abel)



I have learned a lot about discipleship over the last few years while serving in Ecuador. God

has revealed many insights to me about being a discipler through studying the life of Jesus, the Master Discippler. As we consider the need to disciple our youth, I've found that the principles of discipleship that Jesus used more than 2,000 years ago still are relevant, effective, and needful today.

I have observed many times over—both in Ecuador and in Jesus' ministry—that one of the most important aspects of discipleship is time spent together. We often mistakenly believe that if it isn't a Bible lesson we're sharing with someone, it isn't real discipleship. This simply isn't true. There often has to be many connections with a person, sharing aspects of daily life and building a deep relationship, to see any truth grow in a person. It is only when you have invested significant time in a person that you have the ability to speak deep truths into a person's life and make a lasting impact. Youth are especially

TAKING TIME TO DISCIPLE

BY PATRICIA PILLMAN

sensitive to hypocrisy: if you aren't genuinely interested in them, they won't listen to what you have to say.

Jesus set the example by following the biblical model in Deuteronomy 11:19, "You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up." By the way, this verse was given to parents first. As parents, we can never forget or overlook our first and foremost discipleship opportunity: our children. Jesus took advantage of teachable moments as He lived daily life with His disciples. Like Jesus, we can't take advantage of those teachable moments in a disciple's life if we aren't around to experience them.

In Ecuador, my husband, Justo, and I have worked hard to share daily life with the young people we are discipling. Over time, they have come to us with questions from their real world struggles and problems and we have helped them work through the problems through the lens of the Bible. And then finally, they have begun

showing signs of spiritual maturity as they learn to apply Scripture for themselves in practical ways in their lives: a sign of biblical wisdom.

God calls us to follow His example and make the time to disciple someone and help them grow in their walk with the Lord. If the task seems too daunting, don't fear—God's grace is more than sufficient for the task and He has equipped us with everything we need. Paul exhorted his own disciple, Timothy, saying, "You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (II Timothy 2:1-2).

Exciting things can happen when we point a young person to the Lord. Let's you and I be the ones to reach out to someone for Jesus.

Pillman is an AFLC missionary serving in Cuenca, Ecuador, with her husband, Justo, and children.



Pastor Chad Forman was ordained July 15 at Stronghold Lutheran, Detroit, Mich. Pictured is Forman (kneeling), with Pastor Lyndon Korhonen, AFLC president, officiating.

PEOPLE & PLACES

Members of **Bethel Lutheran**, Faith, S.D., celebrated the congregation's centennial anniversary on Aug. 6.

Several new Parish Builders will join AFLC Home Missions congregations this fall. **Moriah Graham** and **Jessica Nikunen**, both 2017 graduates of AFLBS, will work at Christ Community Church, Hagerstown, Md. **Sam Jagt**, who also attended AFLBS, will join the ministry at Good Shepherd Free Lutheran, Camarillo, Calif.

Correction: The newly elected pastor of the World Missions Committee was misidentified on page 10 in the August issue. Pastor David Nelson, Badger, Minn., was elected to the position, as noted on page 12.

JULY MEMORIALS

AFLBS

Morris Moan (14)
Ruth Claus
Ruth Dyrda
Ray Christiansen
John Hauser

AFLTS

Morris Moan (6)
Janice Schmitke
Birgit Lovin
Wesley Sunvold

Ambassador Inst.

Morris Moan

General Fund

Morris Moan (2)

Evangelism

Morris Moan (3)
Ruth Dyrda

Carol Dietsche
Darlene Nelson

Home Missions

Morris Moan
Chet Hamers
William Evenson
Richard Arnt
Pete Hill

WMF

Clarice Astrup
Alta Dozark
Lila Olson

Margaret Elm
Margaret Larson
Lorraine Larson

World Missions

Robert Lofthus
Earl Hillstead

Schools move forward with building project

Large, anonymous donation facilitates plans for new gymnasium, dorm

A gift of \$1.7 million to the AFLC Schools has been designated as seed money toward the construction of a gymnasium and dorm on the campus of the AFLC Schools. Received in August, the anonymous donation will be used to meet the 50 percent cash threshold needed before construction plans begin.

A building committee has been formed with a three-year task of completing construction of both a gymnasium and a dormitory to be ready for use by the fall of 2020. The building committee will evaluate current building plans in support of the strategic plan of the Schools; choose plans, architect, and

contractor; and oversee construction.

An on-campus gymnasium has long been a desire of students and alumni, and increasing enrollment indicates the need for additional on-campus housing, for students of both AFLBS and AFLTS. The Schools Corporation affirmed their desire to build at their June 2017 annual meeting, giving permission to proceed once 50 percent of building costs are received in cash, plus another 20 percent in additional promises. Each building is expected to cost \$5 million, for a total of \$10 million. The new donation will be added to gifts already received totaling \$180,000.



Pastor Christian Andrews was installed July 2 as interim pastor of Good Shepherd Lutheran, Madison, S.D. Pictured are, from left, Joe Neville, Morgan Rohde, Pastor Paul Nash, director of Home Missions, Pastor Andrews, Virgil Johnson, and Dean Feistner.

AFLC BENEVOLENCES January 1-July 31, 2017

FUND	REC'D IN JULY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$32,071	\$248,792	\$203,453
Evangelism	17,417	81,991	72,857
Youth Ministries	7,368	63,480	62,412
Parish Education	14,246	86,240	88,865
Seminary	26,951	146,721	139,664
Bible School	55,518	338,556	306,696
Home Missions	31,483	325,085	258,913
World Missions	29,467	242,722	302,236
Personal Support	39,351	354,333	352,848
TOTALS	\$253,873	\$1,887,919	\$1,787,943
For additional financial information for each department, go to www.aflc.org/giving			

YOKED

"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My load is light."

Matthew 11:28-30

This was the text of a fine sermon I heard this summer, and these words are still at work in my mind and heart.

It would seem clear that Jesus was not speaking about physical burdens here. Later in Matthew's Gospel, He warned His disciples of the heavy loads that the religious leaders sought to lay on them (23:4), the oppressive yoke of outward religion, rules, regulations, and self-

righteousness. Luther suffered deep soul weariness (*anfechtung*) as he tried to bear this impossible load. It's a warning, too, for 21st century disciples to hear and heed.

"Come to Me," Jesus said, and this invitation is especially addressed to those who may be exhausted from trying to carry the heavy burden of religious legalism. Some may remember a story many years ago entitled, "Psalms or Tranquilizers," written by a woman who burst into her pastor's office and threw a bottle of pills on his desk. "This is what I get," she said accusingly, "for all my work in the church!" A young man who turned his back on the faith said that it was too hard to be a Christian. A young lady who was part of a college Bible study group left the fellowship because she felt that too much was expected of her. Perhaps you remember someone, too, who walked away. The root cause of their problems is that they were carrying

the wrong yoke.

"Come to Me," Jesus said, and this invitation may also be addressed to those who are worn out by the pursuit of possessions and pleasures, from believing the lie that the game of life is won by whoever has the most toys in the end. One might say that everyone bears a yoke of some sort, and the yoke of worldliness is also a very heavy one.

Come to Me ... not to a program or a pattern, but to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. We must never forget that Christianity is essentially a relationship with the One who paid the price by His suffering and dying to bring us to Himself.

All ... no one is excluded. It's both an invitation and command, addressed to the whole world.

And I will give you rest ... calming, refreshing, free from the burdens of false yokes. And how will this rest be experienced?

Take My yoke upon you. Rest is found in wearing His yoke. It's not a familiar term to

us today, but back in Bible times the yoke was a common wooden harness that bound a single or multiple animals to a plow or wagon. So what does this mean? Is the Christian life simply another burdensome yoke?

Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me. The personal pronouns point us to the fact that the answer to this apparent contradiction is a person. There is rest as

well as a life to be lived, and we are called to a lifetime of learning to know the One who provides the new yoke. Our course of study is Jesus. He is not like our previous masters—our sinful self, Satan, and the world. *For I am gentle and lowly in heart.* Someone has defined gentleness as strength under control, and humility as selflessness. We learn of these qualities of character as we sit at the feet of Jesus. *For My yoke is easy and My burden is light* ... not easy in the ordinary sense of the word, but good and comfortable. "Christ's yoke is like feathers to a bird; not loads, but helps to motion" (Jeremy Taylor, 1613-1667).

This most treasured portion of Scripture comes to mind in light of the

hundreds of young people who attended the FLY Convention in Colorado, others who attended one of the many AFLC Bible camps, and the children who were taught during the vacation Bible school programs this summer. What will they take home and back to school with them? Will it be

*There is rest as well
as a life to be lived,
and we are called to
a lifetime of learning
to know the One who
provides the new yoke.*

a burdensome yoke of religious rules? Will they foolishly surrender to the yoke of the world or the enemy of our souls? Or will they look to Jesus, learning of Him through His Word, submitting to His yoke and discovering His rest? May God have mercy. Amen.



Pastor Robert Lee

something to share

WE ARE NOT BEYOND HIS SIGHT

BY JENN THORSON

Every time we take a trip, my husband and I share the driving responsibilities. Often, I want a longer time to drive.

But for once, most recently, I was happy to sit in the passenger seat as all six of us anticipated the tenth annual week at our family's favorite Bible camp in east central North Dakota.

Driving toward the camp, which is tucked down deep between hay fields and small, undisturbed lakes, I took in the rural scenery as the day neared its end. The sun was just beginning its descent, shadowing the hay bales on the rolling hills near the tiny farming town of Binford, the golden sunflowers turned in unison toward the slowly sinking light.

The golden and green fields, mature and soon ready for harvest, stretched on endlessly, forming a rich and stunning palate of colors along with the emerald grass, brilliant orange sky, long dark blue clouds, and just a hint of soft purple from the volunteer thistle flowers dotting the landscape.

The glorious vastness of the prairie always makes me stop with a lingering look,

hoping to capture in my mind the entire scene but yet never able to fully take it all in. This beautiful element of creation paints for us a vibrant picture of the immeasurable and unending love of God.

Psalm 36:5 describes it this way: "Your unfailing love, O Lord, is as vast as the heavens; your faithfulness reaches beyond the clouds." Psalm 139 continues this thought: "How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! If I could count them, they are more than the sand."

Just as I cannot fully see the whole of the unbounded prairie, as fields stretch and meet with endless sky, we find it impossible to grasp the complete picture of the wideness of God's love and His purpose for us. What we know of God we read in His Word, and those words of truth give us deep insight and a growing understanding of the Creator. But it seems as though the more we take in about God, the more we realize just how vast and majestic He is, and the more our view of Him will not be fully realized until eternity.

This truth can be a deep encouragement to us as believers in times of joy and

in times of heartache, knowing that God's purposes are vast beyond measure, full of abundance and loving kindness. He sees the whole picture and nothing is beyond His sight. In His mercy and love He, as the master artist, has painted our canvas with colors of brilliance and peace such as I saw on the prairie that evening, allowing shades of both light and darkness to blend together to reveal a truly beautiful portrait that only God could create.

*Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made,
Were every stalk on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade;
To write the love of God above
Would drain the ocean dry;
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Though stretched from sky to sky.*

"The Love of God" by Frederick Lehman

Thorson is a member of Living Word Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D. Her blog can be found at thepurposefulmom.com.