

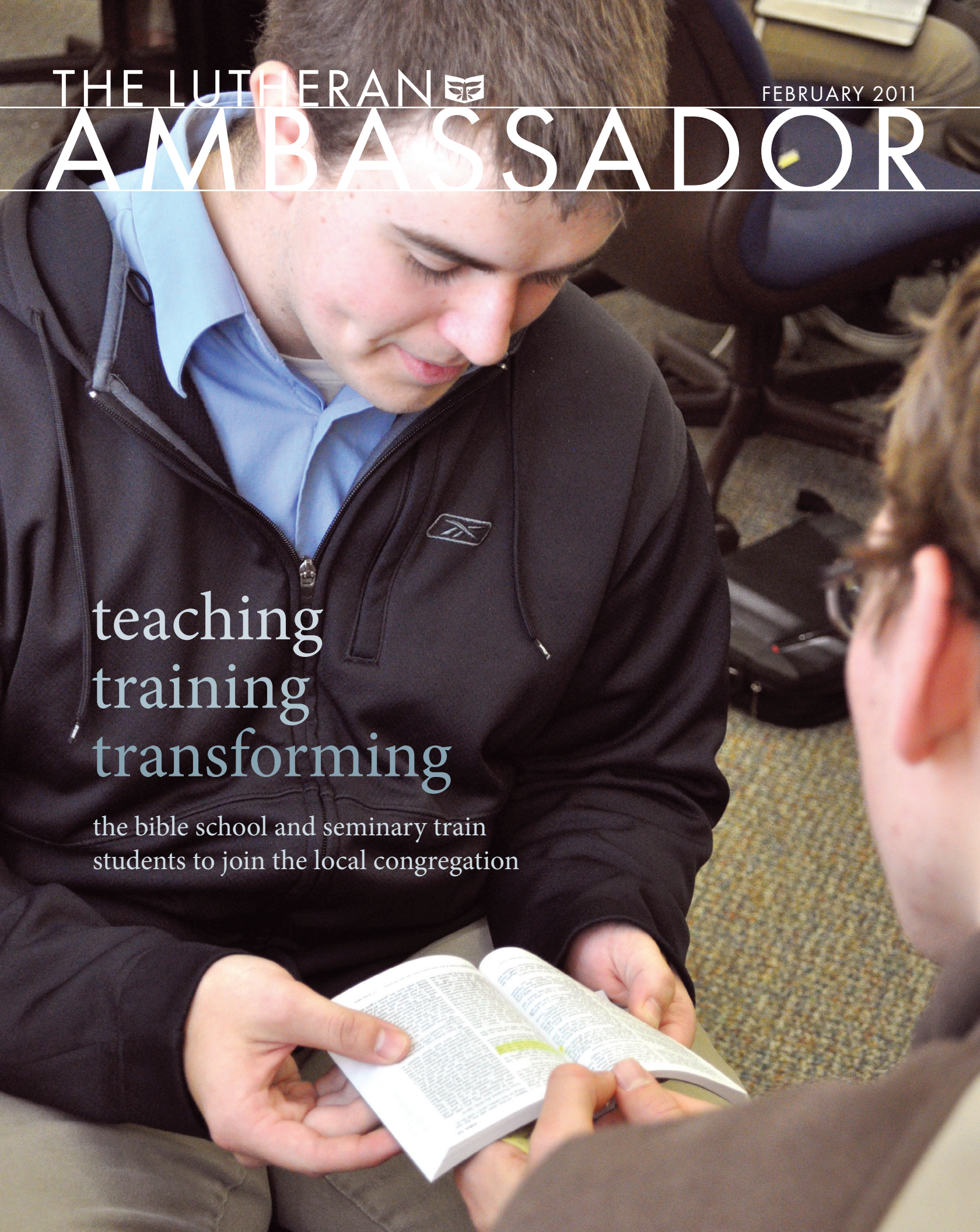
THE LUTHERAN 

FEBRUARY 2011

AMBASSADOR

teaching
training
transforming

the bible school and seminary train
students to join the local congregation



Single eyes

BY PATRICIA BALLMANN

"The light of the body is the eye; if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" Matthew 6:22-23

The word *single* intrigues me in this passage of Scripture. What is Jesus really saying here? Naturally, He's not talking about the eyes of one unmarried, although honestly, as a single young woman, that was the first thing that came to my mind. This thought, however, led me to I Corinthians 7:34 where Paul talks about single women: "The unmarried woman cares for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit." Interestingly, this is not far from the idea that Jesus seems to be communicating to His disciples. To have a "single" eye means that we have only one focus, one thing or person upon which we are fixed. Jesus should encompass all of our gaze, our attention, our adoration.

Here in Matthew 6, Jesus, in essence, calls us to become one with Him. While other versions translate the word "single" as *good, healthy, or clear*, a study of the Greek reveals a meaning akin to something folded or braided together to become unified or one. What a beautiful thought! Christ is urging us to be so focused on our Savior that we become one with Him. I Corinthians 6:17 says, "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." Our spirit should be



one with the Lord.

How do we do this? The axiom, "By beholding, we become changed," gives us the answer. If we behold Him who is Light, we ourselves will be filled with light. Our whole body will shine as Moses' face shone

after spending intimate communion with Jehovah. The more we turn to the Lord and "look full on His wonderful face," the more He imparts His nature to us and we become like Him. We are indeed the light of the world, but only because He first was the Light of the world! If we want to be light, we must turn to Him and reflect His light, for we have nothing but darkness in ourselves.

So, let all our eyes be single eyes, no matter what our marital status may be. Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of your faith. When you are tempted to become overwhelmed with the cares and worries of this world, lift up your eyes to Him. Ask Him to shed His light abroad in your heart and life and to join your spirit with His. His light never grows dim. May Proverbs 4:18 be true in each of our lives as we fix our eyes solely on our Savior: "But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shines more and more unto the perfect day."

Ballmann is a member of Word of Truth Lutheran, Glen Rose, Texas.

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To have people who are well informed but not constrained by conscience is, conceivably, the most dangerous outcome of education possible. Indeed it could be argued that ignorance is better than unguided intelligence, for the most dangerous people are those who have knowledge without a moral framework.

— Ernest Boyer

Here, then, is the real problem of our negligence. We fail in our duty to study God's Word not so much because it is difficult to understand, not so much because it is dull and boring, but because it is work. Our problem is not a lack of intelligence or a lack of passion. Our problem is that we are lazy.

— R. C. Sproul

Is not the great defect of our education today ... that although we often succeed in teaching our pupils "subjects," we fail lamentably on the whole in teaching them how to think: they learn everything, except the art of learning.

— Dorothy Sayers

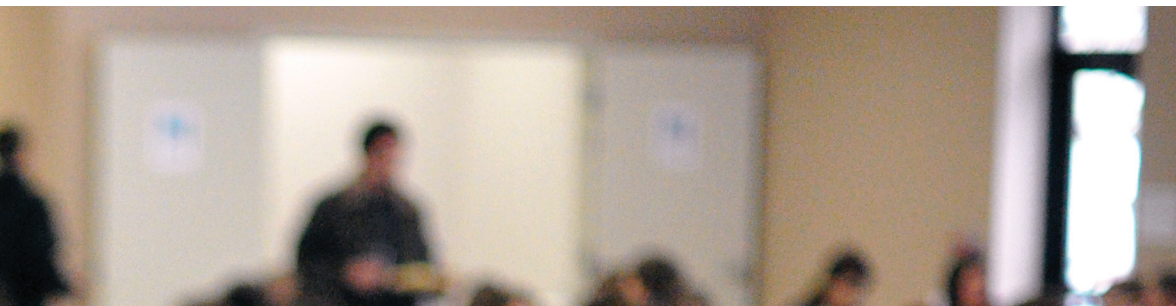
Yes, if truth is not undergirded by love, it makes the possessor of that truth obnoxious and the truth repulsive.

—Ravi Zacharias

seeking God's best means follo



Following a different path



by chad friestad

My favorite memory from my two years at AFLBS was the day I went on a scavenger hunt for my shoes.

It was a beautiful spring afternoon and my friend, Ryan Patenaude, and I decided to go roller blading around Medicine Lake. Being amateur roller bladers, we thought it would be best to carry our roller blades down the Bible school's sloped driveway rather than skating down it, to avoid the risk of falling before we got to the Medicine Lake bike trail.

However, we needed a place to put our shoes while we gone. Since the house closest to the bike path belonged to AFLBS staff member Wayne Floan, we figured it couldn't hurt anything to place our shoes in the Floans' yard while we skated around the lake. So leaving our shoes behind, we strapped on our roller blades and set out on the bike path.

Exhausted from our trip around the lake, we returned a couple hours later to find our shoes missing. We searched the Floans' yard for them, but all we found was a note that was stuck in the ground. It had a message that informed us our shoes had been held hostage and we'd have to go on a scavenger hunt to find them! The note provided us with a clue, which led us to the barbecue grill, where we found another clue. The next clues took us to the back porch of the house, over to the trampoline, and eventually to the back of Wayne's pickup truck, we were pleasantly surprised to find a chest cooler with cookies and lemonade, three 12- and 13-year-old daughters of AFLBS staff members with the last names Floan and Johnson, and our shoes!

Sometimes life is like going on a scavenger hunt for our shoes. We search and search. We seek God. We find a clue, then try to figure out the next step. Some clues are easy, some take a while to figure out, but in the end, we find God's best for us.

Lately, I have been experiencing the truth found in Proverbs 16:9, "We can make our plans, but the Lord determines our steps."

For the past three years, I have been serving as an AFLC Home Missions Parish Builder at Good Shepherd Lutheran in Camarillo, Calif., ministering primarily to youth and children. During my time there, I was often asked questions such as, "How do you like California?" or "Are you gonna be here for a long time?" or "Is this home for you now?" I never knew quite what to say, but one answer I often gave was, "I have no plans of leaving."

That was the honest truth. I loved California for more than just the near perfect weather, the palm trees, and the beach. I was content with where God had me. I enjoyed ministry in a new, growing church, working alongside a pastor whom I loved, and being surrounded by a church family that made me feel at home.

I had no plans, but God did. He knew it was time for my next step and I soon knew, too. Back in mid-September, I received a phone call from a ministry mentor encouraging me to consider a position at AFLBS as Student Development Director. I immediately sensed God calling me to the position. After a lot of prayer and receiving much affirmation from godly people, I decided to pursue the position. Within a month, I was offered the job and I had plans of moving to Minnesota in mid-November.

Needless to say, there have been a lot of changes in my life over the past two months. But one thing that hasn't changed is the call God has placed on my life to make disciples. That was what God called me to do in California, working with youth and kids, and that is my call now, working with AFLBS students.

My heart and vision for the Bible school is simple: to make disciples, all while fulfilling the mission of AFLBS to teach the Word of God, train servants, and transform lives.

My position involves three basic areas: student support, recruiting new students, and communicating with alumni. For current students, I hope to implement more mentoring and life-on-life discipleship on campus, among AFLBS students and staff. I also want to expand ministry options for students as an outlet for experiential learning and personal growth. Lastly, I desire to raise awareness of options for students to consider after Bible school, including college transfer options, MTI (Ministry Training Institute, AFLBS's third-year program), Parish Building with AFLC Home Missions, ministry internships, and missions opportunities.

As part of recruiting new AFLBS students, I hope to develop a promotional presentation for AFLC churches, youth groups, and youth and family camps. The goal is to give our AFLC congregations an accurate picture of the Bible school and to encourage young people all around the world to consider coming to AFLBS. Another goal in our presentation is to raise awareness of opportunities for AFLBS friends and alumni to support AFLBS in prayer, financial giving, and student scholarships.

Are you open to God's call for your life? Or are you making your own plans? Following God's plan might cause you to feel like you're on a scavenger hunt for your shoes, or make you do something crazy, like move from sunny and warm California to Minnesota, just in time for the worst snow storm since 1991. Whatever the cost, God's plan is best.

Friestad, a 2003 graduate of the Association Free Lutheran Bible School, now serves as the school's Student Development director.



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teaching training transforming

what happens when a home congregation invests in its students

by melissa wolla

“Teaching the Word, Training Servants, Transforming Lives.”

As I read an article from the recent *AFLBS Companion* about the school's new motto and logo, I thought, “Yes, that is so true of my time spent at Bible school.” What greater investment can home congregations make than supporting their own to attend a place that is centered on the Word of God? Congregations have the unique opportunity to invest in the spiritual future of the Church as a whole.

As I was faced with the decision of what to do after high school, it was hard to envision all that God would have in store for me in committing two years of my life to studying His Word. Not sure that I really wanted to go to AFLBS—in fact, not wanting to go at all—I was very much encouraged by my parents to do so. Still not convinced, my pastor at the time, Pastor Terry Olson, had a great impact on my decision. Another factor in my decision was that my congregation financially supported a portion of tuition, room and board for those attending. That year, our church had three students who attended AFLBS, and the Lord supplied bountifully for all of us. Without the support from my parents, pastor and congregation, I could have missed one of the most valuable opportunities, and countless blessings that the Lord had in store for me.

While I was struggling with the decision to attend Bible school, someone asked

me: “How can this not be God’s will for you?” I thought about that question, and finally realized how true of a challenge it was. I would be grounded in the Word, surrounded by fellow Christians—which every young person is in need of after high school—and would come away equipped to serve. How could it not be God’s will? Those of us who have been fortunate enough to attend AFLBS know this to be true.

The two years I spent at Bible school were some of the most formative in my Christian walk. The blessings given to me during that time were beyond what I could have imagined. From my spiritual grounding of my childhood home and transitioning into adulthood, AFLBS impacted my life through the teaching of the Word, building newfound friendships, and creating a boldness for Christ. Those friends I gained are lifelong relationships which not only remain steady, but through Christ they grew stronger well after the days of AFLBS. Both my husband and I look back at that time in our lives and are so very thankful for the hand of God leading and guiding us to attend. I can’t think of a better way to spend two years of your life after high school.

After AFLBS I returned to my home congregation in Valley City, N.D., where I currently serve as director of Children’s Ministry. I am so thankful for the training and education that Bible school provided me in serving my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. What a privilege it is to teach and equip young hearts with the gospel so they are ready to give an answer for the hope

that is in them. When I look around our congregation, I see those who have attended AFLBS and are now serving in different leadership roles in the flock. These people range from deacons, Christian education board members, our pastor, WMF leaders, youth board members, Sunday school teachers, and two currently in seminary with one attending Bible school now. It’s a joy to hear my 10- and 13-year-old children already speaking about future plans of attending AFLBS. Praise God from Whom all blessings flow!

Do you as a congregational member completely realize what you are investing in when you support AFLBS/AFLTS students? You are investing in the future of the Church. This is our part of the Great Commission. Though students may or may not come back to serve in their home congregations, God will raise them up in a congregation to serve in various areas of leadership. You may be supporting future pastors, missionaries, or Sunday school teachers. Is your congregation being called to support its youth and raise up the future church? “How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation” (Isaiah 52:7).

Melissa (Burchill) Wolla, a 1994 AFLBS graduate, married Bryan Wolla ('94). They have two children, Jonah (13) and Mikayla (10). Their home congregation is Valley Free Lutheran, Valley City, N.D., where Melissa serves as director of Children's Ministry.



summer teams wonderful relationships lives impacted

the bible school's ministry teams meet congregations' needs

by juli mccarlson

Summer teams! Wonderful relationships. Fun times, serious times, excitement as the hosts prepare for their coming, and a little sad tug at the heart when they leave. Yet a prayerful send-off as the teams are heading out to meet with a new group of people who anticipate their arrival.

Whether the team was from years past or a recent team from the Association Free Lutheran Bible School, those willing servants made an impact on those they came in contact with. They have helped the larger Association of Free Lutheran Congregations' church body to stay connected, the local church hosts to work together, and, most importantly, individuals to build a relationship with Christ.

Our family has a history of being a part of various teams that served others, whether during the school year, or the summer. These teams have assisted with vacation Bible school, Bible camp, or led worship services through music. We have also hosted a variety of young servants over the years as they traveled through our area. The relaxed environment of a home helps us get to know the young people on a more personal level, sometimes sharing personal history, spiritual struggles, prayer concerns, and family happenings as we may know their parents or older siblings. Through fellowship with host families, teams help the AFLC church body keep in touch with one another. It is always good to know how others are doing and if there are specific prayer needs in other families that we could assist with. Our family has also enjoyed seeing how these young people have grown over the years since we met them and how

God has worked in their lives—from their schooling, work, marriages, children, various ministries they are involved with, or other areas He may have for them.

I have always enjoyed being part of the local group that plans for the arrival of an AFLBS ministry team. Praying for them before they get here, planning how to meet their physical needs while they are with us, and setting up the plans for the type of ministry they will assist with while they are here are just a few of the ways they get the local congregation to work together.

Most of the summer teams our family has interacted with these past years are the teams that come and spend the week out at Pickerel Lake Bible Camp in Grenville, S.D., for senior or junior high camp. The Ambassadors, Cornerstone, Timothy, Foundation, and Majesty teams have worked hard as camp staff. Their leadership at camp helps impact the campers, whether making final camp preparations, counseling their group of campers, playing, eating, serving, singing, leading praise and worship, sharing in puppet presentations, or being examples for the students.

When a team member shares his or her personal experiences, our students realize they are not alone in their thoughts and in some of the experiences they are going through. It is amazing how God works in both the lives of the staff and the campers to grow relationships in such a short time. Many of the campers receive salvation through listening to God's Word being shared from a Bible leader, from a testimony given, from a story shared at campfire, from the evening speaker's message, or from the life and listening ear of their counselor. The

counselor hears and sees the need and leads that young person to Jesus! Some of the young people are even led to attend AFLBS because of a counselor's positive influence.

My husband, Mike, who is president of the Bible Camp Association, appreciates that the teams are well prepared to deal with all facets of camp life. He remembers a young man who immersed himself in the week of junior high camp, always being there, full of energy, and working well with the young campers. Because of this young man's zeal, campers were significantly engaged in the physical and spiritual activities of the week. This is just one example of what one servant can do for others. Many of these young team members have helped change the lives of others.

Because of the impact summer team members have on the youth and others in your congregation and community, I would encourage you to take part in the summer team ministry. Be the one who prepares for their coming. Be the one who hosts a couple of team members while they are with your congregation. Be the one who provides a meal during the week. Be the one who invites the youth, or neighbor, or coworker to their event. Most importantly be the one who prays for them before, during, and after their visit.

Summer teams. Wonderful relationships. Lives impacted.

McCarlson is a member of Tabor Lutheran, Webster, S.D. Several of her children have been members of AFLBS ministry teams, including both summer teams and gospel teams.

exercizing the mind, refreshing the soul

Rosenius' work reminds seminary student of God's gracious peace

by barry nelson

"Of making many books there is no end, and much study wears the body" (Ecclesiastes 12:12b).

There have been times during my three years at the Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary when the assigned reading load would bring this verse to mind. It is sometimes a challenge to not reduce our time in these Christian resources, or even time spent studying the Scriptures themselves, to a mere academic undertaking. That is not to say that these books haven't been helpful in our studies and profitable in gaining a deeper understanding of the subject matter, but it is still a blessing when one not only exercises the mind but also refreshes the soul.

For me, that refreshment came on two separate occasions from the writings of Carl Olof Rosenius. The first was his devotional commentary on the book of Romans, and the second was *A Faithful Guide to Peace with God*. In both of these works, Rosenius answers with an emphatic "Yes!" the question, "Can a believer truly have assurance of salvation?" This has always been a personal struggle for me, as I have consistently heard the voice of the accuser trying to plant doubts as to my worthiness. It is not difficult to believe these accusations when we turn our eyes to our own disobedience and failures and we lose sight of the real cause of our salvation in the first place—the merit of Jesus Christ and His perfect obedience. Rosenius carefully separates these two truths. First, that we by our own actions merit nothing short of eternal condemnation, but second, that the merit of Christ is sufficient to atone for all of our sin and the sin of the entire world.

Dr. Fran Monseth assigned *A Faithful Guide to Peace with God* this year in his class on Soteriology (the study of salvation). We were to focus on the second part of the book and write an essay on the subject of "The Grace of God in Christ." This study helped to achieve one of the course objectives as stated on the syllabus—to gain "a renewed assurance and joy in one's own salvation by grace alone."

Often when the topic of assurance of salvation is discussed, there is a hesitation in stating it in too strong of terms because of the fear that when one is too certain of salvation it can lead to careless living, or even a total rejection of the law of God as the standard for the Christian. Rosenius does a great job of presenting the gleeful message of the gospel without diminishing the proper use of the law in the life of the Christian. In fact, that is where Rosenius starts his guide. Before we can be properly assured of our salvation, it is necessary that we have a clear and truthful picture of the situation we are being saved from. "It is true that the Grace of God in Christ is boundless, but it can do them no good whatever who are under the Law and desire to remain the disciples of Moses" (Rosenius, 21-22).

While there may be few Christians who desire to literally follow the Mosaic Law, there are a great deal who follow the spirit of the law. Anyone who believes that our justification is based on our own actions, the merits of our deeds, is actually attempting to be a disciple of Moses. This is an easy trap to fall into, even for the most mature believer. Rosenius, speaking to the believer who sincerely struggles against sin, counsels, "The repentant sinner should not waste time in gazing upon his dead, dark body of sin, but rather let him look to Christ, the Prince of Peace" (Rosenius, 236).

When we keep Christ in focus, we realize that in questioning our salvation, we do not doubt our worthiness, but in fact, we are doubting the power of Christ's merit. When we reframe the question, "Is my unrighteousness powerful enough to overcome the righteousness of Christ?" the answer becomes obvious. The understanding of this concept is vital to having peace with God. Rosenius quotes one of the fathers of Lutheran Pietism, August Francke, who wrote, "when the heart no longer seeks salvation in the gracious forgiveness of sins through confidence in the merits of Christ, it is on the wrong track and finds no peace" (Rosenius, 240).

Satan likes nothing more than for us to turn all our attention inward. When we struggle against sin, we must always keep in mind that our sanctification is also Christ's work. This, too, is a work based on the grace of God in Christ. Rosenius reminds us of the promises that are given in the gospel that the believer "shall have the grace of forgiveness, the grace of victory over sin and the sinful passions of his nature, the grace of sanctification" (Rosenius, 237). This is the promise that helped me quiet the doubts.

I know that the same grace of God in Christ that is the basis of my justification—the declaration of my righteousness by God based solely on the merits of Christ—is also the basis for my continuing sanctification. This is why today I can honestly say that I have found peace with God. And it is the reason for my "being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6).

Nelson, a member of Maranatha Free Lutheran, Glyndon, Minn., is in his third year of studies at AFLTS.



A Faithful Change
L-Pe



spiritual refreshment

a congregation finds blessings from hosting seminary interns

by chris bunn

After four years with four different seminary interns and their families, our congregation at St. Ansgar's Free Lutheran, Salinas, Calif., has definitely been refreshed and blessed. It has always been exciting to see who the Lord would bring to Salinas and how we would all get along. I think we did pretty well and we are all better off for it. Our congregation is definitely impressed with the quality of men being taught at the Free Lutheran Seminary in Plymouth, Minn.

With such great material coming from the seminary, we tried to hire our first intern at the completion of his term. That didn't work out, and we decided, in the future, we had better leave it up to God to find the right fit for everyone.

These men have been so well prepared to work in the Christian community that it did not take us long to realize how God is using the AFLC to train up strong Christian leaders. It has also been exciting to see where God has finally called these men to serve, one to Ukraine, one to the Midwest, and one to Alaska. Our fourth intern has yet to complete his service here.

Each intern has brought along with his family a wonderful infusion of creative energy, dedication and unique ideas about parish ministry. They have all given us a different approach and style to looking at God's Word, though they all have the same strong adherence to Scripture. These men have been taught such sound doctrine that our congregation has come to realize what a privilege it is to belong to such a biblically-

based body as the AFLC.

Our church was enriched in many specific ways by the interns. Between the four of them, they preached in Sunday services, led worship, officiated at our nearby satellite church in Hollister, taught Sunday school, led Advent services, and taught beginning Greek classes. They led youth group and college group, participated in men's Bible study, visited shut-ins and those in the hospital, and they led funerals. They also participated fully in the church council, sharing in the duties of congregational governance, which means everything from planning budgets to potlucks, fundraisers, mission events and community outreach.

Intern wives and their children have been a joyful addition to our congregational life. In just a year one sees such growth, both physical and spiritual, in these intern families. All parties seem to adjust well to our West Coast life, as well as to the different personalities of our congregation.

My wife and I have had the privilege, along with seasoned couples, to support these intern families. Meeting once a month with the intern seminarian and his wife, along with tired but curious children, has always been very engaging. They always respected our thoughts and ideas and found some advice helpful. The younger couples never found much opportunity to see the surrounding country during the time they were here. Later, we realized with small toddlers and, in some cases, babies on the way, traveling was rather exhausting for everyone. They always expressed great enthusiasm and appreciation, however, when

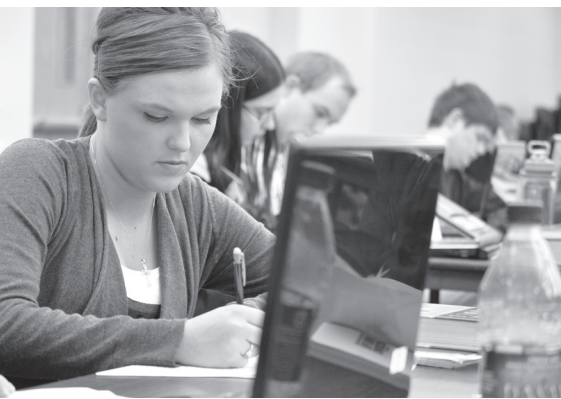
invited for dinner or a trip over to the coast. Our older intern and his family needed different kinds of support, especially with sons and daughters across the country and wonderful grandchildren coming into the world.

Each intern has given his best, despite the fact that each was also completing his final year of seminary studies, as well as attending to his family's and extended family's needs. The difference of our climate also seemed to have an effect on our seminaries, as the only snow we get around here shows up on distant mountain tops and winter for us is when temperatures dip into the 40s. In addition, the intensive agricultural setting of the Salinas Valley, along with its attendant gang problems, was probably a bit of a culture shock for our mostly Midwestern interns.

The interns and their families have been an encouragement, a challenge, and a blessing to our congregation. We hope that we have reciprocated in turn. We have learned to be more caring for these visiting families. They have awakened in us the gift of hospitality, as well as being more attentive to the needs of those in our community. The refreshing presence of the seminary interns and their families has helped us look beyond our own congregation and realize that God has a much more expansive work for us in His Kingdom.

Bunn is a member of St. Ansgar's Free Lutheran, Salinas, Calif.

On the campus of the AFLC Schools



(Pictured at left from top) Courtney Jacobson, Burlington, N.D., and Lydia Johnson, Camarillo, Calif., review materials for talking about their faith in the Evangelism and Discipleship class, a three-week class taught by Pastor Jim Rasmussen which is offered to juniors during J-term. Stephanie Dresser, Moorhead, Minn., fills out a short test during the Evangelism and Discipleship class. Matthew Nelson, Newark, Ill., does a role play with a fellow junior during the Evangelism and Discipleship class. Jonathan Moan, Corcoran, Minn., and Upendo Mmari, Tanzania, look over a test during class.

TOP: Pastor Don Richman, former director of East European Missions Network, spoke at a chapel during J-term.

ABOVE: Pastor Jason Holt participates in a student discussion group time during a Biblical Worldview Class offered to seniors in J-term, which featured the Truth Project.



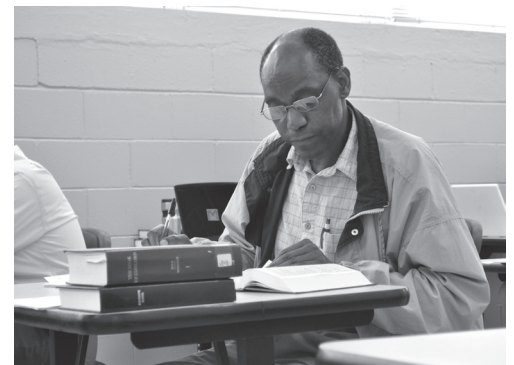
TOP: Members of the seminary chorus sang during the AFLC Schools annual Christmas concerts in December.



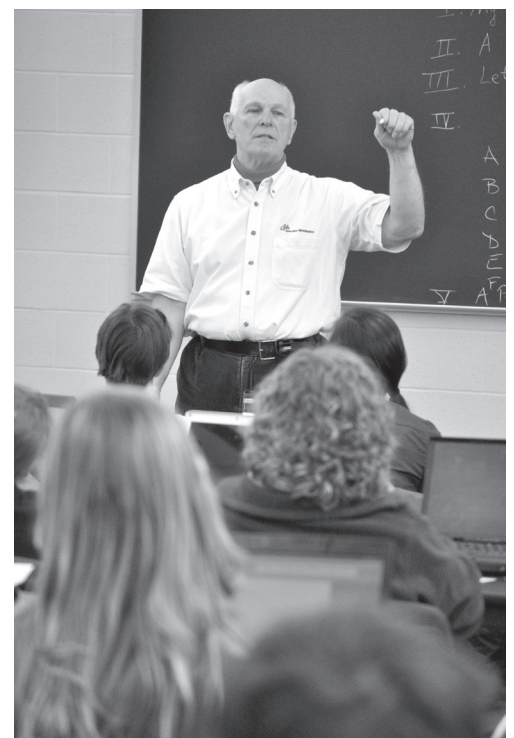
TOP RIGHT: Matthew Carlson, a junior from Esko, Minn., asks Pastor Jim Rasmussen a question during discussion time in the Evangelism and Discipleship class.



MIDDLE RIGHT: Pastor Robert Lee talks with Pastor LeRoy Petersen, Greenbush, Minn., after a seminary J-term class focusing on the history of the AFLC.



AT RIGHT: Nicolaus Nsanganzeli, a senior seminary student from Tanzania, studies at his desk in between classes.



BOTTOM RIGHT: Bill Brown, a church mobilizer for Operation Mobilization, taught one day of classes on how to reach Muslims in the Evangelism and Discipleship class.

News from the World Missions Department

Seminary hosts J-term class on World Missions

The Free Lutheran Seminary, Plymouth, Minn., held a week of classes focused on AFLC World Missions work. The class was held Jan. 10-14, with Pastor Del Palmer (director of AFLC World Missions), leading the class. Also participating in the class were Pastor Kevin Olson, who heads up the Ambassador Institute, and Pastor Connely Dyrud, AFLC missionary to Brazil for many years and currently director of the Ministry Training Institute on the campus of the AFLC Schools in Plymouth. Jonni Sliver, who will begin a missionary term at the Miriam Infant Home in Campo Mourão, Brazil, also participated in the class, along with a host of others who presented information on the history of AFLC World Missions as well as current topics in world missions today.

WM approves candidates

Brent Raan and Emily Walker, members of Hauge Lutheran, Kenyon, Minn., were accepted as missionary candidates. Raan and Walker plan to be married in June. Raan will attend AFLTS before being called as a missionary.

Risk assessment process under way in Brazil

Pastor Del Palmer, Glenn Mork and Paul Handsaker will travel to Brazil March 11-30 to observe the work and encourage those laboring in the mission field there. The major emphasis of the trip will be to complete a risk assessment for the AFLC's missionaries working there. Members of the World Missions Committee have spent considerable time assessing the risks in each country where the AFLC ministers. The purpose of the assessment is to lower the risks and develop a plan to be used in case a major problem arises.



AFLBS' mission field study class will travel to Ecuador

Twelve students who are taking the mission field study class this spring at the Bible school will spend their spring break traveling to Cuenca, Ecuador, for hands-on mission service. The trip is planned for April 8-24. The group, lead by former missionary Pastor Richard Gunderson, will work with youth at the Escuela Bilingüe and at Paz de Dios Church. Pastor Darwin Paccha, a recent graduate of AFLTS, serves at both the school and church. Jessica Pillman will travel with the group as an advisor.

Short-term assistants join World Missions

The AFLC's World Missions Department recently approved several short term mission assistants (STA) for work in various fields. Several former STAs will pursue new ministry fields.

Jim and Cindy Lilly, members of Hope Lutheran, Minneapolis, have been accepted as STAs to work in Ecuador. After planning for many years to begin mission work upon Jim's retirement, the Lillys will begin that process by starting a short mission term beginning in mid-February. They will work toward full-time missionary status with the AFLC on loan to the World Mission Prayer League.

Cassie Nash, a member of Living Hope, Albertville, Minn., has been accepted as an STA to work in Haiti. Nash will work with the Canaan Orphanage beginning in mid-February through mid-June, working primarily as a tutor to school children and as a mentor to young women and college-age students.

Hans Tanner, Sioux Falls, S.D., has

been accepted as an STA to work with AFLC missionary Pastor Nate Jore in Uganda. Tanner, who graduates this spring from AFLBS, will serve his term beginning this summer until he begins full-time schooling. Tanner is prayerfully seeking a man of God's choosing who would partner with him in this endeavor.

Justo Pillman, who has served as an STA in Cuenca, Ecuador, is taking a leave from this work as he pursues being called as a full-time missionary through AFLC World Missions. He will marry Patricia Ballmann (Glen Rose, Texas) in March, who will join him in this endeavor.

Andrew Abel is serving the AFLC as an STA this semester as he develops a promotional DVD for the Brazil mission field. The son of AFLC missionaries to Brazil Pastor Paul and Becky Abel, he is currently pursuing the possibility of expanding this mission assignment to produce promotional work for all AFLC World Mission fields. He will graduate from Northwestern

College, St. Paul, Minn., this spring.

Jacob O'Flanagan, a member of Timberland Ringebu Free Lutheran, Barronett, Wis., began working as an STA in Brazil in December. He is currently serving on the Bible school campus in Campo Mourão working on maintenance and upkeep of the facilities. He will serve through March.

Jon Nelson, who recently returned from a nine-month term as an STA in Brazil, has moved back to his home congregation in Kalispell, Mont., where he is considering further work with youth or a call to seminary.

Nathan Olson, who worked with Nelson in Brazil as an STA for nine months, has moved to the Twin Cities area and continues work as an STA developing materials for the Ambassador Institute while finishing his college requirements. He will pursue enrollment at AFLTS upon completion of his studies.



Matchmaking ministry

BY JONNI SLIVER

There is a lot of variety at the Miriam Infant Home in Campo Mourão, Brazil. There are precious babies in arms, adorable tots, engaging school-age children and maturing teenagers. Some children come to us one by one, others with a brother or sisters, sometimes they come as a family gang! Each one has his or her own story. Even if a child comes with a sibling, no two have the same heart. But one thing is the same for every one of them—a deep need for perfect love.

Most of the Miriam Home children come to us through the juvenile authorities; they have been taken out of their homes for their protection. Their problems come in many forms. Some have parents who couldn't take care of them or they have lost their parents all together. Many have been hurt through physical violence, sexual abuse, or exposure to drugs and alcohol. There is a whole world that children should not have to experience, but do. Praise the Lord, there is also a safe place these little ones can come to!

What can the Miriam Infant Home do, once the children have come to us? We can certainly love them, play with them and make sure they have all that they need. We can take them to the doctor, bring them to school and get them in to Sunday school. We can wake them up in the morning and tuck them in each night. But it

is hard for us to understand how deep the hurts go that our little ones arrive with. Physical wounds and abuse, especially when they come from a person who is important to them, carry life lessons. They teach children what their value is, how to gain affection, and who they can trust. They learn they are not safe. As much affection as we are able to pour out on the children who come to the home, our love is not going to remove the lies and scars they carry with them. What hope is there?

I have good news: there *is* hope and it really is all about Who we know! Every child in the Miriam Infant Home longs to be loved with an everlasting love, without ulterior motives—an unconditional love. Their longing is answered in Ezekiel 36:26, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh."

The staff of the Miriam Infant Home have the ministry of the Matchmaker. We bring our precious children to the Heavenly Father, who lovingly heals their hearts and pours out His Spirit on them. Please pray for the Miriam Home, that it will continue to be a place where children find healing for their hearts.

Sliver hopes to begin a new mission assignment this winter at the Miriam Infant Home in Campo Mourão, Brazil.

Blessing seminarians through books

The Women's Missionary Federation receives money throughout the year for several mission projects within four main categories. Within the Christian Education category is our schools to which the gifts, unless designated, are split between the Bible school

and the seminary. One of the ways we use the funds for the seminary is to give \$100 to each full-time student to help pay for textbooks. Ideally we would like to give these funds each semester of the school year, but sometimes it takes awhile to accumulate the needed funds.

We are thankful to be able to give this support to our seminarians. If you wish to give to this project, designate your gifts to the Book Fund for Seminarians.

By Lois Grothe, National WMF treasurer.



Dearest friends in Christ Jesus,

It is with warm regard and in thankfulness to God for His grace working through each of you that I write to you. Recently, you provided me with a gift that will be used to help pay for the text books that are assigned for the fall semester of my senior year at AFLTS. As a full-time student, father, and husband, I appreciate the sacrifice that has been made on my behalf. As a student of the Word of God, I am continually in awe of God and His Work in my life.

Please be aware that your gifts are appreciated by every seminarian. For some of us, the time spent in seminary is a time of unique financial challenges. It is also a time of patience as we are witnesses of God's grace that is revealed in His provision for every aspect of our lives. Your love in this gift is just one example of the blessings that God provides.

Peter writes, "Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been born again not of a seed which is perishable, but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring Word of God" (I Peter 1:22-23). Your outpouring of love through your generous supplying of the book fund money is evidence of your faith in and love for Jesus Christ. May God bless you, one and all as you continue to love and serve Him.

Thank you again for your generous support. Live in the peace and grace that only comes in one place. That place is Jesus Christ.

*With respect and love, I remain your servant through Christ Jesus,
George Lautner, AFLTS Senior*

All of the courses at AFLTS are designed to equip students for effective ministry as servant-pastors. These courses are centered in serious and concentrated study of the inspired and inerrant Word of God. Our prayerful aim is, by God's grace, to be a Bible-believing, Bible-based, Bible-saturated training ground for the men who are led to study with us. With the Scriptures as the living

source for all that we believe and teach, additional resources selected for their high view of Scripture, which will assist in the understanding and application of the Word, are required for our students. The seminary is deeply appreciative of the financial assistance our students receive from the WMF in order to purchase these helpful and necessary tools that the men will use throughout a lifetime of Christian

ministry. The rising cost of textbooks makes the help received of great encouragement to our students and to all of us on the faculty and staff. Thank you, dear women of the church!

By Dr. Francis Monseth, dean of the Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary.

Ministering to those who hurt

BY PASTOR DON VOORHEES

By the time you read this article I will have been working as a hospital chaplain for 10 years. During that time I have learned much about ministering to the sick, the dying, and their loved ones. Much of this learning has been an education in helping a dying or hurting person's family and friends learn how to break bad habits. These habits were well-intentioned, but were nevertheless not helpful and in some cases became hurtful. Yet, these habits are quite common; they are something we quite naturally fall into. Here are a few ways to truly be helpful to those who are hurting.

Don't be anxious

Sickness, loss and death are not our favorite conditions. They make us uncomfortable. Often we deal with them by pretending that they don't happen—at least not to those near and dear to us. We often avoid those who are suffering because we don't know how to act, or what to say. Nor do we want to face the fact that suffering will at some time come to us, too. We are unsure how we will cope with it.

To get rid of our anxiety we must face our own fears. This is why the best helpers are those who have suffered themselves (I Corinthians 1:3-4). Recognizing our anxious thoughts and feelings is the first step in dealing with them. If we are aware of these feelings, we can deal with them and not let them control us or move us to do and say things that do not really help.

Simply be present

Often there is absolutely nothing we can do to make the situation better, except to be there with the sufferer. Yet people often tell me how much it has meant to them to just have me stay with them. No one wants to suffer alone. You may hold the hand of a dying person. You might pray for him or her. You might not do anything but sit there, but being there has great meaning.

Listen

Talking is easy, but listening is hard work and an exercise in self-control. It means allowing the other person to control the conversation. It means not responding with the first thing that pops into our heads, but asking the suffering one to tell us more. It means really hearing what they are saying rather than planning what we will say next. It means tolerating periods of silence and gaps in the conversation. It also means staying with them no matter how uncomfortable the conversation gets for us. If we can learn to truly listen we may be surprised at what we can learn from those who are suffering.

Do not problem solve

We all want to do something to help the sufferer, but most often there is little we really can do. If there is something real you can do to improve someone's condition, then do it. But don't let your desire to do something lead you to say things that are insensitive spiritually or mentally. It is true that "God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God" (Romans 8:28), but that truth may sound like a slap in the face to one in the midst of suffering. Pat answers seldom help and often hurt—they need you, not a verbal quick fix. It is best to stay with the person. Let them come, in their own time, to their own understanding of what their suffering means.

"Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn" (Romans 12:1). This is a very short summary of some tips for truly helping those who are suffering. If you are interested in learning more, I recommend the little book, *Don't Sing Songs To A Heavy Heart*, by Kenneth C. Haugk.

Voorhees serves St. Peder's Evangelical Lutheran, Dannebrog, Neb.

Ambassador Institute graduates first class

Fifteen students complete two-year oral Bible study course in Uganda

Pastor Kevin Olson traveled to Jinja, Uganda, in January to be a part of the first graduation ceremony for students taking courses through the Ambassador Institute. Fifteen students completed course requirements for graduation, and another five students will earn certificates of participation.

The Ambassador Institute is a distance education program under the AFLC's World Missions Department which aims to educate international students in seminary-level classes. The oral Bible study curriculum includes Scripture memorization and the application of these Scriptures to doctrine, character and ministry. During their two years of studies, students memorize 2,200 Bible verses.

Leading the program in Uganda is AFLC Missionary Pastor Nate Jore. His students, upon graduation, also received a printed copy of the first six terms of the curriculum (with all Scripture printed in Lusoga) for future reference. Many of the graduating students already serve as pastors at local churches. Many have also begun to teach the curriculum to other students.

"That's the goal," said Olson, "to multiply other classes."

The graduation certificates were donated by Jim and Joan Thompson, members of Trinity Free Lutheran, Janesville, Wis.

After attending the graduation, Olson traveled to India with Pastor Jim Rasmussen, director of Evangelism, and Pastor Al Pinno, Vernon, British Columbia, to conduct seminars in order to train and encourage pastors and church leaders.



Pastor Kevin Olson holds one of 15 diplomas that he handed out to students in Jinja, Uganda, who have completed a two-year oral Bible study curriculum.



Laurel, Neb., youth host nativity for community

The high school youths at United Lutheran Church in Laurel, Neb., put on a live nativity for the community in December. Held outside the church building, the community was invited to drive by or walk up and view a recreation of the story of our Savior Jesus Christ's birth. Besides the youth members playing the different parts in the nativity story, the ensemble also included a live camel, donkey, rooster and calf.

After viewing the nativity, the community was then invited into the church building for live Christmas music and cookies.

AFLBS offers missions perspectives class in J-term



TOP LEFT: Isaac Edlund, from Crookston, Minn., listens as Pastor Connely Dyrud teaches on the difference between passion and compassion in mission work. The Missions Perspectives class was held daily for three weeks in January.

TOP RIGHT: Pastor Connely Dyrud, former AFLC missionary to Brazil, is director of the Mission Training Institute, the optional third year of study for Bible School students.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Susan Welsch, a senior from Amery, Wis., stands up to answer a question during class.

BOTTOM LEFT: Naomi Demsky, a junior from Rochester, Minn., listens during the Missions Perspectives Class, which is required for all junior, senior and MTI students.

AFLC memorials: December

AFLBS

Louis Lange
Darrel Ford (3)
Vivian Wall
Irvin Hodnefield

Darrel Ford
Dennis Vogsland
Herb Presteng

Parish Education

Marilyn Pederson
Dennis Vogsland

AFLTS

Mabel Melby
Darrel Ford (2)
Ruby Solhaug
Jo Hicks

World Missions

William Hoppe
Marilyn Pederson
Esther Oien
Oren Resendahl
Clarice Miller
Ruby Solhaug

FLAPS

Thelma Olson
Robert Olson

General Fund

Doris Sweeny
Mary Lou Sweeny
Maynard Davidson
Darrel Ford

... in honor of

AFLBS

Patty Stillwell
Marvene Larvick

World Missions

Ron Thorson

Home Missions

Laverne Swanson
Esther Oien

Association Retreat Center hosts upcoming events

A look at upcoming AFLC retreats and camps at the Association Retreat Center, Osceola, Wis.

• SIDExSIDE and Sno Daze

Dates: Feb. 4-6

SIDExSIDE is for Grades 7-12 and Sno Daze is for Grades 3-7.

Cost: \$90 if registered by Jan. 24. After Jan. 24 the cost is \$110. Discounts are available for families with more than one child attending these retreats—two-children discount of 10 percent each, three or more children discount of 15 percent each.

Speaker: Pastor Wade Mobley

• Couples' Retreat

Dates: Feb. 18-19 (20)*

Cost: \$130

• Women's Retreat

Dates: March 18-20

Cost: \$85

• Men's Retreat

Dates: April 15-16 (17)*

Cost: \$65

*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.

People and Places

Pastor Greg Lenz has resigned from serving Faith Free Lutheran, Minneapolis.

Pastor Brent Olson has accepted a call from the AFLC Schools Corporation to serve as a full-time faculty member at the Plymouth, Minn., campus. He will begin his position beginning in the fall semester after completing work on his doctorate in Old Testament studies from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo.

Pastor Tom Parrish has accepted a call to serve as senior pastor at Hope Lutheran, Minneapolis.

Pastor Andy Coyle has accepted a call to AFLC World Missions and will be placed on loan to East European Missions Network. The Coyles are currently preparing to begin a new ministry in Odessa, Ukraine, where Andy will teach at a newly founded Bible school. They will be commissioned at the AFLC Annual Conference in June.

Members of the Coordinating Committee accepted resolutions of affiliation from **True Vine Lutheran** of Mora, Minn., and **First Lutheran**, Ellendale, Minn.

Members of **Newark Lutheran**, Newark, Ill., recently celebrated the congregation's 125th anniversary.

Correction: **AFLC Family Camp** dates at the ARC were incorrectly listed in the January issue. The correct dates are July 24-30.

The AFLC World Missions Department and the **Evangelical Lutheran Church of Uganda** have decided to work separately. The decision was made so that each group can pursue their varying goals.

Pastor Tomasz and Miriam Chmiel have resigned from working with East European Missions Network. They are no longer missionaries on loan through the AFLC. They have joined Josiah Venture as missionaries in L'viv, Ukraine. Gifts to their ministry can be sent to Josiah Venture, Account No. 82041, PO Box 4317, Wheaton, IL 60189.

Family Camp at **Wilderness Bible Camp**, Lake Park, Minn., is scheduled for July 12-17.

AFLC BENEVOLENCES Jan. 1-Dec. 31, 2010

FUND	REC'D IN DECEMBER	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$43,257	\$344,248	\$327,231
Evangelism	7,193	122,473	102,508
Youth Ministries	7,001	125,393	85,434
Parish Education	15,702	116,287	104,381
Seminary	25,560	219,728	209,761
Bible School	41,670	431,768	381,808
Home Missions	50,416	402,209	365,261
World Missions	47,747	351,191	297,812
Personal Support	58,541	388,666	458,794
TOTALS	\$297,087	\$2,501,964	\$2,332,989

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

Strive to do what is best

I had a great experience being a student at the Free Lutheran Seminary; but I've had even better experiences being a part of Free Lutheran congregations. I enjoyed the time I spent on the campus of the AFLC Schools; but I've enjoyed the time I've spent in the congregations even more.

Soon after the AFLC began people believed it was crucial to start a seminary to train pastors for our congregations and a Bible school to provide college-level training in God's Word for everyone. The schools continue to be of vital importance

to our church body. Our first fundamental principle, however, has not changed: "According to the Word of God, the congregation is the right form of the Kingdom of God on earth."

The schools

exist to serve the congregations. The schools train pastors, youth workers, future Sunday school teachers, worship leaders, board members and moms and dads for participation in our congregations. The schools provide choirs and gospel teams and summer teams to help the congregations do outreach and put on vacation Bible schools. The ongoing focus of the schools is building up the congregations.

If people are having trouble in their marriages and go to a counselor for help, a good counselor encourages them to love their spouses more. If they end up respecting the counselor and enjoy spending time with the counselor, but they don't grow in love for their spouses, the counselor has failed. The schools are like a counselor and the congregation is the bride. The schools

should be helping students to love the congregation more. After two years at AFLBS, students should be more interested in being a part of an AFLC congregation and have more respect for the congregation than ever before.

It isn't easy. The music is maybe better at campus chapel services than it is in the congregation. Students may find all kinds of people their age at school, while much of the congregation is the age of their grandparents. School is being away from home. It is often new and exciting. The congregation is the place you've been all your life.

The congregation may not seem exciting, but it's where the action is when it comes to the work of God's Kingdom. The congregation is where you see parents struggle when children wander from the Lord and rejoice when they return.

The congregation is where marriages survive challenges and get restored by the Spirit of God. The congregation is where you get to see little ones brought to the Lord in baptism and taught the Word of God. In the congregation the little ones can watch people live out faith in Christ and find role models to emulate. The congregation is where you have the privilege of holding a person's hand as their physical strength fails, and remind them of Jesus' promise: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God" (John 14:1), and then watch as they end this life with peace and enter eternity with Jesus. In the congregation you get to "rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn" (Romans 12:15).

You get to know people when you spend years with them in the congregation, going through the ups and downs of life with them. You get to experience the richness and fullness of life. There is much more potential of seeing God at work in the congregation than anywhere else. There is no place on this earth that I'd rather be than to be part of a congregation.

Imagine a major league baseball player who likes going to spring training,

The congregation may not seem exciting, but it's where the action is when it comes to the work of God's Kingdom. ... You get to know people when you spend years with them in the congregation, going through the ups and downs of life with them.

but doesn't want to play in the games that count. He won't be of much value to the team.

Bible school and seminary are like training camp. Training camp matters and affects how the season goes, but congregational life is the regular season and the game that counts. We train people at the schools to prepare them to enter the game and serve the Lord in the congregations.



Pastor Craig Johnson

building the base

Being strengthened

BY PASTOR BRETT BOE

You are the new person at church. The Lord has been working in your life recently to the point that you now have the assurance that your sins are forgiven by grace through faith. Yet as you attend church week by week, which just recently seemed impossible, you look around and feel weak spiritually. You struggle to find where the book of Romans is located in the Bible while everybody around you has already flipped to the correct page. The Christians who have been going to church their whole lives seem like the spiritual equivalent of the Power Team, a group of Christian body builders who tear telephone books with their bare hands and split stacks of bricks with a chop of their beefy arms. You wonder how you can go on without making a fool of yourself in front of these spiritual giants.

The answer to your question is that one does not become a spiritual Hulk overnight. In a recent devotional time I had reading through the book of Acts, a word kept popping up that caught my attention: *strengthened*. The Apostle Paul and other spiritual leaders felt compelled to *strengthen* the souls of the disciples they had made in each

place they visited.

Acts 14:21-22 fleshes out this process: “After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith and saying, ‘Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.’”

The comfort that you, the new guy at church, can find in this example is that the Lord has provided pastors and spiritual leaders to strengthen you. In each of these verses and others, the verb *strengthened* is passive, meaning that this is something that is done *to* you and not *by* you. See the difference? The job of a pastor, much like the apostles in the book of Acts, is to see that disciples are strengthened in the faith. That was the burden Paul had for his young disciples and I’m guessing that is the same burden your pastor has for you. His sermons and Bible studies are geared to strengthen your faith.

Sure, there are things we can do to train ourselves spiritually, such as Bible reading and study, prayer, etc. But even these things are done with the power of God. “For this purpose I labor, striving according to His

power, which mightily works within me” wrote Paul in Colossians 1:29.

In his prayer for the people of God in Ephesus, Paul wrote, “that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man” (Ephesians 3:16). In Colossians 1:11 he also prayed “that you may be strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience.”

The strengthening that God provides is with all power and through the Holy Spirit. Be assured, dear friend, that God is strengthening you. He is doing this through pastors and other mature Christians who love you and are coming alongside of you. He is doing this through any contact you have with the Word of God, be it in a sermon, Bible study or your own reading. We need that strength to serve the Lord and face any trial or tribulation that comes our way.

Boe serves the Dalton, Minn., parish of Zion-Sarpsborg Lutheran, Kvam Free Lutheran and Tordenskjold Lutheran.