

THE LUTHERAN 

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AMBASSADOR

*The new
covenant*



Brokenhearted healer

BY PATRICIA PILLMAN

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness" (Isaiah 61:1-3a).

Pause for a moment to recall a time when your heart was broken. Does it still hurt? Then the above passage is for you! Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament promise through His own suffering human nature and offers hope and healing to all who believe in Him.

Jesus, fully God yet fully man, suffered while here on this earth. He went through great torment, and His heart was broken many times. Consider the examples of Jesus weeping in anguish over the fate of Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-44) or crying at Lazarus' death (John 11:34-36). He also suffered the agony of the Garden of Gethsemane and the abandonment of God on the cross (Luke 22:39-46; Matthew 27:46). All of these instances give us a picture of the extent of Jesus' suffering and the humanity of His compassionate heart.

We should find solace in knowing that He can well understand the heartaches we go through and give us true comfort. He knows what it's like to be weary in spirit, to grieve over lost or deceased loved ones, to feel the pain of betrayal, to agonize

over trying circumstances in life. If we will run to Jesus when our hearts are breaking, He will answer our cries for help with grace and comfort, even in the midst of our sorrow.

He invites us in Matthew 11:28 to "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Jesus is in the business of healing hearts, as demonstrated over and over again in the pages of Scripture. He recognized that part of His mission on this earth was to heal the brokenhearted (Luke 4:18-21), and He continues to fulfill this task in our lives today through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Let us remember the next time we are sorrowing that Christ fulfilled the prophecy to bind up the brokenhearted by being brokenhearted Himself. By suffering in our place, He opened the way for us to approach the throne and there find healing and rest. "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:15-16).

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They gave our Master a crown of thorns—Why do we hope for a crown of roses?

—Martin Luther.

[If Jesus rose from the dead, then you have to accept all that he said; if he didn't rise from the dead, then why worry about any of what he said? The issue on which everything hangs is not whether or not you like his teaching but whether or not he rose from the dead.]

—Timothy Keller

Carry the cross patiently, and with perfect submission; and in the end it shall carry you.

—Thomas à Kempis

According to the laws of legal evidence used in courts of law, there is more evidence for the historical fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ than for just about any other event in history.

—Dr. Simon Greenleaf

Blood.

Pastor Tim Hinrichs

Blood—just seeing it causes some to get queasy. Others like me don't mind seeing blood as long as it's not our own pouring out. Blood is a crucial part of our physical makeup, but for God it's much more than that. It's not just biological. It either connects us with God or separates us from Him for eternity. Everything depends on whose blood is presented to the Father.

It's importance

Blood is first mentioned in the Bible in the story of Cain and Abel. When Cain murders his brother, it is his blood that “cries out to [God] from the ground” (Genesis 4:10). Blood has no voice or separate identity, but from this very first case of murder we discover something crucial about God's understanding of blood: It represents life. In fact, later the principle is stated very clearly: “For the life of every creature is its blood: its blood is its life” (Leviticus 17:14).

For this reason, in the Old Testament it was forbidden to drink blood (Leviticus 7:26-27, Deuteronomy 12:23). In essence, it would be like stealing the life from a creature. Blood is the most precious thing on earth representing the life created by God.

The dilemma

Because of the fall of Adam, all people inherit sin, and that sin pollutes man's blood. It's like having a cancer of sin pulsing through our veins. But in order to be accepted by God, our blood must be completely pure.

How are we to cleanse our blood? One option would be to have a blood transfusion. But this won't change the nature of man—we still sin day after day. Obedience to the law might be another option, but diluting our blood with righteousness doesn't remove the poison of impurity coursing through our veins.

A temporary solution

Instead, the Lord makes it clear that blood must be shed in place of impure blood. The writer to the Hebrews states it clearly: “all things are cleansed with blood and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (Hebrews 9:22).

This can't be just any blood, but one that is pure and holy—blameless. But all men are born in sin. The use of animal sacrifice was the clear answer in the Old Testament. Animals are not sinful or evil, but basically “amoral.” Therefore this is the way in which God allowed man to cover over his polluted blood—through the substitute of an animal: “For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement” (Leviticus 17:11).

But this solution was far from adequate in the long run. First of all, the value of an animal life isn't the same as the value of a human soul, which is eternal and made in the image of God. Therefore a sacrifice is only temporary. Individuals had to return to the temple year after year with their sacrifice for sin all their lives.

Second, only certain types of animals were considered “clean” by God. Cattle, sheep, goats, and pigeons were generally accepted, but requirements even among these animals were strict. There could be no birth defects or blemishes, for example. God was concerned about perfection in every way.

Third, and most importantly, animals simply could not atone for eternal life. “It can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near” (Hebrews 10:1). In other words, those coming to the temple year after year with their sacrifices still fall short of God's expectations. It's not a great enough payment of blood for all that man has done.

Final solution

Therefore, every animal sacrifice of blood was really to be a symbol of the priceless blood sacrifice made on the cross. It was given in faith that a final sacrifice would be provided. This was the sacrifice of the Son of God: “But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption” (Hebrews 9:11-12).

What is the value of the blood of the Son of God? Priceless! He was completely sinless and holy. As God, He is able to cover all sins. What an awesome substitute we have! His blood literally covers over yours when you trust in Him as your substitute before the Father.

Therefore, your approach to God is never based on your own blood, on what you do—even your good deeds. God's reception of you is based only on the purity of the blood that He sees. And when you approach God's throne with Jesus' blood, you can enter into His presence with boldness and worship Him in joy knowing that you are accepted, worthy, holy, and honored because you are received as if you were the Son of the Father. “We have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus” (Hebrews 10:19).

There is no need to get queasy with this blood. Instead rejoice—Jesus has paid the price!

Hinrichs, part-time faculty at AFLBS, serves Word of Life Free Lutheran in Mankato, Minn.

therefore had
It is finished:

ave up the ghost
heretofore

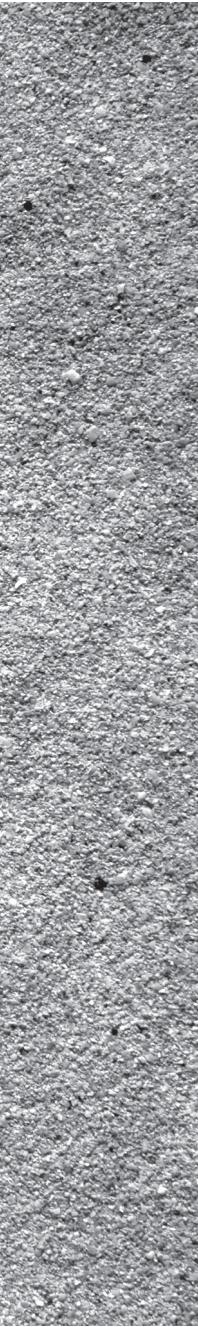
For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement. But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the holy place, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you?' 'The King will reply, 'Early I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.' Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.' They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and you did not help you?' He will reply, 'Early I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'



Recognizing Jesus.

Amber Dahl



I love to consider the ways Jesus revealed Himself after the resurrection and how it can change our lives.

Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene. She *supposed* Him to be the gardener and asked where he had taken Jesus' body. She was overcome when she finally recognized Him as her beloved teacher!

Later, while the two disciples on the road to Emmaus "were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were *kept from recognizing him*" (Luke 24:15-16).

Then the disciples went fishing at night, but they caught nothing. At daybreak, Jesus stood on the shore *unrecognized* by them and said, "Children, do you have any fish? Cast your net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they did and were not able to haul the catch into the boat because of the quantity of fish. John recognized the Giver of the miracle and said, "It is the Lord!" While they ate with Him, "none of the disciples dared to ask him, 'Who are you?' (For now) they knew it was the Lord" (John 21:12).

All of these passages have a common theme that is worth taking note of as a Christian. The disciples knew Jesus very well prior to the resurrection. For the past three years with Jesus they had eaten with Him, walked everywhere with Him, saw His miracles, provided for Him out of their means, were taught and learned many lessons about the Kingdom of God by Him, yet not one of them was immediately able to recognize Jesus after He was resurrected from the dead. He had to open their eyes to see Him and their ears to hear His voice.

Jesus doesn't always come in the form we are expecting from Him. All of His disciples mistook Jesus as a stranger because their eyes were kept from recognizing Him. According to these passages, it is entirely possible to miss Jesus even if we think we know Him. Jesus alluded to this in Matthew 25:31-46, "For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they will also answer saying, 'Lord when ...?' He

will answer them saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it for one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.'"

We should remember that Jesus can come in any form, especially how we least expect Him. It is entirely possible that in the manner we treat another, we are also treating an incognito Jesus. May this knowledge make us kinder to one another, especially with the least likely.

We can also learn from these passages that Jesus *wants* us to recognize His voice. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27). The Greek word for voice is *phone*, meaning voice, sound, tone or language. Christ tailors His communication with us so we will know it is Him speaking to us. One mark of being His disciple is that we will know when Christ is speaking to us personally. His voice gives us direction so we are able to follow Him. Through this, He knows us and we know Him.

Jesus wants to make our very person His dwelling place. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:20). As the Bread of Life, Jesus reminds the Church of Laodicea that He wants to eat *with* them. Like many, I've used this verse as an invitation for Christ to unbelievers, but this verse is actually written for the Church. If we read our Bibles but don't continue to fellowship with the person of Jesus throughout our day, then we are no better than the religious leaders of Jesus' time. He said to them, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me; yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life" (John 5:39-40).

Why, then, is Jesus' presence concealed from us at times? Proverbs 25:2 says, "It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings to search things out." God doesn't conceal Himself to hide from us, but so we will search Him out. Perhaps we will find that searching and finding the unrecognizable resurrected Jesus in our daily lives is the greatest joy of all.

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When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep." The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. Truly, I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!"

Restoration.

Alison Mellgren

I've often pondered Peter's relationship with Jesus. One of the characteristics I appreciate most about this disciple is his straightforwardness. Peter was outspoken, impetuous, and very transparent in his adoration for his Lord. He was also outspoken when he denied knowing Jesus (Luke 22:54-62). The Lord had revealed to Peter that he would deny Him not once, but three times, yet Peter boasted that he would not: "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you" (Mark 14:31).

During that long night of swelling Jewish hatred for the promised Messiah, I believe Peter could not fully comprehend the events unfolding around him. What man could? Jesus had predicted His own death, His betrayal by one among the twelve, and Simon Peter's impending denial. Suddenly, what had begun as a feast for all of them was coalescing into an unimaginable nightmare. The disciples, especially Peter, were aghast when Jesus permitted His own arrest. Their Messiah was supposed to save them from Roman tyranny, and raise up His chosen people once more. How could He do this if He died?

The Lord had called Peter a rock, yet when the brash disciple forsook his foundation, he crumbled. As his third denial died on his lips, and Jesus looked at him, I wonder if Peter felt like the Sea of Galilee was swallowing him again. Only this time the sea wasn't formed from sweet inland water, but a boatload of misplaced faith. Peter's denial wasn't about his lack of faith. I believe it was about placing faith in himself instead of the Son of God.

It is tempting to think of Peter's denial as a moment of weakness, or even to blame his culture for their pharisaical teaching, which was actively denying and debunking the deity of Christ. They were eager to rid themselves of the self-proclaimed Messiah and all of His followers. What man in Peter's situation would not fear for his life? Yet I have to be grateful to Peter and this part of his history, for his example reveals the very same thing in me: my stubborn habit of placing faith in myself instead of an Almighty God. Jesus knew this about Peter, and He knows it about me. What I find so amazing is the Lord's response to His disciple.

Jesus turned and simply looked at Peter. He didn't shout. He didn't strike him dead. He simply met Peter's eyes. I suspect Peter may have interpreted that look as something like: "I know you." How did Peter respond? He went out and wept—not in grief or self-pity, but bitterly with genuine sorrow and repentance. For in the moment Peter realized the Lord knew him, Peter understood what he was capable of. He was powerless to save himself, much less Jesus, whom he fiercely loved, from the death He had foretold. Not only had the Rock crumbled, it had been crushed

by the sin in Peter's own soul. Yet Jesus Christ's surrender to His Father's will that night was the beginning of Peter's restoration, and mine. The apostle Paul writes about this eloquently; "For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:6).

No one knew better the state of Peter's heart, or the unworthiness he felt after reneging on his boastful claim that he would never disown Jesus. The Lord's restoration of Peter is beautiful; he was invited by name to the tomb, giving evidence of the Lord's special desire to restore His deeply repentant disciple. I like the description of Peter's reaction to his summons: he ran to the tomb. He didn't merely hurry, or rush. He ran. We know he wasn't a fleet runner, for others arrived at the tomb before him. Nevertheless, this verb conveys Peter's own desperate desire to be restored. His misplaced faith had revealed him for a sinner and a foolish braggart. More than ever, he had begun to understand his need to be saved by the Son of God. He had encountered the darkness in his own soul and he ran to find the only one who could restore him.

It is worth noting that when Jesus and Peter were reunited, the Lord asked His disciple three times if he loved Him. After the third time, the Bible tells us Peter was hurt. Yet the Lord knew the raw place in Peter's heart that still stung from his betrayal. Each time the Lord asked Peter if he loved Him, Jesus probed deeper into His disciple, indicating there was to remain no part of Peter's heart, soul or mind which could remain hidden from the Lord. It was a purposeful reminder to Peter that his faith must rely not on his own strength, but on God himself. Then Peter could believe the truth of the statement Jesus had made to him, "... when you have returned to me Peter, go and strengthen the brethren" (Luke 22:32). For the Lord had already foretold, "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it" (Matthew 16:18).

Jesus continues to build His church today. It begins in the heart, soul and mind of every man, woman and child who, like Peter, repents of their sins and accepts the restoration only the heart of an Almighty God can grant. I am so grateful that Jesus continues to probe deeper into me, reminding me that there is no part of my heart, soul or mind which remains hidden from Him. I am so glad that each day He works restoration in me by simply telling me, "I know you."

Mellgren is a member of the Trinity/Mt. Carmel parish in McIntosh, Minn.

What do conscientious pastors and communion assistants do when people come to the Lord's Table with unprepared hearts? Open quarrels, grudges, cohabitation without marriage, false beliefs, public and secret sins of all types—people participating in all types of sin receive Christ's body and blood. Should they be given communion?

Jesus freely invites us to receive His life through communion: "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him" (John 6:56). Yet Scripture also warns us not to receive the Lord's Supper unworthily. I Corinthians 11:27-29 says: "Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not judge the body rightly."

What example does Christ give us? He faced the same issue at the Last Supper with His unrepentant disciple Judas: "For Jesus knew from the beginning ... who it was that would betray Him" (John 6:64). Did Jesus give His body and blood to Judas at the Last Supper? Luther believed that He did, saying that "the Lord's Supper is his true natural body, which the godless as Judas himself received with the mouth, as well as did St. Peter, and all other saints."

But others have disagreed. New Testament commentator R.C.H. Lenski argues that the Last Supper took place after Judas departed in John 13:30. Four slightly differing yet harmonious scriptural accounts of the Last Supper are found in Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22, and I Corinthians 11. Plus, John 13 tells of other events that night.

I have come to believe that Judas, indeed, received communion. Luke reports, in 22:21, that immediately after the Lord's Supper, Jesus said, "But behold, the hand of the one betraying Me is with Mine on the table." This shows that Judas still was present. But in Matthew 26:20-25 and Mark 14:17-20 Jesus says similar things before the supper. Does Luke report the events out of order?

Lenski argues that Luke, in his description of the Last Supper and elsewhere, "disregards the connection of time." Yet Luke, from the beginning of his account, purposed to narrate the gospel story carefully and "in consecutive order" (Luke 1:3).

I believe it's best to combine Matthew, Mark, and Luke's accounts, and trust that Jesus spoke of His betrayer both before and after the Supper, with Judas present through it all. Indeed, Jesus, himself, reportedly said or did something more than once.

Another reason I believe Judas received communion is found in John 13:18, which teaches that Christ's betrayer fulfilled the prophecy of Psalm 41:9: "Even my close friend in whom I trusted, Who ate my bread, Has lifted up his heel against me." Furthermore, all references to eating and drinking in John 13 take place when Judas is still present, until verse 30, when he receives the morsel and leaves. After Judas leaves, the text says nothing more about eating or drinking.

Yet why would Jesus give Judas communion when He knew of his unrepentant heart? I've come to believe Jesus was still at the first step with Judas in the discipline/reconciliation process found in Matthew 18:15: "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private."

Lenski comments, "Until the clear denial of brotherhood is established, I must treat the offender as a brother in Christ and in no other way." Perhaps Jesus was preparing for the second step of bringing in one or two witnesses (Matthew 18:16), as we see Jesus in John 13:25-26 quietly informing Peter and others who the betrayer is. Yet even as Judas departed the disciples still didn't realize what was truly happening (John 13:28-29). The third step, in Matthew 18:17, is to "tell it to the church," and only then to exclude a sinner who still refuses to listen.

Jesus allowed Judas to receive communion because Judas had not yet been disciplined by the whole company of disciples. Rather than excommunicating Judas, Jesus followed the very steps He had taught in Matthew 18, giving us an example to follow "in His steps" (I Peter 2:21).

But Jesus didn't give Judas communion without warning. Jesus earlier had warned His disciples in Judas' presence that one disciple was "a devil" (John 6:70-71) who would betray Him. On the night before He died, Jesus warned of His betrayal repeatedly, both before and after the Last Supper.

Christ's example leads me to two convictions. The first is that it isn't just one person's decision to bar someone from communion, even if that one person is the pastor. Jesus reserves this serious decision for the entire congregation. I realize this contradicts the practice of many faithful pastors; I simply invite the reader to search the Scriptures to see whether it is so (Acts 17:11).

The second conviction is that we need much more warning and preparation before taking communion. Though I've never refused communion to someone who came forward (except for children not yet confirmed, as specified by that local church), I have occasionally counseled people not to take communion until certain issues were resolved. One hazard of coming up front for communion is that communicants are on display, bringing risk of hypocrisy due to social pressure. I Corinthians 11:28 says, "... a man must examine himself," not *his neighbor*. We need to cultivate a holy inattention in which every one of us may decide alone before God whether or not to take communion, without worrying what others think. If we do notice certain people taking or not taking communion, we must simply pray for them without judgment, because only God knows what's in their hearts.

Indeed, if we lovingly, persistently follow the steps of warning and reconciliation that Jesus gave us, we likely will have far fewer people coming to communion unprepared.

Peterson, an AFLC pastor, lives in Brandon, Minn.

In Communion.

Pastor Michael Petersen





In that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both people and animals, and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt. This is a day, you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD—a lasting ordinance. For seven days you are to eat bread made without yeast. On the first day, remove the yeast from your houses, for wherever you eat anything with yeast in it from the first day through the seventh must be cut off from Israel. On the first day hold a sacred assembly, and another one on the seventh day. Do no work at all on those days, except to prepare food for everyone to eat; that is all you may do. Celebrate the Festival of Unleavened Bread, because it was on this very day that I brought your divisions out of Egypt. Celebrate this day as a lasting ordinance for the generations to come.

True Passover.

Pastor Craig Wentzel

Humanly speaking, hosting and attending Lenten services may not make much sense. In North Dakota, some of our congregations are getting smaller due to a shrinking rural population. Increased busyness of those remaining few who are forced to wear many hats in the church and community and, perhaps, spiritual apathy in *all* our churches has led to shrinking attendance at Lenten services. In light of this, are Lenten services really important enough to continue offering?

For a pastor, Lenten services require more time and effort. There are additional messages and services to prepare for each week. But the hardest thing of all is to come up with a new theme each Lent, a fresh way to approach the eternal truth of the salvation Jesus has worked through His sufferings and His death on the cross.

This year, I reached a crisis in my own attitude. In my first parish in South Dakota, the congregation I served was too far from neighboring churches for their pastors to be interested in doing a Lenten rotation. For 11 seasons I had to come up with my own Lenten themes, which was difficult. Then I came into the fellowship of the AFLC and it was like a breath of fresh air to become a part of Lenten rotations not limited by distances or my own creativity. But participation in a Lenten rotation is not possible for my parish this year, and I wondered if Lenten services were going to be worth all the trouble they would mean for me.

However, the Lord has answered my question in two ways. First, I have realized that the God I serve is a God of *infinite creativity* who never runs out of ideas. His creation is full of things that no one else would ever have thought of making or doing. He is also *unlimited* by my limitations: the number of hours in my day (Joshua 10:12-14); the amount of my preparations (II Corinthians 12:9); or my supply of ideas (Philippians 4:19). He is only limited by the degree to which I depend on Him.

He has given me an idea for this year that will be interesting and challenging to work on.

Second, He has also given me a *biblical* reason for continuing to hold Lenten services. In reading about Joshua and the people of God as they entered the Promised Land, I discovered in Joshua 5 that the Israelites needed to go back to the basics of being personally marked by God in *circumcision* (baptism), celebrating the *Passover* (the Lord's Supper), and *submission* to the "captain of the host of the Lord" (vs. 14) before they could go on to victory with the Lord.

The people of God were always to celebrate the Passover, which marked their greatest deliverance by God when He set them free

from slavery in Egypt. During the first Passover, the angel of death visited all the homes in Egypt, taking the lives of all the first-born sons. But the people of God were "passed over" if they had placed the blood of a lamb on their doorposts. The people of God were to celebrate this great deliverance for seven days each year with a Passover feast and by remembering and teaching to their children what God had done for them.

The Israelites kept going back to the celebration of the Passover whenever they wanted to have a new beginning with the Lord. For example, when King Hezekiah led his people back to God, cleansed the house of God, offered sacrifices for their sins, and re-established the service of the temple, the Israelites celebrated the Passover (II Chronicles 30:13). They were so blessed by this renewal of the covenant that they decided to celebrate for another seven days (II Chronicles 30:22-23, 26). Then great reforms were undertaken and God acted on behalf of His people again, healing Hezekiah miraculously and delivering his people from Assyria.

Other examples include King Josiah, who, when he repaired the house of the Lord and rediscovered the book of God's law, re-instituted the celebration of the Passover (II Kings 23:21-23; II Chronicles 35:18). And after the exiles returned from Babylon and completed and dedicated the temple, they also observed the Passover (Ezra 6:19-20).

To the Israelites, God's deliverance from the Egyptians through the Passover was so significant to them that they could never neglect it in all their subsequent experiences of God. It was the basis of their whole life with God. But it was just a picture of an even greater deliverance to come.

The Old Testament Passover meal was transformed by Jesus on the eve before His death into the Lord's Supper, a remembrance and celebration of what He did for us on the cross. His death for our sins is the *true* Passover.

As the Israelites celebrated the Passover, so we need to celebrate Jesus' work on the cross, when God's judgment passed over us because of Jesus' blood. Participating in the Lord's Supper is just one way to celebrate our Passover. Like the Israelites' Passover, we can celebrate Christ's death and resurrection by participating in the seven weeks of the Lenten season. This is a time to think about and celebrate God's deliverance through the cross of Christ.

Why should we offer Lenten services? Because we need to celebrate the true Passover.

Wentzel serves Living Word Lutheran, Edmore, N.D., and Zoar Lutheran, Hampden, N.D.

49th annual conference REGISTRATION

June 14-17 at Sioux Falls Christian School, 6120 S. Charger Circle, Sioux Falls, S.D.

For a downloadable form, and for more information, visit our Facebook page or go to www.aflc.org and click on "conferences"

First name: _____ Spouse (if attending): _____

Last name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

AFLC Congregation: _____

Other Congregation: _____

Membership (Check one)

You: _____ Rostered AFLC Pastor or serving AFLC church _____ Visiting Pastor _____ Lay Member _____ Lay Visitor

Spouse: _____ Rostered AFLC Pastor or serving AFLC church _____ Visiting Pastor _____ Lay Member _____ Lay Visitor

Number of children attending (see page 18 for details): _____ 5 and younger _____ 6-12 _____ 13-17

Number attending Saturday's free optional creation apologetics seminar (see page 18): _____

Meals and banquets: A general conference meal is only being offered at noon Wednesday through Friday. All other meals are on your own. Board and committee members must register for applicable meals. **Meal registration must be received by May 31.**

Meal	Cost	#	Total
Wednesday Conference lunch (ages 13-adult)	\$10		\$
Wednesday Conference lunch (child)	\$5		\$
Wednesday Builder's Fellowship lunch	\$10		\$
Wednesday Schools' Corporation dinner	\$9		\$
Thursday Missions Corporation breakfast	\$7		\$
Thursday Conference lunch (ages 13-adult)	\$10		\$
Thursday Conference lunch (child)	\$5		\$
Thursday ARC Corporation lunch	\$10		\$
Thursday PIMO lunch	\$10		\$
Thursday Pastors' banquet	\$20		\$
Friday FLAPS breakfast	\$7		\$
Friday Conference lunch (ages 13-adult)	\$10		\$
Friday Conference lunch (child)	\$5		\$
Friday AFLC Foundation lunch	\$10		\$
Children/youth events (attach names and ages)	\$25		\$
Total meals			\$
*Conference registration fee (\$30 single/\$40 couple)			\$
Total registration and meals			\$

*The registration fee is required for all attending the AFLC Conference. **Make checks payable to "AFLC" and mail to: AFLC, c/o Conference Registrations, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441.** Registrations must be postmarked by May 31.

Trust ~ Delight ~ Commit



BY MARY ANN WARD & DAWN JOHNSON

The Women's Missionary Federation is pleased to announce our annual WMF Convention which will be held June 14 at the Sioux Falls Christian School, Sioux Falls, S.D. We invite you to join us as we study God's Word, fellowship together, attend workshops, and sing praises to Him using the theme: "Trust ~ Delight ~ Commit" from Psalm 37:3-5.

We have a great line up of speakers, including Candice Johnson, who will lead us in our morning Bible study on "Trust." Johnson is the author of our 2011 WMF Bible study entitled *Joseph*. The morning study and memorial service will be followed by the business meeting.

Three workshops are planned for the afternoon session, with a format that will allow everyone to attend all three. Amy Skogerboe will share with us using the word "Delight" from our theme; and Arlys Jorenby will share on the word "Commit." To

finish off the afternoon we are delighted to have Marlene Eidsmoe present a monologue on Corrie ten Boom.

The day will conclude with a banquet at 5 p.m., featuring missionary Tamba Abel and, for a special treat, Christie Ballmann will share a chalk talk with us.

The WMF leadership breakfast will be held Wednesday morning for those who are interested in ideas for women's ministry. The Mission Festival service will be held Wednesday evening, with Pastor Jonathan Abel bringing the Word and sharing about mission work in Brazil.

We pray that you will make every effort to join us. You will be blessed.

*Ward, Ottawa, Ill., is the Communications Secretary of the WMF.
Johnson, Wilson, Wis., is the Executive Secretary of the WMF.*

2011 WMF Convention • June 14 • Sioux Falls, S.D.

Please use this form to register for the WMF Convention, luncheon and banquet on Tuesday, June 14, and for the WMF leadership breakfast on Wednesday, June 15. The convention will be held at Sioux Falls Christian School, 6120 Charger Circle, Sioux Falls, S.D.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home congregation: _____

Address: _____

Item	Cost	#	Total
*Registration	\$7.50		\$
Tuesday luncheon	\$8.50		\$
Tuesday banquet	\$10		\$
Wednesday breakfast	\$6		\$
Total			\$

The registration fee is required for all attending the convention. **Make checks payable to "WMF of AFLC" and mail to: Lois Grothe, 3745 Franklin Ave., Astoria, OR 97103. Registrations must be postmarked by May 31. Preregistration is required to attend luncheon and banquet. Childcare will be provided. Please indicate children's ages on AFLC Conference registration form on page 14.*

AFLTS will graduate three students in May

Ryan Mairs

I was born and raised in Lisbon, N.D. My parents, Dean and Judy Mairs, welcomed me into the world on July 4, 1974. After high school I ventured across the Red River and attended college at Moorhead State University in Moorhead, Minn. It was during this time



that I was introduced to, and later married Tanya Orth of Gwinner, N.D. Tanya and I have been blessed with four wonderful children: Morgan Faith age 15, Bethany Hope

age 11, Clarissa Love age 7, and Sawyer Sage will be 1 in May.

Additional education brought me to Bloomington, Minn., and Northwestern College of Chiropractic. After a short return to Fargo, N.D., we moved to Fergus Falls, Minn., where we were first introduced to the AFLC. We began attending Calvary Free Lutheran in 1999 and continued until the call to attend seminary in 2007.

After growing up in the church, but not having a personal relationship with the Lord, I came to know Christ at a Lenten Passion play in Fargo. The Holy Spirit convicted me of the reality of my sin and the truth that Jesus Christ died to redeem me from the bondage of sin. As the Lord has taught me and directed my life, He has given me a heart for lost families and a desire to help others to know the Lord personally.

My time at seminary has been an opportunity to clarify and deepen the conviction of my biblical understanding. The fellowship with my classmates and the instruction of the teachers has been invaluable in helping me grow in the Lord. Through my seminary experience, the Lord has taught me reliance and trust in Him. My internship has been at Grace Free Lutheran in Maple Grove, Minn., under the supervision of Pastor Peter Franz.

David Franz

I was born on March 15, 1984, in Minot, N.D., to Pastor Peter and Judy Franz. Having been made His child through the grace given in baptism, I've sensed the Lord has faithfully been at work in my heart and life ever since. He blessed me with a wonderful Christian



home, where my faith was regularly nourished by the Word of God and where I was upheld in prayer and given a godly example to follow. My home congregation is Grace Free Lutheran

Church in Maple Grove, Minn., where my dad serves as pastor.

After graduating from high school, I attended AFLBS. During the fall of my second year, I began sensing the Lord calling me into the ministry, but it was not until the spring, after many months of prayer, that I felt confident of this calling. After graduating from AFLBS, I went to Northwestern College in St. Paul, Minn., where I obtained a degree in biblical studies.

I began seminary in the fall of 2007. Although I faced some challenges in seminary, they were far outweighed by the blessings. One of them was getting married to Whitney (Huber) after my first year of study. The three years I spent at seminary not only provided me with the opportunity to become grounded in the Word of God, but also to grow in my walk with the Lord, who has instilled in me a confidence in His Word and a love for preaching and teaching His Word.

For the last year, I have been interning at Emmanuel Free Lutheran Church in Williston, N.D., under the supervision of Pastor Jon Wellumson, and have also been preaching at Beaver Creek Free Lutheran Church in Ray, N.D. During this time, our first child, Derek, was born. It has been a joy for me to learn and serve here, and we are excited to see where God leads us.

Jason Gudim

I was born on May 31, 1980, in Grand Forks, N.D. My parents are Duane and Judy Gudim. I started attending an AFLC congregation in the second grade when my family joined Trinity Lutheran Church in Grand Forks.

There has not been a time in my life when I feel I have been apart from the Lord. I was always brought to church and Sunday school, and was always encouraged to attend Bible camps and youth retreats. I came to assurance of



salvation as a sixth grader at Galilee Bible Camp.

My familiarity with God, church, and the Bible has not always been a blessing, however. Because church was an everyday part of my life, all things related to Jesus Christ became common and ordinary to me, and as a result, I did not always take my relationship with Jesus very seriously.

Through a series of closed doors, God sent me to AFLBS after I graduated from high school in 1998. It was there that God first got a hold of me and told me He was preparing a place for me in full-time ministry. Rather than embrace it, I tried to run from it, or at the very least, take control of it.

After graduating AFLBS, I accepted a call to serve as youth director at First Lutheran Church in Oklahoma City. After a year, I moved back to Minneapolis and was married to Esther Palmer. We have two children, Noah (5) and Grace (2), and a third due in early July.

While finishing my schooling at Crown College and working at FaithSearch International, God reminded me that He had set me aside for work in the ministry. I enrolled at seminary in 2007, and have had a peace ever since that I am exactly where the Lord wants me to be.

I am serving my internship at St. Ansgar's Lutheran, Salinas, Calif.

Group travels to Uganda and India to teach



TOP: Pastor Jim Rasmussen, director of the AFLC's Evangelism Department, hangs out with children from St. Paul's Lutheran School in Chirala, India. He was one of four teachers leading a weeklong pastors training seminar.

ABOVE: Pastor Nate Jore and the class that is studying in Kagoma, Uganda, hold up Bibles and MegaVoice audio players, which hold 84 Bible stories from the Ambassador Institute curriculum that the students are learning.

TOP: Glen Mork, from Emmaus Lutheran, Bloomington, Minn., speaks to the first graduates of the Ambassador Institute in Uganda.

ABOVE: Pastor Nate Jore (center), AFLC missionary to Uganda, and Pastor Kevin Olson (right), from the Ambassador Institute, hand out a certificate to Wilson, one of 20 graduates.

Committee asks Schierkolks to return to States

Members of the AFLC World Missions Committee have asked Pastor Todd Schierkolk and his family to return to the United States over concerns for their safety. The Schierkolks, who live and work in Jerez, Mexico, were due for a furlough this year. Committee members felt that it would be best if they could come home a couple of months early.

The Schierkolks hope to make the transition back to the U.S. by May. Please be in prayer that the violence in Mexico would subside so that they may return.

Short Term Assistant Ingrid Giles, who was working with the Schierkolks in Jerez, has already returned to the States, where she is continuing her translation work. Ingrid is currently a candidate to become a called missionary with AFLC World Missions.

If you would like to have the Schierkolks come to your church for a missions presentation, please call the World Missions office at (763) 412-2013.

Youth, children events planned for conference

Hosts of the AFLC Annual Conference are busy planning events for children and youth. The conference will be held June 14-17 at Sioux Falls Christian School, Sioux Falls, S.D.

The program of events will include vacation Bible school for children and Bible studies for youth in the morning hours, and field trips in the afternoon. Off-campus field trips are being planned to the Great Plains Zoo and Museum, the Washington Pavilion and a geo-trekking event. Other activities include Frisbee golf and lawn bowling.

The programs will begin on Tuesday, June 14 and conclude on Friday, June 17.

Host congregations Abiding Savior Free Lutheran and Living Word Free Lutheran are in charge of planning these events. The cost for the entire week, which includes all programming, activities, transportation and food, is \$25 per student. Please register for these events on the conference registration form (see page 14).



New confirmands welcomed at Good Shepherd Lutheran, Camarillo, Calif., in February. Pictured (left to right) are: Carter Schaub, Ryan Hiepler, Jasper Twigg, Nathaniel Seeba, and Isabel Perez.

Creation apologetics seminar offered

AIG speaker featured at event held in conjunction with annual conference

Answers in Genesis speaker David Menton will present a creation apologetics seminar on Saturday, June 18, in Sioux Falls, S.D. (the morning after the AFLC Annual Conference). Dr. Menton will present two sessions on biblical authority and design inferences in creation, and will provide time for interaction. During the annual conference, Dr. Menton will also speak to the pastors' and wives' banquet and teach our youth—including a field trip to a museum of natural history.

A lifelong Lutheran born in Mankato, Minn., Dr. Menton has done research at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., edited five editions of *Stedman's Medical Dictionary*, and taught for 34 years at the Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, Mo. Dr. Menton holds degrees in biology and chemistry, possesses a tremendous sense of humor and is an accomplished amateur illusionist.

This valuable seminar, which is presented at no cost to conference attendees, will be held from 9 a.m. to noon at Abiding Savior Free Lutheran. You may register your attendance on the conference registration form (see page 14). For more information on this event, contact Pastor Wade Mobley of Living Word Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D., at (605) 361-3044, or visit www.answersingenesis.org/outreach.

National Day of Prayer event on May 5

May 5 is the National Day of Prayer, and organizers in the west metro area of the Twin Cities are planning a breakfast event from 6 to 8 a.m. at the Medina Entertainment Center.

With a theme of "A Mighty Fortress is Our God," taken from Psalm 91:2, the breakfast will feature keynote speaker U.S.

Representative Jim Ramstad, with worship music by River.

Tickets are available for \$16, or \$20 after April 20. Group tables are also available for purchase. Contact Helen Oslund, Vision of Glory Lutheran, Plymouth, Minn., for more information: mhgdoslund@comcast.net.

A light in their community

BY BRYAN SEYLER

Berks County, situated in southeastern Pennsylvania, is a Lutheran hotbed, with an estimated 75 Lutheran churches. Every street corner has a church, many of them in beautiful, historic buildings. Sadly, few are truly preaching the Word. There is spiritual drought where the Word is absent. Disciple Lutheran Fellowship is a new AFLC Home Mission congregation that God called as a light in the middle of this community. God is moving and stirring revival!

My wife, Pauline, and I have been on a journey to Disciple Lutheran Fellowship that has had many twists and turns. We came from an ELCA congregation that we could no longer fellowship with because of their decisions and theology. Over a period of several years, a core group of conservative Lutheran believers in Reading, Pa., met together to seek God about starting a new fellowship. In 2008, through the guidance of Pastor Paul Nash, director of AFLC Home Missions, and meetings with Pastor Elden Nelson, AFLC president, we were accepted as a Home Missions congregation. Becoming a Home Missions congregation, with the special training, prayer, and godly direction it provided, was truly what our fellowship needed.

From the beginning, it was apparent to Pauline and I that this Lutheran congregation was different. The vision of Disciple Lutheran is to disciple people in a saving grace knowledge of Jesus Christ. Joining Disciple Lutheran was like a family homecoming. It's been three years since we've been members, and the family feeling has not changed. Our Home Missions congregation is growing spiritually, always helping other people, loving, and encouraging one another.

We were blessed again, through answered prayer, when Pastor Eugene Enderlein accepted a call to be our first interim pastor in 2010. As Pastor Enderlein has given us guidance, he has encouraged us that it isn't the number of members we have, but our obedience to God's Word, that matters most.

Through word of mouth and advertising in our local papers, we are spreading the idea of a return to biblical Lutheranism. The Holy Spirit is touching the hearts of people in our area and we are receiving calls from other ELCA congregations enquiring



Dave Brendel and Bryan Seyler, both members of new Home Missions church Disciple Lutheran Fellowship, Reading, Pa., took part in the Home Missions Retreat at the ARC.

about biblical Lutheranism and answering many questions about Disciple Lutheran and the AFLC. Our goal is to keep planting seeds throughout the area so that other people and congregations have the opportunity to learn about Jesus Christ.

Flung in a rather lonely spot from other AFLC churches in the Mid-Atlantic, it's a blessing to be part of a larger church body. I praise God for giving Dave Brendel and myself, both of us elders at Disciple Lutheran, the opportunity to attend the AFLC Home Missions Leadership Retreat at the ARC on Jan. 17-18. God provided us with almost perfect weather for the 18-hour drive from Pennsylvania to Wisconsin. This was also our first time visiting AFLC headquarters. Pastor Nash told us that the greatest benefit of a retreat experience like this is not so much what is taught, but what is caught. We both confirm this statement, through the edifying fellowship of so many godly people. Traveling back home, we were full of new ideas and inspiration to share with our Disciple Lutheran family.

It is my daily prayer that the Holy Spirit will continue moving revival in the Reading area, bringing the lost into a saving grace relationship with Jesus Christ. Please pray for us! Pray that Disciple Lutheran will be a light on a hill.

Seyler is an elder at Disciple Lutheran Fellowship, Reading, Pa..

Mexican children receive cartoon Bible story book

Through a donation from an AFLC congregation in Texas, children in a Jerez, Mexico, kids club received cartoon Bibles in Spanish at a special Christmas celebration.

The kids clubs are run by Pastor Todd and Barb Schierkolk and their daughters Megan and Kirstie, AFLC missionaries to Mexico. The Bibles were donated by Faith Lutheran Church, El Campo, Texas. Pastor Clyde Grier instigated the project after remembering how much these Bibles meant to him growing up. About 80 Bibles were given away in Jerez.

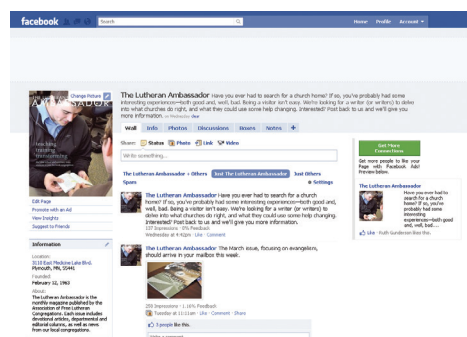
According to a recent newsletter from the Schierkolks, they have received many positive comments from kids who received the Bibles, including, "I read my new Bible every night before bed."

The annual Christmas outreach program hosted by the Schierkolks included a play, musical program, and distribution of quilts, also donated by many AFLC congregations and women's groups.

RIGHT: Lisbet, a fifth grade student who attends a kids club hosted by the Schierkolks, AFLC missionaries in Jerez, Mexico, received a cartoon Bible. (Photo by Megan Schierkolk.)



Ambassador on Facebook



The editors of *The Lutheran Ambassador* recently started a fan page on Facebook, featuring posts of past articles and news from campus events.

We'd like to hear your thoughts on articles and themes planned for future issues. Become a follower of the Lutheran Ambassador and feel free to share your thoughts with us.



Members of United Lutheran, Laurel, Neb., have been working on making quilt blankets that they plan on sharing with people in need.

His power impacting the world

MTI studies start with personal Christian development

BY PASTOR CONNELLY DYRUD

Since 2000, the Ministry Training Institute has graduated more than 60 students who are involved in ministries from all walks of life—impacting the world. They are serving the Lord in Eastern Europe, North and South America and Africa. They are missionaries, pastors, youth workers, teachers, medical workers, and parish builders. The training they received from MTI is practical, on-the-job training that develops leadership and character.

There are two areas of personal Christian development that I teach as most vital in all Christian ministries. The first is daily Bible reading and prayer. Both are part of that sweet relationship of love with God that we all long for. Jesus set an example for us in this area when He got up early, while it was still dark, to pray to His Heavenly Father (Mark 1:35).

The second area I think is most vital to personal Christian development is discipleship. The last words Jesus shared with His disciples was to continue to go and make disciples (Matthew 28:19-20). This springs from the sweet relationship of loving our neighbor in the way Jesus described: “On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:37-40). Jesus’ command to love our neighbors is all inclusive of what the Bible has taught us down through the ages, and will continue to inspire His followers until His return.

With this teaching in practice we can look at the world through a different light. I’m concerned with the fear Christians are showing and sharing today. God has not changed, and neither has the world. When my wife, Carolyn, and I left for Brazil in 1969 the concern was that the world was going to be overtaken by the communists and that Jesus would return before 1986. Both were great fears at that time. God was in control then and still is today. Did you know that the Chinese definition for the word *danger* is *opportunity*?

The crisis in the Middle East today could very likely be the



Ministry Training Institute student Josiah Rolf (right) stands next to a FLAPS plane with Lavon Bohling, an instructor in the aviation track of MTI.

results of Christians praying around the world for the 10/40 Window (1040window.org), that God would open the doors and hearts of the people in the Middle East. God is so good that He is bringing the people from the Middle East as immigrants to our country so that we as the followers of Jesus Christ can share the good news about the Messiah, who wants to live in their hearts and lives, too.

My prayer is that our MTI students will continue to look at the people and the nations of the world as great opportunities to share Jesus. And that they would continue to ask, plead and pray for the lost that they may become part of the nations of the world that will turn to God through Christ Jesus.

I ask you to continue to pray with me that the Lord would raise up more MTI students of all ages, and that they would be empowered by the Holy Spirit to impact the world today for Jesus. Pray, also, that they would look at the current events as great opportunities for God’s work.

Dyrud, an AFLC missionary, is the director of the Ministry Training Institute, a third-year program offered at AFLBS.

AFLC memorials: February

AFLBS

John and Jackie Nelson

AFLTS

Robert Schwartz

Ruth Claus

Home Missions

Elise Jost

Harvey Levandoski

Sam Hunstad

Ron Forness

Angie Hoel

Ruth Claus

Parish Education

Marv Schaper

Marge Bischoff

World Missions

Pastor Stephen Odegard

Arnold Edlund

Orville Tostensen

Irvin Hodnefield

Oral Ranum

Lou Warwick

Thorsten Christopherson

People and Places

The theme for the **2011 Annual Conference** is "Generations Walking Together," taken from Deuteronomy 6:1-9. The conference will be held June 14-17 in Sioux Falls, S.D. Host congregations are Abiding Savior Free Lutheran and Living Word Free Lutheran.

Pastor Michael Flechsig, Ortley, S.D., has accepted a call to serve Good Shepherd Lutheran, Pleasanton, Texas. Flechsig resigned from serving Ortley Free Lutheran, Ortley, and Egeland Lutheran, Waubay, S.D.

Pastor David Johnson, Silverhill, Ala., has retired. He most recently served Zion Lutheran, Silverhill.

Three senior seminarians recently received their final year internship assignment from the Free Lutheran Seminary. **Adam Osier** has been assigned to Ruthfred Evangelical Lutheran, Bethel Park, Pa., under the guidance of Pastor James Molstre. **George Lautner** has been assigned to Abiding Savior Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D., under the guidance of Pastor Kirk Flaa. And **Barry Nelson** has been assigned to Emmanuel Free Lutheran, Williston, N.D., under the guidance of Pastor Jon Wellumson. The year-long internship assignment begins in June.

Members of the Coordinating Committee accepted a resolution of affiliation from **Living Faith Lutheran**, Boyertown, Pa.

ARC to host Men's Retreat

The Association Retreat Center, Osceola, Wis., will host a men's retreat April 15-16. Steve Gamble will provide special music and Mike Fisk will be the featured speaker for the retreat, which has a theme of "Built with Grace." The event will feature a wild game feed. The cost is \$65 with an optional extra night stay for an additional fee.

For more information on these retreats and future camps, contact the ARC by e-mail at arcregistration@centurytel.net or call 800-294-2877. You can also visit the ARC Web site at www.arc-aflc.org for more information.

AFLBS announces 2001 summer teams

The Association Free Lutheran Bible School, Plymouth, Minn., has announced the members of the 2011 summer ministry teams that will travel throughout the United States, serving in AFLC churches and camps. An additional team was created this year to meet the increased interest from congregations seeking ministry teams. Besides serving as counselors at local camps, the ministry teams will lead vacation Bible school programs, good news clubs and provide music ministry. The teams for 2011 are:

Ambassadors: Andrew Jore, Luke Quanbeck, Adam Voth, Nicole Pierson and Olivia Johnson.

Cornerstone: Andrew Olson, Luke Erickson, Andrea Thompson and Lydia Johnson.

Covenant: Caleb Dahl, Caleb Benson, Torie Hemingsen and Stephanie Kantonen.

Foundation: Brandon Fouks, Steven Peterson, Ashley Hurner and Sarah Smithberg.

Joshua: Aaron Johnson, Jordan Nelson, Naomi Eikom and Katelyn Dahl.

Majesty: Andrew Berge, Michael Johnson, Jonathan Moan, Katelyn Gudim and Emily Hoops.

North Barnabas: Shane Remington, Kyle Smith, Janna Fugleberg and Courtney Jacobsen.

Timothy: David Niemela, Sean Buchfink, Anna Benbo and JoAnna Rumohr.

South Barnabas: Josiah Nelson, Isaac Paige, Hannah Johnson and Esther Long.

Team photos and schedules for the summer will be posted on the AFLBS Web site as soon as they are available.

Louise Warwick

Louise Nehrenberg-Warwick, 71, of Arlington, Wash., died Jan. 20 at her home. She was the wife of Pastor Roy Warwick. Surviving are her husband, Roy; three sons, David (Pam), Danny and Steve; two daughters, Diane (Clay) and Debi; two sisters, Marilyn (Wayne) and Ruth; six grandchildren and many stepchildren and step-grandchildren. The service was Feb. 12 at Word of Life Lutheran Brethren, Marysville, Wash.

AFLC BENEVOLENCES Jan. 1-Feb. 28, 2011

FUND	REC'D IN FEBRUARY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$18,680	\$47,895	\$53,530
Evangelism	6,412	17,197	39,829
Youth Ministries	4,001	39,215	47,626
Parish Education	3,728	17,172	14,061
Seminary	14,298	34,108	38,667
Bible School	19,011	72,231	92,071
Home Missions	24,532	76,025	116,794
World Missions	34,516	100,820	53,473
Personal Support	21,433	63,396	48,307
TOTALS	\$146,611	\$468,059	\$504,357

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

Lord of lords, King of kings

In 70 AD a rebellion took place in Jerusalem that was brutally put down by the Roman Empire. As Jesus had foretold, the city of Jerusalem experienced massive devastation. The conquering Romans brought back to their city the spoils of victory and used it to finance the building of what became the Roman Colosseum.

The arena was given the name Colosseum in reference to the colossal statue of the Emperor Nero that had once loomed over the site. The statue was nearly 120 feet tall. The gigantic size was most likely a result of Nero's high opinion of himself.



Pastor Craig Johnson

When Rome suffered a terrible fire in 64 AD, a rumor started to spread that Nero was to blame. To stop that rumor Nero started another one. He said the Christians were responsible for the fire. That led to some of the worst persecution Christians had experienced to that point. Nero had the apostle Paul beheaded and Peter crucified. He had Christians tied to a pole, doused with oil and lit on fire to serve as human candles, providing light for evening garden parties. It must have seemed to some at the time as if Nero had all the power and the Christian Church didn't have much of a future.

It was Nero's future that proved to be dismal. Rather than face assassination, he committed suicide in 68 AD. His colossal statue was eventually melted down for its bronze. Only part of the pedestal remains.

The Colosseum that was named after Nero's statue was not a welcoming place for Christians in its early days. Historians have different opinions as to

how much persecution occurred inside the Colosseum. Some believe most of the persecution happened elsewhere in Rome. Whatever the case may be, it is certain that Christians today feel a lot more comfortable going inside the Colosseum than our brothers and sisters did nearly 2,000 years ago.

In what used to be the Colosseum's imperial box, there now stands a cross. It was placed there, most likely in the 18th century, to commemorate Christians who were martyred in the arena. In the midst of a lot of ruins, in the place where emperors used to strut and show off their power and wealth, is a cross.

History took a different path than some in the first century expected. Both Nero's power and his statue seemed immense—but neither lasted long. Some thought the cross of Jesus would soon be forgotten, but it still stands. Even if a literal cross were not standing inside the Colosseum, the message of the cross would still be the most life-transforming message in the world. "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18, NIV).

Nero had the statue and the palace. He had servants who would jump at his command. He had soldiers who would execute whomever he said. But he didn't have real power. Those Christians who were being turned into human torches, who knew Jesus had died for their sins and rose again, they had the real power. They had the mes-

sage of Christ crucified and risen again.

Rulers like Nero come and go. Christians sometimes get needlessly intimidated by them. The Lord doesn't. "The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One. ... The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them" (Psalm 2:2, 4). God is and always will be King of kings and Lord of lords. The Neros of the world are no threat to His rule. It is foolishness to think anyone could ever topple Christ the King from His throne.

In what used to be the Colosseum's imperial box, there now stands a cross. ... In the midst of a lot of ruins, in the place where emperors used to strut and show off their power and wealth, is a cross.

The blood of Jesus, shed on the cross, still pays the penalty for all of our sins. Forgiveness and freedom from sin can still be found in Christ. Jesus still lives. Death is still defeated. Those great truths will never change. While earthly kingdoms rise and fall, God's kingdom is forever.

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR
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Periodicals

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association retreat center

It's your choice

BY BOB DIETSCH

Funny what you think about on a long road trip. My wife, Carol, and I were coming back home after a visit to western North Dakota when I remembered a parts salesman who used to call on us at our business in the days before we worked at the Association Retreat Center. He said he had been offered an opportunity to be a partner in a new start-up company, but turned it down. The company later became known as 3M (Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing). The man's attire confirmed the fact that maybe he had made a wrong choice.

We all face many choices in life. Not all of them will affect our livelihood and not all of them will be once-in-a-lifetime opportunities. There is one important choice, however, that everyone will have to make, and that choice will decide where you will spend eternity. What will you do with Jesus?

As we celebrate Easter, I'm thankful that God made the choice to send His only Son to become incarnate. I'm glad that Jesus made the choice to be obedient to the Father by going all the way to the cross to pay the price for my redemption. This is the good news we share at the ARC.

First, the work of Christ is finished. His sacrifice was made, and the price has been paid. John 19:30 says, "When he had received the drink, Jesus said, 'It is finished.' With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit." And II Corinthians 5:21 says, "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

Second, Christ is risen. Because He lives, we, too, can live. In Luke 24:6, the angel proclaimed, "He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee."

Third, Christ has returned to heaven, where He is preparing a place for those who love Him. He will return to claim His own. John 14:3 says, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."

We are blessed to be His hands and feet as we see folks not only make the choice for Jesus but to see them encouraged in their walk with the Lord. Make the right choice.

Dietsche, former executive director of the Association Retreat Center, Osceola, Wis., is a member of Amery Free Lutheran, Amery, Wis.