

THE LUTHERAN 

FEBRUARY 2012

# AMBASSADOR



*The student &*  
**THE WORD**



# As we grow, grow, grow

BY CHRISTINA OSTHUS

I graduated from our Bible school more than five years ago, but my youngest sister's senior year at AFLBS has caused me to reflect on why God wanted me there. My sister has been trying to figure that out for herself, and I have told her I suppose I don't understand each part of His purpose in my life either. I suppose it is easier for those who left Bible school with spouses or fiancés to assume they know why God sent them there, but obviously God's plan is a whole lot bigger than that. It was during my two years at AFLBS that I decided on my major and my vocation and made many wonderful friends. But really, why did God want me there?

In many ways, Bible school would seem to contain all the ideal conditions for Christian growth, wouldn't it? Students are fed from God's Word daily in classes, given many opportunities for prayer, strongly encouraged to have daily personal devotions, and required to get involved in at least one type of Christian ministry or service. How could any flower help but bud and bloom in that environment? To most Christians, a place like AFLBS is as close to a spiritual greenhouse as one can get. If you are considering Bible school, know that it is a wonderful, blessed place to be, one that God has used to break and build up many.

However, the greenhouse is not the only place that provides growth, especially if your plant is of the human variety. A plant does not just need sunlight and warmth—it needs rain, too, and may even need a chill to produce a blossom. I say this both because God has a different way that each of us will fit into His master plan and because very few of us will be called to stay in an environment like Bible school for our entire lives. God seems to lead most of us through a variety of settings to facilitate growth, from the greenhouse, to the desert, to the musty basement (or

from Bible school, to a secular university, to a summer working at a factory, in some cases).

Then there are several different types of growth that Jesus, as our gardener, has for us, and most of them fit under growth by increase and growth by decrease. Growth by increase would be the more conventional, pleasant way to grow, like the tree placidly and prosperously growing in Psalm 1. That kind of growth can certainly happen at Bible school as individuals steadily increase in knowledge, in faith, and in the fruit of the Spirit. Growth by decrease, on the other hand, is that pruning process that Jesus mentions in John 15. It is a loss of something sinful or unproductive to cleanse the vine and make it stronger. This also can happen at Bible school, as members of the community may need to give up some habits, some relationships, and some ministry opportunities in order to become stronger and rely more fully on God.

Are you where you need to be for God to help you grow? Are you in a place where you are able to hear Him? More to the point, are you making a personal effort to listen to Him? Consider AFLBS as a place to find your greenhouse or desert. Just don't assume that you know better than your gardener what kind of soil you need.

*Osthus is from Eagle Butte, S.D., and serves on the 2013 Free Lutheran Youth Committee.*



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We dare never think that it is enough if we just remain united in our faith and doctrine. No, once love has been destroyed, it won't be long before one person believes what the other person rejects, and the other teaches what the first considers an error.

—C.F.W. Walther

Christ is the wisdom of God; and in the knowledge of this Christ there is wisdom for you. Not wisdom only, but life, forgiveness, peace, glory, and an endless kingdom! Study Him! Acquaint yourself with Him! Whatever you are ignorant of, be not ignorant of Him. Whatever you overlook, overlook not Him. Whatever you lose, lose not Him. To gain Him is to gain eternal life, to gain a kingdom, to gain everlasting blessedness. To lose Him is to lose your soul, to lose God, to lose God's favour, to lose God's heaven, to lose the eternal crown!

—Horatius Bonar

Nothing can be rightly known, if God be not known; nor is any study well managed, nor to any great purpose, if God is not studied. We know little of the creature, till we know it as it stands related to the Creator ...

—Richard Baxter

When I was young, I was sure of many things; now there are only two things of which I am sure: one is, that I am a miserable sinner; and the other, that Christ is an all-sufficient Saviour. He is well-taught who learns these two lessons.

—John Newton



# EVERY DAY

By Lydia Johnson

I

am a creature of discontentment. If it's cold outside, I sulk like a Scrooge and long for the springtime. When the summer finally comes, I whine about the heat as if one more degree would suffocate me. I anticipate and

hope with the best, but my pessimistic nature rarely finds satisfaction in the reality that follows my hopes.

Before I came to the Association Free Lutheran Bible School, I longed for a fresh start, a new chance to know God like I never had before. Instead, I found that I never stopped being a mess—that “fresh starts” didn't exist. I'd learn a new truth and then have to learn it over again. This year I thought, “Alright, now that I've walked the valleys, I'm going to be stronger.” And what do you know? I continued to be the same old wreck of a human being. I began to become frustrated because I didn't gain what I anticipated, grow like I dreamed, listen like I should have. Sometimes I still despair.

But slowly I've come to recognize that learning the Word doesn't mean storing up a library's worth of God knowledge so that I become better and holier. Rather, each day starts again with the same goals: to know Jesus, to love His Truth, and to marvel at how great He is. I watched it happen as I studied the vast attributes of God, as God confronted me with the magnitude of my sin and the sweetness of His grace, and as I failed (and continually fail) Him only to see His hand picking me up again. Though I forget His truth, He allows me to relearn what I lose. All this happens as a part of learning the Word.

This school has a great responsibility and privilege to present the Word to students. The instructors have the honor of helping students see Christ and witness the LORD in all His majesty, so that each day they're flabbergasted at this God who lets them belong to Him. As they teach, our instructors have a chance to communicate the necessity of Truth. By the power of the living Scriptures, they enable students to encounter YHWH.

I get to be a part of that. Even though I may disappoint myself greatly, and teachers the same, the Scriptures will always reveal the God who cannot fall below par. This is the God I've met at AFLBS—the same God I want to meet every day of my life.

*Johnson, a senior, is from Camarillo, Calif., where her father, Pastor Jim Johnson, serves Good Shepherd Free Lutheran.*





# TEACHING THE WORD

By Pastor Joel Rolf



How important is it in the perspective of life and eternity for people to come to know Jesus Christ as their Savior and to make Him known to others? What is the value and impact of a life that is lived by faith in Jesus Christ and His Word? Sometimes, we might take for granted or underestimate the impact and value of praying parents whose passion it is to teach their children to know and love Jesus. Consider the

influence of people who live out their faith at home, in the work place, in the congregation and community. Consider the impact of pastors, Sunday school teachers, coworkers, and others God has used in your life to teach you God's Word and encourage you in the Lord. How can you calculate the value and impact they have had in your life?

Nearly 50 years ago, the early visionaries of the AFLC clearly realized the value and impact that Bible school could have in the lives of young adults. Since 1966, when the Association Free Lutheran Bible School was established, the mission has remained constant "to establish students in the eternal and inerrant Word of God for a life of faith in Jesus Christ and faithful service in His kingdom."

AFLBS has been blessed with faculty and staff through the years whose hearts are convicted that "all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (II Timothy 3:16-17).

We passionately believe and teach that God's Word is truth (John 17:17). It is a sure Word (II Peter 1:19-21). It gives faith in Christ (Romans 10:17; 1:16-17). It regenerates and transforms lives (I Peter 1:23-25). The Word of God gives hope (Romans 15:4,13). It gives direction for life (Psalm 119:9-11,105). Christ and His Word also equip us for every good work (II Timothy 3:17).

The prayerful purpose of faculty and staff alike is to teach the Word, train servants and see God transform lives. The goal is that this teaching and discipling in Christ and His Word would not be an end in itself, but that this training would be used to teach students who will, in turn, teach others (II Timothy 2:2).

Since AFLBS began, several thousand students have invested a year or two of their lives studying God's eternal Word from Genesis to Revelation. Hearts and lives have been transformed by Christ and His Word to serve Jesus in whatever vocation God calls them. The majority of students who have attended AFLBS have gone on to be spiritual leaders on college campuses, in their marriages and homes, workplaces, congregations, in this country and around the world.

God only knows the multiplied influence and impact of His Word being taught in our schools. Friends, consider the value and impact of a life that is lived by faith in Jesus Christ and His Word. Who might you encourage and help to study God's eternal Word at AFLBS?

*Rolf, dean of AFLBS, is a member of Grace Free Lutheran, Maple Grove, Minn.*





# TRAINING STUDENTS

By Michelle Olson

**I** love teenagers. In fact, I have had the privilege of working with youth at Hope Lutheran Church in Minneapolis long enough for events to be named “ninth annual” (which unfortunately can be considered a long time in the youth ministry world).

But what I really love is training others to love teenagers. My passion is training servants to do what God has called us to do. And so I love Bible school students. Part of the Bible school motto says, “training servants,” and I take advantage of it ... in a good way, of course.

I was blessed to be able to attend AFLBS. Not only did I attend, but also I was able to be a dorm assistant for two years following graduation. For a girl who said she would never go to Bible school, I sure did spend a lot of time there. Some of my favorite AFLBS memories involve serving others. A group of us went to northern Minnesota to teach a bunch of high school students for the day (these students got released from school to come to the church

to learn). Another time, a group of us went to Iowa to help with a youth outreach overnight. There was a group of us who went to Pittsburgh to participate in a youth ministry training event. And these trips (or, as I like to think of them, intensive training times) don’t even include the choir, gospel team, and summer team trips.

In my life, AFLBS help to cultivate skills and encourage a heart for others. I remember thinking during summer teams, “I can’t believe someone trusts me to travel around in a van teaching other people about Jesus. Is this really a good idea?” Not only was it a good idea, but it was and is a great idea when it comes to training servants. I learned so much that summer, from personal integrity to teaching those with disabilities to work in a team, to classroom management. AFLBS gave me opportunities to learn from the Bible and to apply its teachings in my life. It gave me a chance to do youth work, to go to various camps, and to travel the U.S. serving others.

Now every fall I get excited to go to AFLBS to meet with past volunteers and hopefully some soon-to-be volunteers. There is a huge difference between a first-year student in the fall and a second-year student in the spring, especially after serving on a summer team. It is incredible to watch these students not only mature in their faith, but also grow in their understanding of serving others. They become much more confident in Jesus and in the gifts He has given them.





# “QUOTES”

“... While the time spent in the classroom is great, you never fully grasps the information until you have the chance to apply it. Also there are just some things you can’t teach in the classroom but can only gain through experience. ...”

*Brandon Fouks, a student at the Ministry Training Institute, is from Deer Park, Wis.*

“Being a part of a local congregation is huge. When you’re at Bible school, you’re constantly being spiritually fed. Being active in the congregation is a fulfilling way of putting what you learn into practice.”

*Seth Knutson, an MTI student, is from Minot, N.D.*

“It has been a treat to get to know a new batch of Bible school students each year. Without fail they begin the year timid, reluctant, and often questioning why they are here. By the end, they are usually transformed into bold servants with a divine purpose.”

*Phil Bernards, a youth ministry volunteer at Hope Lutheran, is from Brooklyn Park, Minn.*

“... Hope Church has given me an outlet where I can apply what I am learning. ... I have had the opportunity to get plugged into their mentor program. I’m so thankful that God has placed this blessing in my life.”

*Corey Berge, a junior at AFLBS, is from Maple Grove, Minn.*

“When training servants, it is important to try to imitate Christ in all you do. Serving is a major part, and helping at youth groups has taught me the importance of following Christ. ... It is important to serve because it helps our witness and points to the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

*Dennis Gothier, an AFLBS junior, is from Laurel, Neb.*

“Working with the youth does help train us as servants as well as training the youth to be servants. It helps us as leaders because we have to read our lesson and be in the Word and then relay that to the youth and hope it is instilled in their hearts.”

*Natasha Niederloh, a youth ministry volunteer at Hope Lutheran, is from Champlin, Minn.*

“Serving in my local congregation has been an amazing experience. Sometimes this is not easy since we need discipline, encouragement, and patience to lead with people. However, the fact of knowing that we are setting the seed of God’s Word is an amazing experience, which can’t be expressed only with words, but we can feel in our hearts.”

*Andres Chinchin, an AFLBS junior, is from Quito, Ecuador.*

# TO SERVE

When I think of AFLBS students I think of Nate, Mike, Josh, Micah, Rachel, Arika, Jess, Harry, Christina, Emily, David, Amanda, Matt, Katie, Ashley, Cassandra, Mark, Jodi, Justin, Sam, Dan, Ryan, Tim, Esther, Nick, Jeremy, Jake, Ryan, Sarah, Vika, Brianne, Fevon, Travis, Wayne, Caleb, Drew, Greg, John, Brandon, Rikke, Charles, Tyler, Savannah, Shane, Laura, Andrew, Corey, Thomas, Hannah, Andres, Seth, Daniel, Julia, Luke, Peder, Jeremiah, Kevin, Emily, and Jenn. And these are just some of the AFLBS students who have served our local congregation since I have been at Hope Church. These students have been a blessing to me, to our youth, to our church, and to our community. It is amazing to think about the lives that have been touched by using their gifts and taking the opportunity to serve Jesus by serving others.

James 1:22 says that we are to be doers of the Word and not just hearers. In a Bible school environment, there are many opportunities to be hearers. A student hears the Word at least four hours every morning at AFLBS. But Scripture is clear: we are to be doers as well. I am thankful that AFLBS requires students to earn a Christian service credit. We are blessed to have a school that emphasizes training servants.

*Olson, a 2001 graduate of AFLBS, is the youth ministry director at Hope Lutheran, Minneapolis, where she has served for nine years.*







# TRANSFORMING LIVES

By Jordan Rumohr

H

aving grown up not knowing Christ, I remember one thing that I never wanted to do: live in a big city. Life in Upper Michigan was wonderful with its beautiful forests, snowy winters, and best of all, few people. Shortly after coming to Christ, however, I realized that dealing with people was something I'd have to get used to if I were to take part in His work.

But this leads to the second thing I didn't want to do: go to Bible school. Nerds went to Bible school, not me. But God had other plans for me, and Bible school was to be a big part of them.

In the spring of 2007 I left small town life and headed for the campus of the Association Free Lutheran Bible School. I expected God would do wonderful things there, and I looked forward to growing in His Word, and making lasting friendships. I remembered testimonies of those who had gone to Bible school before me, how God had humbled them. I remember very distinctly thinking, "I'm glad God doesn't have to do that with me ..."

Obviously, God did have to do that with me. Early on, God began to work on my pride. He showed me with John 15:16 that I am not my own. It was He who had chosen me, I did not choose Him. He began to grow in me the desire to serve Him with my whole life—to do whatever He would call me to do.

It was during my second year at Bible school that God lead me to apply for the Ministry Training Institute. I had originally planned on taking the aviation track. Ever since I was little, I've always wanted to be a pilot. I thought that this would be my chance, but again, God had other plans. I realized that I wanted to fly airplanes more than I wanted to serve

God, more than I wanted to see others come to Christ. God had to change that in my heart. So I agreed to spend my internship in Naknek, Alaska, putting into practice the things I had learned in Bible school. Theology became practical. His Word really does what He says it does. Being a part of the ministry up there is a cherished part of my memories. We were so privileged to see God pull people into His Kingdom whom I would have written off as hopeless. And then I remember that's what He did with me. He was preparing me for another step.

I had been given the opportunity to join the Parish Building program with AFLC Home Missions. But I wouldn't be serving in the Midwest, or in the little town of Naknek that I had grown to love so dearly, but in Mesa, Ariz. I struggled with the decision for quite some time. My girlfriend at the time was also a parish builder in Mesa. I was excited for the opportunity to work there with her, but at the same time, didn't want my only motive for going there to be her. God had great plans, however, and allowed this all to take place. For this I am very

thankful, as she is now my wife.

As a parish builder, I am constantly turning back to the things God taught me while at Bible school. The foundation I was given and the training I received are indispensable. Whether it's teaching a Bible study, leading praise and worship, or simply interacting with people on a personal level, I am always relying on those things.

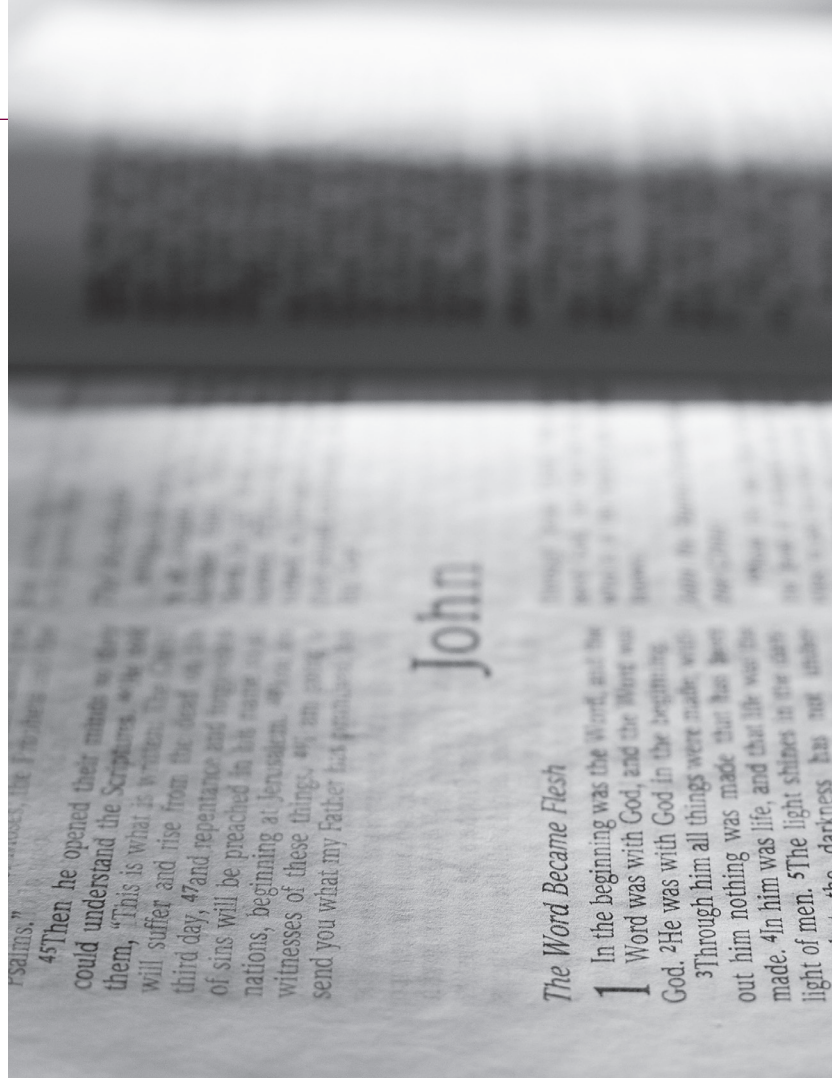
"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work" (II Timothy 3:16-17). It is no secret that the success of the Bible school has nothing to do with itself, the students, or even the teachers. It is the very Word of God that is effective for transforming lives. We cling to the Word because God is faithful, and promises to do what He says.

*Rumohr, a 2009 graduate of AFLBS and 2010 graduate of MTI, serves Calvary Free Lutheran in Mesa, Ariz., as a Home Missions parish builder. He is originally from Champion, Mich.*



# THE WORD BECAME FLESH

By Pastor Martin Horn



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he motto—“The Word Became Flesh”—was chosen for our seminary to reflect the foundational beliefs and values of the AFLC and to shape the ministry of the seminary.

The mission of the AFLC as a whole is to foster and serve “Free and Living Congregations.” But we recognize that freedom and life are not the product of human wisdom, human effort, organizational skills, or charisma. Freedom and life come only through the power of the gospel, which is the message of the life, suffering, and death of Christ. Therefore, the role of the seminary in the AFLC is to send out men prepared to serve the congregations through the

preaching of this gospel.

Why was John 1:14, “The Word Became Flesh,” chosen as the motto of our school? Because these few words are the summary of the gospel, which is the focus of our school and which is necessary for the very life of our congregations. It is this very message that shapes the purpose of our school.

In John 1:14, John explains the incarnation, one of the essential and foundational doctrines of the Christian faith. God the Son, as John said in

verse 1, who was co-eternal with the Father and through whom all things were made, now humbles Himself and becomes flesh.

John is sparse with his words, but he is also precise. Note the word “became.” Christ became flesh. Christ did not simply put on human flesh like we would put on an overcoat, but He really and substantially became flesh.

Note also John’s use of the word “flesh.” He could easily have used the word “man,” and the phrase would still convey the meaning of the incarnation: “The word became man.” But flesh conveys something more: the deep humiliation of Christ in the incarnation. In Scripture, “flesh” is man in all his weakness and frailty. Jesus condescended to leave His glory and become

flesh and thus submit himself to human sickness, human suffering and human death. Isaiah describes the weakness of human flesh so well, “All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass” (Isaiah 40:6-7).

What is the significance of the incarnation? It is that the “Word became flesh” is the cornerstone of our salvation. Our Catechism asks, “Why did the Son of God become true man?” The answer: “In order that He might suffer and die for us.” In Hebrews 10:19-20, we are told that Christ opened the way into the presence of the Father “through the flesh.” Our redemption was accomplished through the flesh. Christ suf-





fered in the flesh, He bled in the flesh, and He died in the flesh. Therefore the gospel is simply the message of the incarnate Christ.

What is the significance of these words for our seminary and the training of pastors? A little history is in order.

“The Word Became Flesh,” or *Ordet Blev Kjødet* in Norwegian, was originally the motto of Augsburg Seminary. Established in 1869, Augsburg was first the seminary of the Norwegian Danish Lutheran Conference, and then later of the Lutheran Free Church. When the AFLC, composed of former Lutheran Free Church congregations, formed its own seminary in 1964, it was only natural for the founders to adopt the same motto.

Georg Sverdrup, the long-

time president of Augsburg Seminary and one of the founders of the Lutheran Free Church, wrote extensively on the training of pastors, and several times commented on Augsburg’s theme.

In his “Principles of Augsburg,” Sverdrup writes that the power of all human religion is fear. The priests of heathen religions use this fear to control the people for their own benefit and aggrandizement. Thus religion only enslaves.

Christianity is different. Christianity is not a power of fear that binds the hearts of men, but a power that breaks the bonds of fear and sets the believers free. The incarnate Christ, the “Word become flesh,” has come down to earth to mediate between God and man through His death on the

cross. Where this message is proclaimed, hearts are set free. Thus the Christian ministry is not a ministry of controlling the congregation through fear, but of proclaiming the freeing power of the Christ incarnate.

In his Seminary Annual Report from 1887, Sverdrup observed that some Lutheran pastors sought to emphasize pure doctrine and others holy living in their congregation. Although Sverdrup believed that both correct doctrine and holy living are important in the congregation, neither will “gather” or build up the congregation. Only the preaching of the Word, and specifically the message of the incarnate Christ, will bring life and freedom in the congregation.

What does “The Word Became Flesh” mean for our

seminary? God’s Word, and specifically the gospel of the incarnate Christ, is the focus of our seminary. The entire program of our seminary is built around this one purpose: to prepare men to bring the gospel, the message of the incarnate Christ, to the congregation. There are many issues that must be dealt with in the seminary curriculum—but all of them support the preaching of the gospel. When this is done, then the congregations will be served, and true freedom and life will be brought into the congregation.

*Horn, the chairman of the AFLC Schools Board of Trustees, serves Emmanuel Lutheran and Hauge Lutheran in Kenyon, Minn.*







# BACK ON CAMPUS

By Jarrod Hylden



As a 2007 graduate of AFLBS and a first-year student at AFLTS, I want to share my perspective as a student of theology and God's grace for me along the way. I first felt "the inner call" to full-time ministry when I was in confirmation. After spending several years in denial, it eventually became certain that pastoral ministry was to be my vocation.

This being the case, attending the Bible school seemed like a good idea to me. As a high school student I attended AFLBS Campus Days, where I played Ultimate Frisbee, competed in the men's dorm version of wrestle mania, and experienced half-priced appetizers at Applebee's for the first time. AFLBS, here I come!

Life as a real student at AFLBS, while it contained all those things, was slightly less euphoric. However, it was formative. It was probably as close as I'll ever get to following the example of the first Christians in Acts 2:42, "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."

The training I received at AFLBS was instrumental to being a witness for Christ at a "real" college. Between the gospel that *grasped* me in Pastor Phil Haugen's course, "Romans and Galatians," and the evangelism training I received from Pastor Jim Rasmussen, there was a fire lit in my heart to share

the good news of Jesus Christ with my peers at Concordia College in Moorhead, Minn. Studying the Bible at AFLBS helped immensely as I led Bible studies at Concordia.

After a brief honeymoon of successful campus ministry, I quickly realized that developing and maintaining an evangelical ministry at a college was not without hardships. However, at Concordia I also learned that prayer groups are forces to be reckoned with and I saw firsthand that the gospel truly is the power of God for salvation. As a freshman, I knew of one evangelical small group Bible study. When I left there were more than 20 small groups as well as one large campus worship service led each Monday night by evangelical believers. I hope my experience with campus ministry will positively influence my approach to pastoral ministry.

Coming back to the campus on Medicine Lake for seminary training has been refreshing. It's wonderful to get back to studying the Bible and Lutheran theology as a full-time student.

In seminary, the work load is certainly much heavier than it was at AFLBS (there is much less time for Ultimate Frisbee and wrestle mania). Using Acts 2:42 as a model, I would say my experience at Bible school was fellowship-heavy and my experience at seminary is weighted in favor of studying the apostles' teaching. The instructors interact with the original languages of the Scriptures and assign theological books and articles to supplement our study of the Bible. Although it is hard work, it's rewarding to be pushed academically. Our future parishioners deserve to have scholarly pastors who have a firm foundation in the Scriptures and Lutheran theology, and who are able to engage with competing theological trends.

Although the seminarians' fellowship doesn't last long into the night as with the Bible school students, it is sweet fellowship nonetheless. Each morning before classes begin, a seminary student leads the students and faculty in devotions. In conclusion of this devotional time, we all kneel and pray together for three congregations and one missionary family. Nothing has made me happier to be part of the AFLC than knowing that our current and future church leaders are praying for the flock each day.

When I think back on my AFLBS days I remember choir tour, Taco Bell runs, and staying up late with my friends in the dorm. Thinking back on my first semester of seminary, I recall the rich experience of reading C.F.W. Walther's *Law and*

*Gospel* and Sidney Greidanus' *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, along with the Scriptures themselves. The rewarding task of serious theological study makes me wish that I was pushed harder academically while at AFLBS. On the other hand, there have been times this past semester when I've craved a late-night *chalupa* or two and I would give anything to be reunited with my AFLBS men's quartet for one last song.

Studying Lutheran theology is a blessing because it is so Christ-centered. John Theodore Mueller's *Christian Dogmatics* (our systematic theology text) rightly states, "The purpose of sacred theology ... is to lead perishing souls to Christ and through Him to communion with the true God." By God's grace, it is now clear to me that I am not here to become a learned scholar, a pious man, or a relevant and dynamic leader; but, I am here preparing to be a servant of Christ and a herald of the gospel of free grace for the salvation of sinners.

*Hylden, a junior at AFLTS, is originally from Park River, N.D. He is a 2007 graduate of AFLBS and currently serves as the men's resident head.*



# A PART OF GOD'S WORK

By Dr. Dan Mundfrom

M

My connection to our Bible school began when my brother, John, enrolled in the fall of 1968. During his two years of attendance I had several opportunities to visit the campus and interact with other students. I knew long before I graduated from high school in 1971 that I was going to Bible school.

When I arrived on campus that fall, I already knew several students from summer Bible camps, Luther League activities, and my home church. In the fall of 1972 I met my future wife, Elaine Strand. As the years passed all six Mundfrom siblings and all eight Strand siblings attended AFLBS. In addition, four of my siblings and five of Elaine's are married to Bible school graduates. The Bible school became an integral part of all our lives, and we developed a deep love for AFLBS and its ministry.

Eventually, all four of our children attended Bible school, as well, and at the latest count, ten nephews and three nieces have studied there. I believe that more will come in future years. At present, one of our children, two nephews and one niece have spouses who attended Bible school. AFLBS gave us opportunities to sing in choirs, participate on sports teams, travel with gospel teams, and

serve on summer teams, but most importantly God used the Bible school to ground us and grow us in His Word. We look back on those days with fond memories and great affection for the school and the friends we made there. I also have family connections to the seminary. Both of my brothers and two brothers-in-law are graduates of AFLTS. There clearly has been and still are strong ties from our family to our AFLC schools.

My ties to both schools were strengthened in the summer of 2000 when I was elected to the AFLC Schools Board of Trustees, and for the next 11 years I had the privilege of serving on that board. This service involved meetings 10 or 11 times a year, which in and of itself is a major time commitment. There was work to be done outside the meetings in preparation for or in response to what transpired during those meetings. In addition to the business conducted at each meeting, there was am-

ple opportunity for fellowship with the schools' faculty, staff and trustees, many of whom I now count among my best friends. Despite the amount of time and work involved, I can honestly say that I looked forward to those meetings each month and the time spent with those friends and fellow laborers for Christ.

But as great as that fellowship was, by far the most rewarding aspect of serving on the Board of Trustees was to see firsthand and be a part of the work that God is doing in our schools. It was encouraging to interact with the deans, faculty, staff, and students and hear how God was working in and through their lives. During my time on the board, friends have often thanked me for my service. In response I've said, "The schools and the work God has done and is doing there have been a blessing to me and my family. It is an honor and privilege to be able to give something back."

I fully realize that my circumstances were not the same as what many people have. During those 11 years I worked for different employers under several supervisors. All were supportive of my involvement on the board and willingly allowed me the time away from work to attend meetings, etc. I believe that if God has work for you to do, He can also take care of the details. I am grateful

that He placed me in situations which allowed me to serve Him.

My connection to and involvement with the schools didn't begin with my service on the board, and it hasn't ended there either. The Bible school and seminary will always hold a special place in my heart and in the hearts of my family members. As long as God's Word is taught and His presence is sought and honored there, I will continue to support the work they do and would welcome the opportunity to serve again.

Someday you may be asked to serve on a board or committee of the AFLC. I strongly encourage you to consider doing so. It will be rewarding, tiring, uplifting, time-consuming, and a blessing for you, and it will be an encouragement for those with whom you serve. You will make new friends and deepen existing friendships. You will be challenged as you wrestle with difficult decisions, and you will grow in your faith and trust in the Lord to supply the needs before you in His time and according to His will. And when your service tenure ends, perhaps you will be able to say with me, that "it was the single most rewarding experience of my life." May God be praised.

*Mundfrom, Richmond, Ky., served for 11 years on the AFLC Schools Board of Trustees. He is a professor of statistics at Eastern Kentucky University.*









# Imitating faith

BY MARY ANN WARD

*"Remember your leaders, who spoke the Word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Hebrews 13:7-8).*

**I**t is with great excitement and thankfulness to God that the Women's Missionary Federation is preparing to host a Women's Retreat March 23-25 at the Association Retreat Center near Osceola, Wis., to celebrate 50 years of the WMF of the AFLC. We will meet under the theme, "Jesus: Yesterday, Today, Forever," taken from Hebrews 13:7-8.

As we prepare to celebrate 50 years of faithfulness from God, it is our desire as a national WMF to continue to introduce others to Jesus. I am reminded of the first generation of ladies who had the desire to begin the WMF 50 years ago. Each one of them had a legacy to pass on to the next generation and laid the groundwork for the WMF today. Psalm 145:4 describes that legacy, "One generation shall praise Thy works to another, and shall declare Thy mighty acts." We can all tell that wonderful story of Jesus and His love, and the forgiveness of our sins. A life in Christ creates a life of meaning and purpose; we have a promise of a home in heaven.

We all like to look back at old photo albums. Do you have a picture in yours of a person holding a Bible? Or, maybe there is a

picture of a grandparent in a chair with a child on his or her lap reading the Bible to that child. That is the picture I see when I read Psalm 145:4. It is an example of people creating a legacy to pass on. Those living in the present generations need to listen to stories from those who have lived in past generations. They will tell you about hardships, tell you stories of blessings, and will share with you how God has sustained them, thus strengthening their faith.

Start today. Be the person sitting in a chair who reads the Bible to a younger person. Begin having family devotions. Get involved in your church. Every church has families who need to be mentored so they can create a legacy for their family. In Christ, we can begin influencing lives for the better as we speak and act in a way that glorifies Him. As we learn to trust the God of yesterday, His love and grace will sustain us today, and forever.

Registration forms for the Women's Retreat planned for March has been published in several publications of the WMF, including the *Helping Hand*, on the WMF Web site ([www.aflc.org/women](http://www.aflc.org/women)), and in the WMF e-news. Plan ways you can encourage women from your congregation to attend this special celebration retreat. Consider doing some fundraisers to alleviate some of the expense for those who cannot afford to go.

*Ward, Ottawa, Ill., is the communications secretary for the WMF.*





# WATERS IN THE WILDERNESS

## FEBRUARY 3

“Notwithstanding in this rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven” (Luke 10:20).

**T**he seventy disciples had returned from a field trip, and brought to Jesus an exciting account of their success. Even the devils had yielded ground before them.

Yes, the seventy gave Jesus credit, saying that at His Name the devils fled; but Jesus, so wise and understanding, knew they had a problem; therefore He told them that their true source of rejoicing must be that their names were written in heaven, not their success in spiritual work.

Three-year-old Linda sat watching the moon. It was so big and seemed almost within reach. To Linda it looked like a fairy land. So she said to her father sitting nearby: “Daddy, I want to go to the moon.”

Daddy explained that the moon was much farther away than it seemed; but Linda insisted that he was not even trying, that he should bring out the dining room table, pile another table on it, then get all the chairs in the house on top of each other. Linda became very unhappy when her father would not cooperate.

Followers of Jesus may sometimes “reach for the moon” by being too ambitious for themselves. Then God reminds them that the greatest in their experience is their personal salvation, His love and ministry to them.

Someday our address, as well as our name, will be in heaven.

By Rev. Karl Stendal, 1907-1989

*Waters in the Wilderness* is a daily devotional published by the AFLC Board of Parish Education in 1971 with Dr. Iver Olson, editor. All 365 meditations were contributed by AFLC members from many walks of life. “Here, they offer each a glass of cool and refreshing water each day to thirsting souls,” wrote Olson in the preface. Reprinted by permission. The volume is out of print.





# Real hope for our world

BY PASTOR MARLIN HARRIS

Jesus says in Matthew 28:19-20, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” If we take this seriously, the discipleship battle for men’s souls will be never ending.

Some time ago, as a young Air Force chaplain, I was stationed at Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines. President Ferdinand Marcos was removed from office, and I will never forget the turmoil that act brought to the country. Americans became the target for Communist Sparrow Units. One day, these units killed three Americans while they were on their way home from the base. Missionaries from the hill country also shared stories of being held at gun point.

While I was stationed at Tinker Air Force Base in Oklahoma City, Okla., in 1995, the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building was bombed and lives were lost. Then, shortly before retiring from the Air Force, the terror attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, happened. As a hospice chaplain, patients and family members constantly asked, “Why me?”

Just recently in the Mora, Minn., community where I serve as a parish pastor, three people were killed in a house fire. Questions were raised such as, “Where is God?” and, “Does anybody care?”

In times of turmoil and doubt, being a true disciple and follower of the one true God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is critical. Christ’s redemptive power is at work. Jesus Christ gives the invitation to “all you who are heavy laden, I will give you rest.” We need to trust God especially when things don’t make sense.

I Peter 5:7 tells us, “Cast your cares on Him for He cares for you.” Romans 5:1-5 also offers us much hope, “Therefore, since we

have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.”

This message is meant for all. It must find meaning in each life. Today you can bring to the Lord your every concern and worry. God has the power through His Holy Spirit to replace those things which cause you disturbance. Bring before Him all your fears and heartaches.

Hospice patients who are believers and trust in God generally are more hopeful and at peace with the death process than those who do not believe. Every care and concern can be laid at Jesus’ feet. Within each person is a human soul which God has the power to change and redeem.

Having grasped what this can mean to you personally, you will want to take up the challenge of going into the world to make everyone His disciple. You will want to share this good news. You may never serve in the military or on an overseas mission field or as an institutional chaplain, but God asks you to serve Him wherever He has planted you. As a child of God, you have the opportunity to share the love and good news that Jesus died on the cross to forgive sins.

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Romans 15:13).

*Harris serves True Vine Lutheran, Mora, Minn.*



# A different perspective

BY PASTOR KEVIN OLSON

Sospeter stood outside of his house. It was a cement house, which was good, but it had a large crack in the side that he pointed out.

"How can I get this fixed?" he asked.

Meanwhile, his four children ran around the yard in worn-out clothing and his bicycle had a flat tire. His needs alone seemed overwhelming, not to mention those of the community and his neighbors all around him.

"How can we help?" That is a question that we must continue to answer. Perhaps that question also applies to our own lives. We can easily see the needs in Sospeter's life, but do we see the needs all around us?

When that question is posed in other countries, there are several sources that people turn to for an answer. Some see economic development within the country as the solution. If companies do well, then citizens have jobs, and their standard of living can increase. For companies to do well there needs to be the infrastructure of roads, electricity, water and a means for import and export. But improving economic development is often perceived as a solution coming from an outside source with no personal responsibility.

Another potential source is political stability. If government corruption could be eliminated or warring factions could be at peace, then citizens would be able to improve their situations. The wasted energy or resources that go into fighting could be used for building up rather than tearing down. The motivation for helping the masses or finding peace with an enemy does not come naturally from the heart of man. People justify their own actions rather than putting others first.

A third potential source is relief. Relief can come from many sources, but it is directed toward a person's temporary needs such as medicine, food or shelter. Helping people survive can seem like the only caring response to people in need. Everyone needs help sometime in life to keep from spinning downward out of control. Yet relief can cause dependency and a poverty cycle all of its own.

A fourth solution is possible. It comes from an outside source, yet requires personal responsibility. The motivation to help others before one's self comes from a character change on the inside rather than a large organization. Change in character can bring tangible relief to people.

The help that is needed for citizens in other countries is the same help that is needed in our own country and in our own lives. It is the transformation of individual lives by the power of God. He is the one who made us each unique with talents with which we can work to serve others. The Holy Spirit is the one who works on the inside of people, growing our character and convicting us of pride, greed and temptations. It is the love of Jesus displayed on the cross that causes the heart of man to love one's neighbor.

The needs that other countries face are the same as what we face in the United States, whether they are economic, political or physical. The solution for all of us is found in Jesus. He said, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these my brothers of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40).



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





## Winter events at Schools campus

December and January were busy months on the campus of the AFLC Schools in Plymouth, Minn. The schools hosted a weekend of Christmas concerts in mid-December, along with an open house and gospel team concert for students' family members and friends. The Bible school faculty and staff surprised its students with a late-night pancake feed the night before finals began. In January, the Schools hosted a three-week J-term followed by a Missions Conference during the last week of January.

TOP: Andrew Horn and Steven Peterson were part of discussion group during the J-term class on Biblical Worldview. TOP RIGHT: Pastor Timothy Skramstad taught a J-term class on Biblical Counseling. MIDDLE RIGHT: Senior Kyle Smith takes notes during the class. LOWER RIGHT: The faculty and staff of AFLBS serenaded the students during O Pancake Night. BOTTOM RIGHT: Matt Grothe and Sean Buchfink prepare to eat their pancakes.





TOP: The men's quartet (Jacob Neufeld, Andrew Strand, Tim Papillon, and Regan Ades) close the gospel team concert with one last song.

MIDDLE LEFT: Naomi Demsky (Rochester, Minn.) plays the role of a naughty child during a skit performed at the gospel team concert.

MIDDLE RIGHT: Student Development Director Chad Friestad addresses family members and friends during the gospel team concert.

LEFT: Kate Barsness, Carissa Quanbeck and Luke Westlake take notes during the J-term class on Evangelism, taught by Pastor Jim Rasmussen.



## AFLC memorials: December

### AFLBS

Ruth Claus  
Darlene Wolla  
Elwood Olson  
Donovan Eide  
Gloria Hill  
Don Ian  
Tucker Bomgartner  
Ernie Wolla  
Ernest Lee  
Barb Wentzel  
Lyell Johnson  
Carl Finstrom  
Margaret Floan

### AFLTS

Ragnold & Martha Softing  
Elna Cook  
Diane Iverson  
Isabelle Tordson  
Gladys Williams  
Sylvia Bergsrud  
Margaret Westin  
Ethel Lhotka

### Evangelism

Esther Burrows  
Doris Kay Sweeny

### FLAPS

Robert A. Olson

### General Fund

Barb Wentzel

### Home Missions

Bud Dutcher  
Ragnold & Martha Softing  
Arlis Fixen  
Shawn Glinz  
Rudy Barstad

### World Missions

Ragnold & Martha Softing  
Barb Wentzel  
Herman Hofstad  
Vivian Otto  
Sue Nelson

### Youth Ministry

Mary Lou Sweeny  
Sheldon Knutson

... in honor of

### Home Missions

Jody & Sean Dianchrist  
Pastor Rodger & Helene Olson

### Youth Ministry

Boyd Mortenson

## People and Places

A memorial service for **Pastor William Olson**, who died on New Year's Eve, was held Jan. 15 at St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Indianapolis, Ind., where he has served for the past four years. He previously served Peace Lutheran Church, Crescent City, Fla., of which he was the founding pastor.

**Pastor Robert Lee**, editor of *The Lutheran Ambassador* and AFLC Schools church history professor, has been asked to lead a "Roots of Faith" tour to Norway July 6-17. For further information, e-mail Tours@BrekkeTours.com or contact Pastor Lee at rlee@aflc.org.

**Pastor Harvey Jackson** is currently a resident at the Good Samaritan Home, Park River, N.D.

**Jerry and Terry Nelson** have completed their time as Home Missions Parish Builders at Good Shepherd Free Lutheran in Camarillo, Calif., as of Dec. 31, 2011.

**Pastor S. Jerome Elness** has resigned as pastor at Our Redeemer's Free Lutheran, Superior, Wis., where he has faithfully served as a part-time pastor for 16 years. His last service was on Dec. 25, 2011.

The Home Missions work on Naknek, Alaska, has begun publishing a quarterly newsletter titled, *Naknek, Alaska Mission News*. The first issue was published in January. To receive the newsletter, contact AFLC Home Missions at homemis@aflc.org.

**Pastor Ray Persson** died Dec. 2, 2011, in Astoria, Ore. Pastor Persson served AFLC congregations in Astoria, Bemidji, Minn., Boscobel, Wis., and interim work in Lake Stevens, Wash. He also served other congregations and was involved in various ministries during his 50-plus years of service in the ministry. Pastor Persson had a special concern for and interest in the ministry of the local rescue mission and jail ministry. He was preceded in death by his wife, Doris Persson, and is survived by his son and daughter-in-law, Paul and Lois Persson of Portage, Wis., and his daughter and son-in-law, Pauline and Bill Moberg of Astoria, as well as six grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. A memorial service was held on Dec. 8, 2011, at Bethany Lutheran, Astoria.

**Pastor Michael Johnson**, Brandon, Minn., was inited in marriage on Dec. 10, 2011, to Gracia Anderson, daughter of martha Anderson and the late Pastor Emmerson Anderson.

## Offer for new subscribers in 2012

Members of the AFLC Coordinating Committee recently voted to offer a one-year subscription to *The Lutheran Ambassador* for 2012 for new subscribers at half the regular rate of \$20/year. This would be a great opportunity for our readers to order gift subscriptions for some who might not be acquainted with the magazine.

## Retreat center to host events

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

### • Couple's Retreat

Dates: Feb. 17-18 (19)\*  
Cost: \$130

### • Women's Retreat

Dates: March 23-25

### • Men's Retreat

Dates: April 20-21 (22)\*  
Cost: \$65

\*Denotes the option of an extra night stay. For more information on camps and retreats, 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](http://www.arc-aflc.org) for more information.

## AFLC BENEVOLENCES Jan. 1-Dec. 31, 2011

FUND	REC'D IN DECEMBER	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$49,080	\$341,210	\$344,248
Evangelism	18,689	132,343	122,473
Youth Ministries	16,157	123,847	125,393
Parish Education	14,009	132,303	116,287
Seminary	32,759	235,065	219,728
Bible School	48,603	453,205	431,968
Home Missions	75,622	481,204	465,338
World Missions	44,142	428,532	351,361
Personal Support	77,184	442,259	389,431
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$376,244</b>	<b>\$2,769,968</b>	<b>\$2,566,228</b>

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



# The heart of the AFLC

Some of our readers may recall a television series from the 1950s, narrated by Walter Cronkite, entitled, "You Are There." It consisted of dramatic reenactments of various important events in history, presented as if the viewers were actually eye-witnesses of the events.

Well, the title of this series came to mind while reflecting on the beginnings of our AFLC schools, because I really was there. A Seminary and Doctrine Committee was elected at the 1962 organizational conference in Thief River Falls, Minn., and the following statement was adopted:



Pastor Robert Lee

*We live in a day when we must more earnestly than ever contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. The Word of God will need to be set forth*

*clearly while about us reigns much theological confusion. It is in His will that God shall give us faithful servants for the days ahead, for we realize that the heart of any kingdom work lies in such an institution as shall train our youth to be good pastors, teachers, and church leaders.*

The recommendation was to begin seminary work by the next fall, but it would be two years before the Medicine Lake campus was acquired and faculty and a student body assembled. It was at the 1966 Annual Conference, meeting again in Thief River Falls, that a resolution was approved to begin Bible school classes in

the fall, and Raymond and Olive Jacobson would travel among our congregations in their camper truck during the summer months to recruit the first student body of 13 young men and women. Then our AFLC schools program was complete.

Please note the words in the 1962 statement: "the heart of any kingdom work lies in such an institution." This certainly was true for our former church body, the Lutheran Free Church, which actually was born out of Augsburg Seminary and shaped by that institution through its years of existence. Members of other Lutheran church bodies professed the same love and loyalty for their schools.

Your editor is taking this opportunity, with all due respect to our founders, to challenge the conviction that our schools are the heart of the AFLC.

Please do not misunderstand and doubt my commitment to our seminary and Bible school. A significant portion of my ministry has been devoted to teaching in these institutions, for which I am very grateful, but an honest appraisal of the past should cause us to seriously reconsider what the heart of a church fellowship ought to be.

There is a sense of betrayal felt by many of us when we think of our relationship to church colleges and seminaries in previous affiliations that once stood foursquare on the infallible Word of God but gradually compromised and lost that precious heritage. (A book entitled *The Dying of the Light* by James Burt Schaefer documents this process, and shows that this erosion was not unique to Lutheran institutions.) Those of us from the Lutheran Free Church were urged to merge with

other Lutherans, regardless of our different polity, out of love for our schools so that they would have a brighter future supported by a much larger constituency.

Our debt as an association to the seminary and Bible school is immense, and gratitude to God is a most proper response as we emphasize them in this issue. The legacy of our schools is an imperfect one, of course, because it is a human one, but it was recently my privilege to visit with members of one congregation where they spoke so positively of the gifted graduate

*Yet the heart of the AFLC is not institutions, nor is it ministries or programs.*

of our seminary who is their pastor, and of several Bible school graduates who are providing lay leadership in many of the congregation's programs. May their numbers increase!

Yet the heart of the AFLC is not institutions, nor is it ministries or programs. All of our common endeavors exist for the primary purpose of serving our congregations, which must always be the heart of our fellowship. The first of our Fundamental Principles is foundational: "According to the Word of God, the congregation is the right form of the Kingdom of God on earth." And as our family of ministries serve the congregations, they serve the Lord of the Church. All glory to Him!



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*building the base*

# ‘In the beginning God’

BY PASTOR GENE SUNDBY

**T**his is not a study in Genesis, nor of creation, but, it is an account of the beginning of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations (AFLC), written by a man who once was young but now is 50 years older.

God, of course, did not have a beginning, but the first four words in Genesis are, “In the beginning God.” This speaks to us of major decisions made by God, even before the foundation of our world, to save fallen mankind by sending His Son to be our Savior by His subsequent life, death, resurrection and ascension. His story continues to our present and will continue until Jesus comes, in the clouds, to claim His bride and wrap up the history of our present world.

In a much less significant way, “In the beginning God” is also true of the beginnings of the AFLC. Long before October 1962, God had been at work in the hearts of young and old, convicting and convincing that all was not right in the Lutheran Free Church (LFC). The LFC was not an old entity, having been formed in 1897 during a major revival. But at the age of 65 it was headed for the dust bin of history unless God would work a miracle through a faithful remnant. God was ready to act, but was the remnant?

Those in leadership of the LFC were, for the most part, not sympathetic to those who were concerned and, in fact, very determined to proceed with the merger even when it meant changing the “Rules for Work” in order to win the next vote. This illegal tactic was employed more than once, and finally resulted in the decision

to merge. However, this maneuvering stiffened the resolve of the remnant to take action, and thus, about 10 months after the merger was approved, the founding conference of what became the AFLC took place in October 1962.

As is usual, all the talkers were not doers, and thus the original group consisted of about 48 mostly small congregations. This grew to about 75 in a few months. One must remember that these were sometimes remnants of divided congregations and parishes.

It is almost impossible to imagine the hurdles this group faced. Everything was gone: schools, missions, publishing, and the list goes on. As well, there was no experienced leadership. Eventually even the name—(LFC)—was taken away. Daunting, impossible, hopeless? For this little flock, yes. For God, no. Remember, He had already been at work preparing and equipping a people to do the impossible.

During 2012, the 50 year Jubilee of the AFLC, in three successive articles I will attempt to inform you about how God rose up to build, and how it was marvelous in our eyes. How He blessed the AFLC still astounds us who lived through those glory days. To Him be the honor and glory now and forever more. Amen.

*Sundby, Outlook, Saskatchewan, Canada, is the past president of the AFLC-Canada. He is a member of Bethlehem Lutheran, Haywarden, Saskatchewan.*