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LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

SANCTITY
Of LIFE





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EDITOR

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rlee@aflc.org

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ruthg@aflc.org

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763-545-5631
luthamb@aflc.org

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ENCOURAGING WORD

WHAT THE SOUL NEEDS

BY PASTOR STEVE SNIPSTEAD

I picked up an ear worm the other day. I made the mistake of listening to a recording by the vocal group, Home Free, doing a remake with the Oak Ridge Boys of their hit song, “Elvira.” Now I’m listening to all kinds of other music to get this tune out of my head.

About the same time I picked up another kind of worm. I’m not sure what to call it, a “mind worm” maybe, or a “soul worm.” This persistent thought is a quote recorded by author John Ortberg in his book *Soul Keeping* from his mentor and teacher Dallas Willard on how to have a healthy soul: “You must arrange your days so that you are experiencing deep contentment, joy, and confidence in your everyday life with God.”

When I read it I had to stop and put my book down. The thought warmed and encouraged me. God wants for me what I want for myself—deep contentment, joy, satisfaction. I long for these—everyone does—and they’re found not by attending some high-powered event or in great accomplishments, but in our everyday experience with God.

I kept reading and kept thinking. What does it mean to experience God in my everyday life? I realized the problem is not that I couldn’t experience God, but that I spend most of my day not thinking about God at all. I schedule regular devotional times but then move on with my day not often experiencing deep contentment, joy, and satisfaction. With more ideas from *Soul Keeping* and after discussions with other friends, I thought of several ways to arrange our days so that we can have more of God in our everyday lives.

Slow down: do what you must to quiet your mind so you can feel what is happening with your soul. It may or may not involve stopping some activity. But it will involve coming to God often in prayer throughout the day.

Look up: find what helps you notice the activity and presence of God in your life. Scripture says, “Your Word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against you” (Psalm 119:11). Scripture is full of “soul worms” that grab your attention and guide your mind.

Lean in: practice surrendering the need to always get what you think you want. Jesus says that if I aim at a life of pleasing myself, I will actually destroy my soul. But if I place honoring God above pleasing myself, then my soul can find true satisfaction, deep contentment, and joy.

Our souls are designed by God to orbit around Jesus and the cross, to be constantly renewed like a river is flowing into it. John 7:38 puts it this way, “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.’” When our souls center around God we find what we long for and our souls can drink and be refreshed.

We don’t share the divine nature of Jesus, but it’s God’s plan for us to have a relationship with Him like that of Jesus, souls that in their everyday lives with Him are filled with satisfaction, deep contentment, and joy.

Snipstead serves Faith Free Lutheran, Kalispell, Mont.

The term “pro-life” should be a shorthand for respect for the sanctity of life. But I will not let that label apply to people for whom sanctity for life begins at conception and ends at birth. What about the rest of life? Respect for the sanctity of life, if you believe that it begins at conception, cannot end at birth.

—Thomas L. Friedman

For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

—Psalm 139:13-16 ESV

Even the smallest person can change the course of the future.

—J.R.R. Tolkien

The care of human life and happiness, and not their destruction, is the first and only object of good government.

—Thomas Jefferson

All that is required for evil to triumph is for good people to do nothing.

—Edmund Burke



Life is God's idea. He is the Almighty Creator. Genesis records how it all began: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (1:1). God spoke all things into existence (Psalm 33:9). The word "create" means "to bring into being from nothing; to cause to exist." We can't comprehend such awesome power and infinite wisdom. Yet we read these remarkable words in

Hebrews 11:3, "By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible." Ponder the power of the first four words in that verse.

Genesis 1:27 records what happened on the sixth day: "God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." More detail is given in chapter 2: "The Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being" (vs. 7), and, "Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man" (vs. 22). God planned and designed two genders, marriage and procreation, and gave mankind eternal souls.

This isn't a fairy tale; this is God's revelation of the beginning of all things.

The explanation of the Third Article of the Creed states the truth this way: "I believe that God has created me and all that exists; that He has given and still preserves to me my body and soul, my eyes and ears and all my members, my reason and all the powers of my soul ..." Every person is a miracle of God. Every part of your body is proof of Intelligent Design, from every inner organ to the blink of your eye.

What is our response to God? "You created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well" (Psalm 139:13-14).

Life begins at conception, when the sperm and egg are joined. At that moment, all the details of your life are already planned—male or female, tall or short, color of your eyes, etc. Scripture verifies that viable human life begins in the womb: Jeremiah was chosen to be a prophet while he was still in his mother's womb (Jeremiah 1:5). Before John the Baptist was born, he leaped in Elizabeth's womb in recognition of the presence of his Savior, still in the womb of His mother, Mary (Luke 1:39-44). Yes, babies in the womb are persons.

Some may ask: Why is there so much human suffering in our world? What about deformities, diseases, and tragic deaths? It all seems so unfair. We all suffer from the curse of sin in this world. Christians are not exempt. To be honest, we all have some degree of disability, whether visible or not. I appreciate what God said to Moses when he was making excuses about serving God: "Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or dumb? Who gives him sight or makes him blind?"



CREATOR Of LIFE

By Linda Korhonen

Is it not I, the Lord? Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say” (Exodus 4:11-12). God is sovereign; His ways are higher than our ways. He sees the whole picture. Trust Him with your life, even your weaknesses. His power shows up best in weak people (II Corinthians 12:9-10).

Life decisions can be very difficult and painful. Many know the trauma of shutting off life support for a loved one when there is no hope of recovery without artificial help. Some are put in life-and-death situations where they must make a choice. It’s hard, and some may live with regrets. Bring it all to Jesus. He understands. “If our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things” (I John 3:19-20). Believe solid facts in God’s Word, not your feelings.

We live in a society where human life is not valued. The release of videos of Planned Parenthood expose the unthinkable practices of selling babies’ body parts from abortions. Why isn’t the whole country outraged against this practice? God’s people need to get involved and stand for life wherever they can. Consider volunteering at a local pregnancy center, participating in a walk for life, and giving to pro-life organizations involved in protecting the lives of unborn babies. Form a life group in your church. Do what you can. Pray.

Protecting life also includes taking a stand against other practices that destroy life: embryonic cloning (replacing the nucleus of an egg with one from another body cell to grow and then de-

stroy for research), assisted suicide, and euthanasia (wrongly called “mercy killing”). Isn’t it amazing to see all the ways that Satan tries to “steal, kill, and destroy” (John 10:10)? But Jesus came so we “might have life, and have it more abundantly.” Life here is precious, but best of all is eternal life that is a gift to all who personally trust Jesus as their Savior.

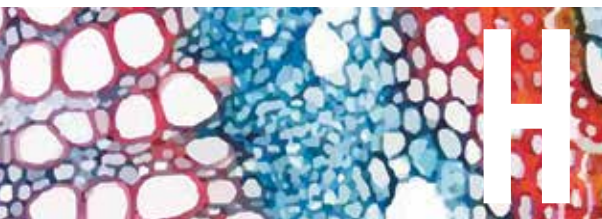
Korhonen, Plymouth, Minn., is a member of Good Shepherd Free Lutheran, Cokato, Minn.



REDEEMER *Of* LIFE

By Pastor Tom Reagan

*"I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death."
(Luther's meaning to the second article of the Apostle's Creed)*



Her name was Julie. She was a 19-year-old, single college student who found herself in a very tough situation. She was pregnant. She did not find help from her family. She had hoped that her boyfriend would help and marry her, but his actions

fell short of his words.

Julie moved to a neighboring state. She found housing, various jobs, and made arrangements with an adoption agency. She knew that in order to love her baby and to do what was best she had to give her baby up for adoption. She was a Christian and would not abort the life inside her.

Her situation was difficult. Loneliness was common. But she also knew she had forgiveness in Jesus. She knew that God was with her. Through the adoption agency she made provisions for her baby. One of her requirements was

that the baby had to be placed in a Lutheran family. She wanted her baby to grow up learning about the love Jesus. A second provision was that she wanted her child to be adopted by a mom and a dad. She wanted her baby to have what she could not give. Her last requirement was that the family had to have another older sibling who was also adopted. She did not want her baby to be alone in that way.

Days and months passed by and then she finally delivered her baby, a boy. The adoption protocol at that time was to not allow the mother to see her baby—likely to prevent bonding and the mother changing her mind. But Julie insisted. She insisted so strongly that the medical personnel eventually had to bring her son for her to see and to hold. She looked into his eyes and memorized his face. She was comforted with knowing he would have a mom and a dad as well as a brother or sister. But the greatest comfort to her was



knowing that it was possible to see him again, if not here on earth then by God's grace in heaven.

Julie's story is close to home. I grew up as an adopted child in a Lutheran home. I grew up with both a mom and a dad. I also had an older adopted sister. I met Julie 27 years ago. But that was our second visit. The first time we saw each other she held me in her arms that difficult day in the hospital. Julie is the one who gave me up so I could be given what she could not give.

Our story is very much about redemption. We were both sinners who had experienced the pain and isolation of sin. In Romans 6 we read, "The wages of sin is death ..." Thankfully, our story did not end there. The second half of the verse reads, "... but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

In God's mercy and grace we were given new lives spiritually and physically. About a year after her delivery, Julie met a very special man, Larry.

She was open right away regarding her past, and Larry fully accepted her. They married and love one another and the Lord to this day.

God the Father in love gave up His sinless Son to do something for us which we could not do ourselves. Jesus fulfilled the law for us. He took our punishment upon Himself. He made payment for us. "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect" (1 Peter 1:18-19).

God, the giver of life and redemption, tells us that we always have hope in Jesus Christ no matter the circumstances, because Jesus is with us and He is the victor.

Eventually my parents, Jim and Elsa Reagan, and Julie and Larry and my children and our families met one another. Ours is a real good story

with an ending unlike those of many other adopted children. Our lives are enriched and have far exceeded anything we could have imagined. Forgiveness and restoration came through that sacrificial action—the giving up of a Son so that another may have life.

Reagan serves Bethany Free Lutheran, Wahpeton, N.D.

CALLED *To* LIFE

By Dr. John Eidsmoe





When Charles Darwin wrote *The Origin of Species* (1859), he had never heard of DNA. Had he realized that about a million pages of information is compressed into the DNA of every single cell, and that the human body is composed of 100 trillion cells,

he would have dismissed his evolutionary theory as a fairy tale.

No wonder the Psalmist declared that we are “fearfully and wonderfully made” (139:14). No natural process could have formed beings as complex as we are, much less the rest of creation. God created us, and He created us in His image.

For the omnipotent God, creation was easy. As we read in Genesis, He spoke, and all things came into being. But redeeming us from sin was the most difficult ordeal in all history. He redeemed us by the death of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, if God created us and redeemed us, He must have had a purpose. And that’s the subject of this article: God created and redeemed us because He has called us to some purpose.

That calling commenced before the beginning of time. Isaiah confidently declared, “The Lord hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name” (49:1). And God said to Jeremiah, “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations” (1:5).

But what does it mean to be called?

Johannes Andreas Quenstedt, a German Lutheran theologian (1617-1688), explained that the call is an act “by which God calls men to faith and repentance through the Word, when read or written, and offers them the grace of conversion. By grace those who have been converted are able to become partakers of salvation.” God elected believers before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4), and He conveys saving faith through the Word and the Sacraments.

But we also speak of “calling” in a more specific sense. Every believer is called to our common salvation, but every believer is also called to a special station in life. In keeping with the Lutheran concept of vocation, Dr. Robert Preus writes that “every station in life, approved by God, is a call.” For some, this is a call to the public ministry of the Word; others are called to different vocations. In all of these callings, Preus says, “God is acting upon individual persons either to save them

or place them in some office whereby they might serve Him.”

So we are created, redeemed, and called. But how do we recognize God’s calling? A farm boy supposedly told his church that he was called to the ministry because the clouds over his field formed the letters GPC, which meant, “Go preach Christ.” One elder thought the youth had misunderstood the letters; GPC actually meant, “Go plant corn.”

Understanding God’s calling on our lives can indeed be difficult. If you’re reading this thinking I’m going to reveal your true calling, you’re going to be disappointed. But I’ll offer seven suggestions:

- God’s call is always consistent with the Word. God will not call you to something that is contrary to His Word rightly divided.
- God’s call is commonly revealed in answer to prayer. But we must always be careful to pray that His will, not ours, be done.
- God’s call is often conveyed or confirmed through the Church. This is always true of the call to the pastoral ministry and often true of other vocations.
- God’s calls is often to fields with clear need. That’s one reason I answered the call to the ministry of Lutherans for Life.
- God’s call is commonly (but not always) to fields of service in which our spiritual gifts, abilities, training and experience can be utilized. But not always—sometimes He calls us to an unfamiliar field, to develop gifts we never knew we had.
- God’s call is often accompanied by an interest or desire to serve in a particular field. But be careful, our desires are vulnerable to Satan’s deception.
- God’s call is often confirmed by doors opening to that field of service—a scholarship, a job offer, an opening, an invitation.

As we are called to be citizens of God’s kingdom of the right, the Church, so we are called to be citizens of His kingdom of the left, the State. In the public arena we stand firm for principles of righteousness. Foremost of these is defense of the God-given right to life

Created by God, in His image. Redeemed by God, through the blood of Christ. Called by God, to salvation, and to a field of service. Perhaps your calling is yet to be revealed.

Eidsmoe, Pike Road, Ala., is on the AFLC clergy roster. He is a professor of constitutional law and related subjects and is currently on the board of directors for Lutherans For Life.

CAMPUS & LIFE

By Emma Twedt



owntown Fargo is easily identified as the heart of the city. Libraries, theatres, and centers for art are places of beauty and creativity. Restaurants and coffee shops are places of fellowship and joy. In the midst of this stands the Red River

Women's Clinic, a place not of beauty or joy, but of heart wrenching pain and death. The only abortion clinic in North Dakota, it was the site of the deaths of more than 1,000 babies in 2013, and continues to be the location of more.

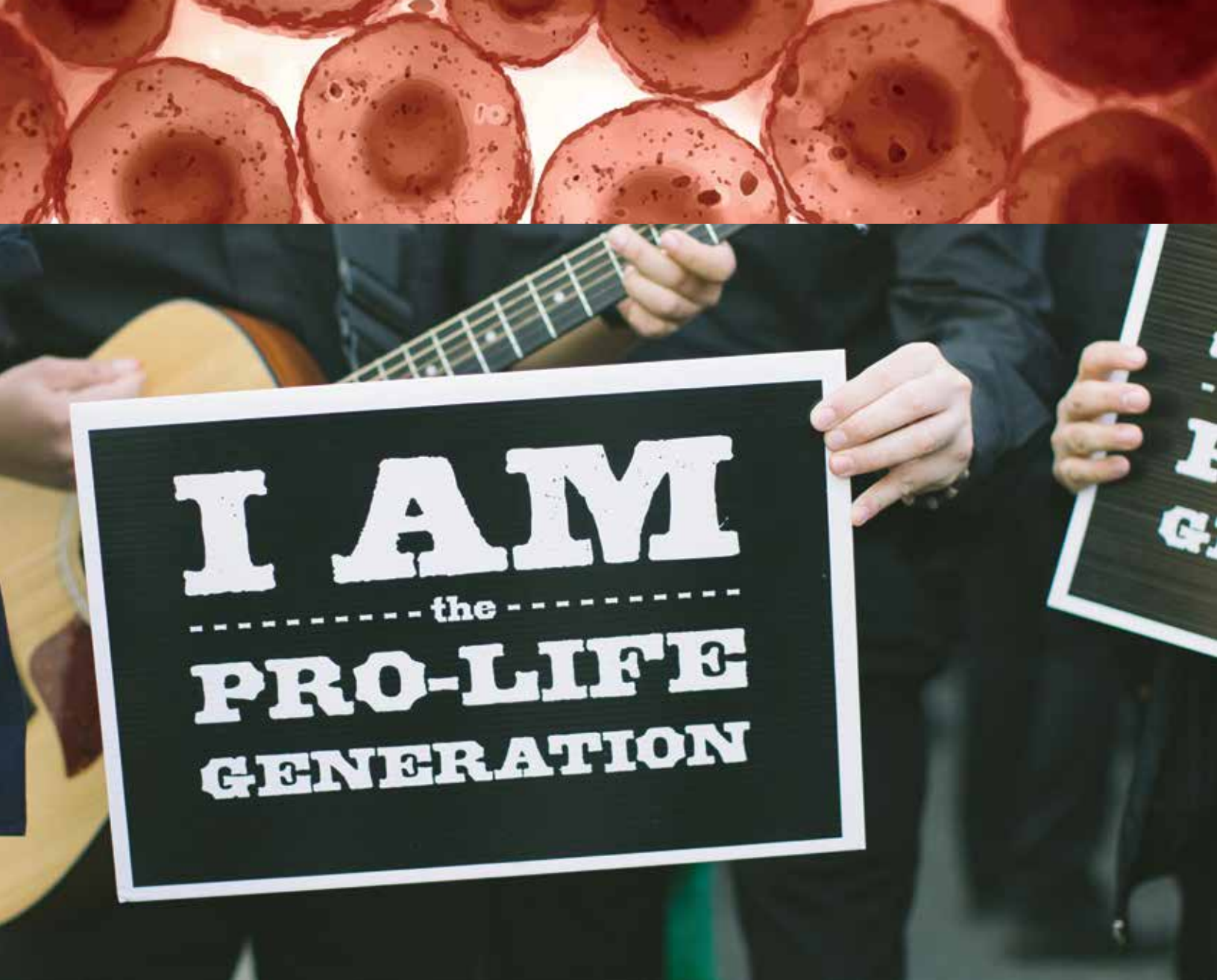
Most people walking around downtown don't give more than a cursory thought to that women's clinic on the corner. Abortion surrounds us no less casually than the clinics in which it takes place. This is particularly true on a college campus. According to the Guttmacher Institute, 44 percent of abortions are performed on women between the ages of 18-24. Of the few hundred young women that I see in class every week, it is highly likely that at least a few of them have already experienced the pain of abortion firsthand. Those of us who are peers of these women have a unique opportunity to be voices for life on campus.

Though I only started studying at the university a few months ago, I've been encouraged by other students who are also concerned for life. I've been involved with Collegians for Life,

my university's pro-life organization, which meets regularly to discuss pro-life issues and to promote life on campus.

More than 20 students showed up in 40 degree weather, high winds, and rain to stand outside the Red River Women's Clinic in a peaceful protest. Nearly 50 students came to hear a pro-life speaker on campus.

One major focus of our group has been to increase awareness about pro-life issues. Only months after the Center for Medical Progress released shocking videos exposing Planned Parenthood, public discourse surrounding abortion has once again faded. Though we aren't talking about it as frequently, abortion is still killing thousands of children every day. In our society where trending topics are brought up and discarded within weeks, days, and sometimes hours, it is crucial to be reminding people of the incalculable value of human life. Whether this is through social media, hosting pro-life speakers, or passing out pro-life balloons at a homecoming parade, it's important to keep discussions going so that others can learn the truth about life, abor-



tion, pregnancy, and adoption.

Social media can be a useful tool, but pro-life advocacy needs to go beyond a few trendy hash tags. Another project I am excited to be involved with is that of making my university more friendly to students who are pregnant or parenting. Frederica Mathewes-Green once wrote, “No one wants an abortion as she wants an ice cream cone or a Porsche. She wants an abortion as an animal, caught in a trap, wants to gnaw off its own leg.” A college campus can be an intimidating place to be pregnant, leading women to feel as if they are caught in that trap. Through tools such as changing tables in restrooms, improved on-campus daycare services, and private feeding rooms, hopefully women can feel more welcome to be both students and mothers.

There is no doubt that God cares deeply for the unborn. Psalm 139:13-16 reads, “For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together

in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.” As Christians, we have a call to be concerned when these lives are threatened. Micah 6:8 states, “He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”

We have been called to work justice for the unborn. We have been called to love kindness and to extend God’s grace and mercy to women recovering from abortion. We have been called to walk humbly with God, not placing ourselves above those who have been involved with abor-

tion, but instead showing them how we have been forgiven. We have a message of grace and forgiveness that can only be found at the cross. This message is not dependent on the severity of our sin, but the perfection of Jesus and His work that paid the price for all sins. May we continue to share this message on our college campuses, in our workplaces, in our homes, and in our churches.

Twedt, a member of St. Paul’s Free Lutheran, Fargo, N.D., is a student at North Dakota State University, Fargo. She graduated from AFLBS in 2015.

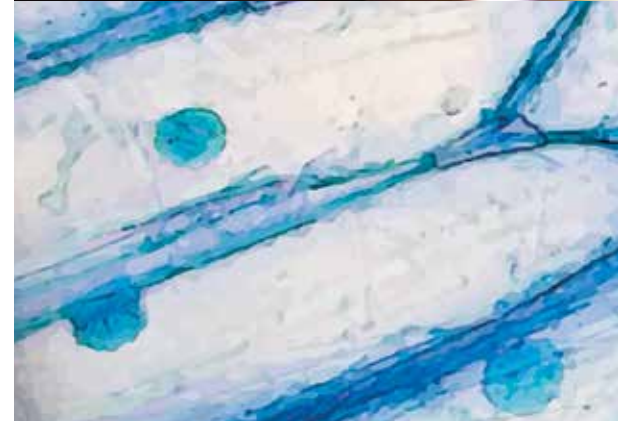


For 27 years, I sat silently in church. I was silent, but I was not the only one. There was also silence from the pulpit. It wasn't until six years ago that I heard a pastor say during his Sunday morning sermon that God would forgive me. For those 27 years, I had lived with the burden of this one very tragic sin which I believed God could never forgive. By His amazing grace, however, here was a pastor, in church, on a Sunday, right in front of everyone, telling me (even though he didn't know he was telling me, because I was silent) that God would forgive me of this sin—the unforgivable sin, or so I thought: the sin of abortion.

I lived a childhood filled with abuse at the hands of family members. I came to know and love the Lord as a teenager. But I became a very lost and confused young adult in college, and in that time of confusion, I became pregnant. While I still fight the desire to blame specific people in my life at that time for forcing me to make a decision I never would have made if left to myself, I must accept my place in the decision to have my child aborted 33 years ago. I was being told all the things I couldn't offer a child by people angrier and louder than me. Things that were hard to hear in such a crisis situation ... but I listened, and then followed their advice. My child was lost to me forever. I've spent all these years since regretting that

loss. I've carried around guilt, shame, fear, and so many other things which God does not intend for His children to carry, not if they truly trust His grace and ability to forgive our sins. After all, isn't that why His own Son went to the cross in the first place? To die for our sins, once for all?

Six years ago, when I heard my pastor speak of God's forgiveness even for those of us with abortion in our past, it was the start of a journey of healing for me. On this journey, He placed on my path a Christian author, Shadia Hrichi, who also has abortion in her past, and whom God led to write a powerful Bible study specifically for post-abortion healing. The study is called *Worthy of Love: A Journey of Hope and Healing After Abortion*. It is a study I was blessed to be able to work through on my own, along with having attended a weekend post-abortion recovery retreat.



HOPE & HEALING

By Sandi Miller

God used that retreat and Hrichi's study to bring about complete healing in my life where abortion is concerned.

I am honored to have been led by the Lord to begin a women's ministry at Our Saviour's Lutheran Church in Patterson, Calif., using the study *Worthy of Love* as our primary Bible study resource. I was blessed to be able to work closely with Hrichi, Pastor Paul Johnson and Karen Johnson to get this ministry under way in September 2014. We have been able to set up the study group in such a way that participants remain anonymous. All communications concerning the group can be done confidentially via an email address set up solely for our Worthy of Love ministry. We are blessed by a dear woman in our church family who has opened her home to our group, so we have a safe, comfortable

place for participants to meet. We have had three women work through the study so far, and it has been wonderful to see God's healing hand at work in their lives as His truths are revealed to them, as they see for themselves His great capacity for grace and forgiveness.

There are many women (and men) sitting silently in all of our churches, not knowing that there is hope, healing and forgiveness for their past abortion(s). It is my prayer that God will use me, Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, and this ministry to help others begin their own journey of healing through this powerful, effective Bible study which is deeply grounded in His Word. I have had the opportunity to begin reaching out to other churches in our community, sharing with their leadership and their congregations about *Worthy of Love*, both the book and the ministry.


I am currently helping a woman in Illinois prepare to start a post-abortion ministry through her church using this same Bible study. I pray daily that God will continue to open doors and hearts, so that more women will learn of His desire to bring healing and forgiveness into their lives for the wounds of past abortion.

Miller is a member of Our Saviour's Lutheran, Patterson, Calif.



LIVING/CHRIST

By Pastor J. Christian Andrews



On Oct. 5, 2015, Jerry Brown, the governor of California, signed ABX2-15 into law. The bill known as “The End of Life Option Act” was rushed through a special legislative session and adds California to Oregon, Washington, and Vermont in the list of states that have legalized assisted suicide. Though I no longer live in California and am not directly affected by this bill, that such a bill progressed so easily through the legislature and was so quickly signed into law is concerning. It is not just that California is known to take the lead on so many issues that become national, but that we as a nation with Oregon, Washington, Vermont, and California as leads, are losing or have lost our wonder about life and its value.

This image comes to mind. It was March 2007. Dad, the visage of a Britton warrior with a row of staples adorning his shaved head, slept in an induced coma hooked up to the latest technology in a self-rotating bed, the mattress inflating and deflating at predetermined intervals to tip his body this way and that to prevent bedsores. We circled his bed that night, the doctor having told us the pressure on his brain was building again after surgery had been done once to relieve the damage of a brain aneurism. We prayed. We shed tears. Dad survived the night. He lives today, content, aware of what happened, but with brain damage and in need of constant care.

I have puzzled often over this question of life and what it is in us when on occasion our despair and pain is so great that we choose to take life, but that mostly we long to live. The question of suicide in general is a difficult one and not one I will explore here. But there is this other question. What is it in us that makes us shake our heads at legislators or a majority population (Oregon, Washington) when they seem to violate the dignity of elder life? What is it in us that causes us to hang on so tenaciously to life?

Perhaps the value of life begins here, in Paul’s statement: “For to me, to live is Christ ...” (Philippians 1:21). The essence of life is that its value is given it by its Creator. This we have which no one else has, that God formed from the dust of the earth the man and breathed His very life into him. The Psalmist knew this when he confessed, “For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother’s

womb. I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well” (139:13-14).

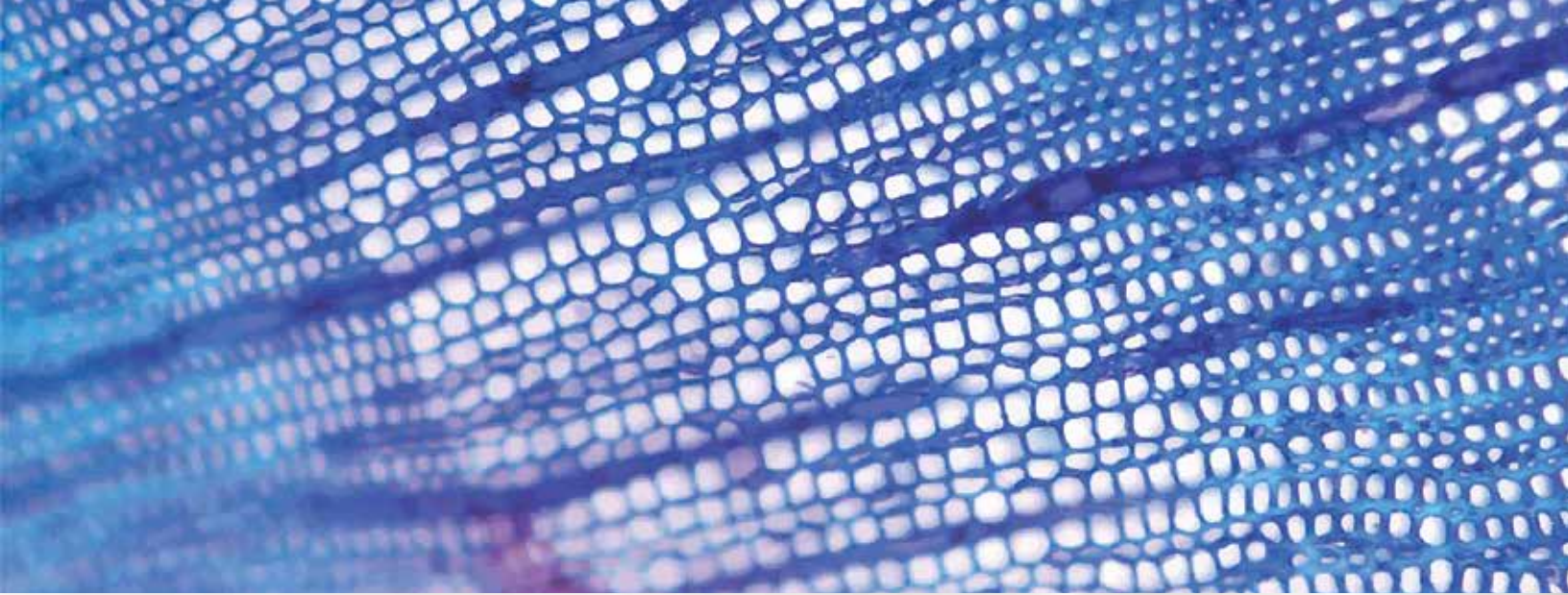
And this we also have which no one else has, that God took on human flesh so that a perfect man could do what is needed to restore to sinful humanity a right relationship with the Creator. The apostle to the Gentiles knew this when he wrote, “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation” (II Corinthians 5:17-18).

The value of life is first in that we are wonderfully created and, second, that we are marvelously recreated. Indeed, to live is Christ.

It is this life in Christ, then, that limits the second part of Paul’s statement: “... to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21). If death is indeed gain as also the Psalmist has professed—“Precious in the sight of the Lord Is the death of His godly ones (116:15)—it would seem we could choose death over life. Without a proper understanding of the intrinsic value of life, both created and recreated, we might do so. When our life is in Christ, and indeed when our life is Christ, however, we understand that it is not for us to choose the gain. That death is gain is given to us in that God has chosen us even as, “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (I John 4:10). So also when life ends, when death is gain, it is not our choice but His. Again the Psalmist’s confession: “Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Your book were all written The days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was not one of them (139:16).

Death will come to us all as long as the Lord holds His return. But death should come only by His choosing. While we live, we do so knowing that meaning is found only in Him. Yes, to live is Christ! This wonderful truth, this blessed assurance, is enough even in the face of the mystery. We can live in the mystery knowing, also, that one day there will be gain. Yes, to die is gain!

Andrews and his wife, Susan, own and operate Great River Inn Bed and Breakfast in Little Falls, Minn. He is available for Sunday supply and winter interim work.





AFLC Schools host Christmas concerts



The AFLC Schools hosted a weekend of Christmas events Dec. 4-6 on the Plymouth, Minn., campus. The weekend began with a Bible school gospel team concert on Friday evening. On Saturday, campus events included a brunch for parents, men's and women's basketball games, a Christmas Coffee House sponsored by the AFLBS Alumni Association, and an evening concert featuring the Wind Ensemble, Seminary Chorus, Proclaim Choir and Concert Choir. The concert was held again on Sunday afternoon, followed by an evening dinner.



In the latest edition of the AFLC Winter News, our Home Mission page highlighted the concept of stem cells. Did you know that healthy human body cells are programmed to divide and reproduce up to 50 or 60 times? Also, did you know that our stem cells are uniquely called starter cells? In the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19), Jesus calls us to “go and make disciples”—to be stem cells.

Over the years, we have been blessed with wonderful stem cell congregations which have divided to reproduce new AFLC Home Missions congregations. Abiding Savior of Sioux Falls, S.D., is now currently working with its second church plant, Shiloh Free Lutheran Church of Rapid City, S.D.

Pastor Andy Coyle recently began serving as the pastor of Shiloh Free Lutheran. Pastor Coyle shares about the difference of having another church coming alongside this new group.

“It is truly a blessing to have a parent church for so many

THE DIFFERENCE

BY PASTOR PAUL NASH

reasons. Often times people only think of the financial aspect. Obviously having financial support as we get started is invaluable, but they are providing so much more. They are providing leadership, guidance, and support on many levels such as administration, marketing, strategy, and vision. Most importantly, they as a congregation are actively praying for us and are genuinely engaged in the success of Shiloh. As a pastor, I really enjoy having other pastors as partners in our work. I am not alone. We are not alone. This is crucial.

“If the AFLC is going to be more active in planting new churches, our existing churches need to consider parenting these new churches. There is plenty of research which shows that the most effective way for doing evangelism in America right now is to plant new churches. I pray that many of our stable churches would consider how they can support and get involved in church planting. At Shiloh, we have already talked about wanting to plant another church out here in eastern South Dakota in a few years. I believe this

must be a passion of ours at our inception.”

We see a huge difference in our church plants when there is a mother church or starter cell church involved with their ministry. The impact of the additional prayer support, guidance, and care is significant.

To be honest with you, it is totally impossible for our limited staff to adequately care for our new churches and still continue to start new church plants. That’s why we need the help of more starter cell churches. We often see as the mother church generously gives of herself, God pours out an enormous blessing on them.

Perhaps your church would like to begin caring for one of our Home Mission plants. You could simply begin by adopting them as prayer partners. Contact our offices for more information.

Nash, director of AFLC Home Missions, is a member of Solid Rock Free Lutheran, Anoka, Minn.



Hauge Foreign Mission is a non-profit organization working in partner-

ship with two other mission organizations, the Norwegian Lutheran Mission (NLM) and Hungarian EKE—Lutherans in Fellowship for the Gospel. Hauge Foreign Mission sends 100 percent of contributors' funds to designated missions under the NLM and EKE.

NLM has its headquarters in Oslo with a solid evangelical ministry throughout Norway. It also has schools, hospitals and mission work in Ethiopia, Indonesia, Japan, China, South America, Central Asia, and Africa. The most recent partnership with NLM has been supporting one of their missionaries since 2012. David Olson, who serves in Mongolia, is the son of AFLC Pastor Terry and Jean Olson. Personal contact with NLM continues with representatives from Hauge Foreign Mission attending the triennial meeting in Norway.



NORSK LUTHERSK
MISJONSSAMBAND

HAUGE FOREIGN MISSION

BY PASTOR EARL KORHONEN

For nearly 25 years a partnership with Hungarian brothers and sisters in Christ has grown by supporting the EKE Bible School and its director near Budapest. Additionally, many people have been reached for Christ at the Hungarian Bible camps and retreats for family, youth, and children. The next youth mission trip to Hungary is planned for July 2016.

Though Hauge Foreign Mission did not organize until 1950, its beginning work must be credited to Gabriel Eikli, a Norwegian missionary who came through the States in 1949. Along with his wife, Martha, he served in China for 11 years until the Chinese closed the door to mission work. They were herded into a boxcar on a freight train that took them through Siberia for 42 days. A Japanese soldier on the train told Eikli, "Come to Japan, we need you." The Eiklis felt that the Lord was calling them to Japan.

In 1950, another young Norwegian couple, Arne and Elsa Gronning, came to the States to visit relatives in Montana. Arne told his relatives that he felt the Lord was calling them to work in Japan, but the NLM had no funds to send them at that time. His relatives told him to go visit a pastor friend in North Dakota named Peter Ljostveit.

A small group of lay people decided to support Arne and Elsa and sent them to Japan.

When the mission supporters began calling themselves the Gronning Mission, Arne urged that a more appropriate name would be the Hauge Foreign Mission, to honor Hans Neilson Hauge's legacy of preaching that led to a revival in Norway in the early 1800s.

Hauge Foreign Mission members hold its annual meeting every Labor Day weekend during a family retreat at the Association Retreat Center, located near Osceola, Wis. Mission speakers from Norway and Hungary are featured on alternating years.

The quarterly newsletter of Hauge Foreign Mission, *The Christian Fellowship Banner*, features mission needs, testimonies, and articles from the various mission fields. For more information on the mission and for access to the newsletter and other contacts, visit the web site at haugemissions.org.

Korhonen, an AFLC pastor serving Stavanger Free Lutheran, Garden City, Iowa, is the treasurer of the Hauge Foreign Mission.

**WMF**WOMEN'S
MISSIONARY
FEDERATION**O**

ne of the most interesting accounts in the Old Testament concerns a prophet

we meet in a brief reference in II Kings 14:25 but become more intimately acquainted with in the four-chapter book that bears his name, Jonah. When we finish reading this book, we are left wondering how the story ends; we want to know what radio host Paul Harvey called “the rest of the story.”

The first chapter of Jonah recounts how God called Jonah to go to the dreaded and feared enemy, the Assyrians, at their capital city, Nineveh, and speak against its inhabitants in God’s Name. Jonah did the opposite, and fled in a ship toward Tarshish. Because of Jonah’s rebellion, God sent a storm that threatened his ship and all on board. When it is discovered that it was Jonah’s sin that caused the storm, he gets what he deserves by being cast overboard. The storm ended

ABOUT GRACE

BY PASTOR JON & LYNN WELLMUMSON

and God’s grace took over; a large fish swallowed Jonah and he lived in it for three days. From inside the fish, Jonah prayed, recognizing God’s deliverance and praising Him for His salvation. The fish vomited Jonah out onto the land.

God instructed Jonah again to go to Nineveh with a message of God’s opposition to that city’s inhabitants. This time, Jonah obeyed. He began crying out to the people of that city with God’s message, and the people of Nineveh repented, all the way up to the king. As they turned from their evil ways, God was merciful and refrained from raining His wrath down upon this city.

Then we find out why Jonah fled in the first place. We might have thought that he was afraid to proclaim God’s Word to these brutal people. But no, Jonah wanted to see these people receive justice—to get what they had coming! He was actually afraid they might repent and experience God’s grace. This is not what Jonah wanted; he wanted to see these horrible enemies suffer.

While Jonah waited outside the city to see if God would destroy it, God tried to teach Jonah a

lesson about grace through a vine and a worm. In the end, we never find out if Jonah took God’s lesson to heart. Perhaps the reason we are never told is to get us to examine ourselves to see if we really understand God’s grace. When we are unwilling to be gracious toward those who have offended us and would rather see them judged, we don’t understand our need for God’s grace. We easily think of ourselves as pretty good and in need of only a little understanding from God, while those who hurt us are terrible people who should get what they deserve. Jonah had forgotten who he was. He was the one who acted directly against God’s command. Apart from the grace of God, Jonah was a dead man. Are you hopelessly lost apart from God’s grace?

The Wellumsons live in Williston, Minn., where Jon serves Emmanuel Free Lutheran and Lynn is the president of the Women’s Missionary Federation.

Coming out of the ashes



Two years after devastating fire destroyed historic church, a congregation dedicates its new sanctuary



Members of St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church of Schwer, Milford, Ill., dedicated their new church sanctuary on Sunday Nov. 29, 2015. Pastor Lyndon Korhonen, president of the AFLC was present at the service.

The dedication came two years and one month after the congregation's historic sanctuary was destroyed in a fire on Oct. 21, 2013. The sanctuary was built in 1907 and included intricately carved wood finishings and a pipe organ, amongst other historic and meaningful pieces.

The fire began with an electrical failure following a funeral service. Several people were still in the adjacent fellowship hall cleaning up when the fire was discovered. All were able to exit safely. However, the sanctuary was completely engulfed in flames by the time fire emergency crews arrived.

Construction on the new sanctuary began in late 2014 and was completed just shortly before the dedication service. The new sanctuary is also connected to the surviving fellowship hall. Though modern in design, it includes several more historic design features, including a steeple, several stained glass windows, and lantern-like light fixtures.

The congregation has been served by Pastor Matt Steendahl since 2006. He recently accepted a call to serve Trinity Lutheran, Brookings, Ore.



Members give to Operation Christmas Child program

Nearly every member of Zion Lutheran Church in Silverhill, Ala., responded to Operation Christmas Child by donating a shoebox full of gifts for children in need this Christmas. According interim pastor John Sterling, the congregation continues their 100+ years of service and love in the community while praying and waiting for God to call a permanent pastor to live in southern Alabama.

Pictured at the dedication of their filled shoeboxes are (from left) Linda Gibbs, John Sterling, Shirley Stephens, Tonie Norden, Vera Avera, Clareen Wells and Ernest Burnett.



Home Missions to hosts February leadership retreat

The staff of the AFLC Home Missions department invites you to "Creating a Culture of Discipleship" at the 2016 AFLC Home Missions Retreat, scheduled for February 1-4 in the Valley of the Sun at Calvary Free Lutheran Church, Mesa, Ariz.

The emphasis of the retreat will be on equipping the saints from the theme verses in Ephesians 4:11-12.

Registration for the retreat and more details on the event are available on our website: aflchomissions.org/ministries/leadership-retreats/

THE PARADOX

BY PASTOR BRENT RAAN

My family has had an amazing time visiting many churches throughout the AFLC and staying in many different people's homes. We have made friends from Washington State, to Pennsylvania, down to southern Oklahoma, and all the way across to Uganda, Africa. We are thankful for each one you and are joyful as we remember our time with you. Yet we are saddened knowing that soon, March 1, we will be saying goodbye. Here is the paradox in which we find ourselves, we are excited to join the ministry of AFLC of India but we are sad to leave home. We are excited to settle down and to gain deep friendships with people, especially when it includes drinking chai tea.

A lot of our excitement, though, comes from the knowledge that God has called us to go to India and that He goes before us. In Psalm 139:1 and 5, the Psalmist writes, "O Lord, you have searched me and known me! ... You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me."

Life often delivers interesting events. Some events are simply amazing and leave us in awe of God and who He is. Some events leave us questioning God. We may

wonder if God even exists and, if He does, we question if in fact He is good.

In the same way, as my family gets ready to leave for mission work in India, we have found ourselves both excited by new prospects and saddened by recent life events.

A concept regarding our life situation was recently explained to us by looking at two rubber ducks known as Yeah Duck and Yuck Duck. When you put the two ducks together you have a pair of ducks, otherwise known as a paradox.

As our friend explained to us the idea of a pair of ducks, he encouraged us to look at what God is doing. Even within the times that we are experiencing yuck ducks, he encouraged us to look for God. I understand that at times this is easier said than done. But even as my family has experienced some events this past summer that I hope no one has to go through, we also see the love and faithfulness of God. I think that during most events that life throws our way, if we take a step back, we can see God and His care for us. The Lord promises us that He knows us, that He hems us in. Elsewhere He promises that He will never leave us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). As well, we are



told that every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father (James 1:17).

I pray that each one of us may start this new year reflecting on the things that God has done for us and what He doing in the midst of our lives. Know that God is for you. He is a safe person to go to and He loves and cares for His children. I am so thankful that my family can run to Him in this time of life.

Raan and his wife, Emily, have been called as AFLC missionaries to serve in India. They leave in March for the mission field.

PEOPLE & PLACES

Pastor Andy Coyle was installed Dec. 13 at Shiloh Free Lutheran, which meets at Terra Sancta Retreat Center, Rapid City, S.D.

Pastor Steve Berntson has accepted a call to serve AFLC Home Missions congregation New Hope Lutheran, Jamestown, N.D., beginning January 1.

Pastor Nathan Olson was installed Nov. 15 at Gloria Dei Lutheran, St. Louis, Mo.

The Home Missions **Gathering in Hastings**, Minn., has closed.

Pastor David Tilney has accepted a call to serve St. Paul's Lutheran, Cloquet, Minn. He was installed Nov. 8, with AFLC President Pastor Lyndon Korhonen officiating. Tilney was recently added to the AFLC fellowship roster.

Pastor Matt Steendahl has accepted a call to serve Trinity Lutheran, Brookings, Ore. Steendahl leaves St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church of Schwer, Milford, Ill.

The AFLC Schools **Missions Conference** will be held Jan. 24-26 on the campus of the AFLC Schools, Plymouth, Minn. Pastor Brent Raan, AFLC missionary to India, is the featured speaker on the theme, "Grace: Living In & Living Out."

NOVEMBER MEMORIALS

- AFLBS**

Ruth Claus (2)

Pastor Harvey Jackson

Peg Kylo

Bruce Gunderson (2)

Judith Wold

Ernie Nash

Cathy Johnson

Andy Nelson (5)

Becky Valdez

Betty Jean Lindstrom

Kenneth Lein
- Irene Hanson

Nels Ellerten

Arnold & Alice Horgen Rokke

Merle & Goldie Berven Gray

Florence Hiepler

Parish Education

Andy Nelson

Judith Wold

Carlos a dos Santos

General Fund

Andy Nelson

Home Missions

Pastor Rolf & Evangline Heng

Pastor Harvey Jackson

Andy Nelson

Youth Ministries

Andy Nelson

AFLC World Missions in Switzerland

Members of the World Missions Committee have asked missionaries Paul and Becky Abel and Pastor Craig Johnson to travel to Geneva, Switzerland, for a week of meetings Jan. 9-17, 2016. Geneva is home to a Free Lutheran congregation served by Pastor Augusto Fiuri, formerly of the Free Lutheran Church in Brazil. Please be in prayer for the meetings, those traveling, and God's will as we consider ministry opportunities in Europe.

AFLC Youth Ministries events

- **Youth Worker Weekends**, the AFLC's national youth leader refreshing and equipping event, is scheduled for Jan. 8-10 at the Association Retreat Center, located near Osceola, Wis. The event is geared toward offering training for volunteer and vocational youth workers. For more information, visit aflc.org/youth.
- Youth Ministries is partnering with **YouthWorks** to offer a short-term inner city mission experience for students. The trip is planned for July 5-8 to Kansas City, Mo. Students will partner with local ministries to meet the needs of the community. Activities could include working at a food shelf, elder care facility, a children's program, or other ministries. For more information, visit youthworks.com/aflc.
- **FLY Beyond**, the national youth equipping conference, is scheduled for July 18-22 at the Association Retreat Center, located near Osceola, Wis.



In Memoriam

Thanksgiving week was marked by the death of two who were part of the history of our AFLC Schools.

One of the early part-time instructors, Pastor Chester R. Heikkinen, 99, died on November 24th at the Ambassador Nursing Home, New Hope, Minn. A graduate of the Suomi Synod seminary and the longtime pastor of Morgan Avenue Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, he also once was an instructor at the Seattle Lutheran

Bible Institute.

Evelyn Wibeto Stone, 98, who died on Nov. 26 in Alexandria, Minn., was the wife of the late Pastor Arnold Stone, another part-time instructor during the early years of AFLC Schools. Among her survivors is son Dale Stone, a member of the second graduating class of the seminary.

Blessed be the memory of these faithful servants.

AFLC BENEVOLENCES January 1-November 30, 2015			
FUND	REC'D IN NOVEMBER	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$19,745	\$306,000	\$311,633
Evangelism	7,057	121,783	124,703
Youth Ministries	4,429	97,158	115,898
Parish Education	8,391	130,260	119,673
Seminary	13,915	240,245	248,713
Bible School	26,911	468,416	437,694
Home Missions	28,917	416,369	452,921
World Missions	32,857	405,927	428,758
Personal Support	53,598	520,210	403,141
TOTALS	\$196,320	\$2,706,368	\$2,643,135
Contact the individual departments for further information about specific financial needs.			

OF THE MAKING OF BOOKS

The first month of a new year is often an opportunity for new resolutions, and here's a suggestion: Read a book a month. The following are a few of special interest to our readers that have crossed my desk in the last couple months:

- Two interesting new books have recently been published by some of our AFLC family. Pastor Orville Hiepler, who is probably the elder saint of AFLC clergy, has written an autobiography entitled, *A Prairie Farm Boy Looks Over His Shoulder: An Ordinary Life of 95 Years Others Call Extraordinary*. Rich with photos and



Pastor Robert Lee

glimpses into his long and fruitful years of ministry, this book can be an encouragement and inspiration to many.

Hanna's Story: A Journey from War-Torn Germany to the Lakes of Minnesota, by Hanna Upmanis, is a title that

gives a good synopsis of this interesting autobiographical book, an account of life under Hitler, World War II, the Russian zone, and finally escape to a new life in America. Copies may be obtained for a donation to Living Word Lutheran Church, Eagan, Minn., the AFLC congregation to which Mrs. Upmanis belongs.

- Mercy and Truth Publishers, Pastor Dennis Gray, director, has blessed our AFLC family with two important books: *Our Fathers Saw His Mighty Works*, a history of the Lutheran Evangelistic Movement, by Jonathan Anderson; and *Rise Up and Build*, compiled by Pastor Gray and others, to continue the story of the LEM and to promote a renewal of the evangelistic model that this organization typified.

P.S. You may also obtain two older works from Mercy and Truth that should be included in your library: *Fifty Years Under the Southern Cross* by Pastor John and Ruby Abel; and *A Pioneer Church Family* by Pastor Trygve Dahle.

- Pastors, and all who are concerned about Christian education, you are encouraged to get a copy of *Reclaiming Lutheran Confirmation* by Oliver K. Olson (www.lutheranpress.com). This hard-hitting wake-up call and critique of much of modern Lutheran confirmation practices by a noted theologian who grew up in the Lutheran Free Church reminds us of the vital importance of serious instruction in passing on the elements of our faith to new generations.

- Pietan Publications, New Ipswich, N.H., has provided us with some significant new editions of older works, and one of their most recent is *Are You Converted?* by Ole Hallesby. Remembered most of all for his devotional classic, *Prayer*, Hallesby is the most widely known Norwegian theologian outside of the Scandinavian lands, and his emphasis on "the subjective experience of the objective Savior as communicated to the heart by the Holy Spirit through God's Word" is a needed one today in a world of nominal religiousness.

- Paulist Press has published *Scandinavian Pietists: Spiritual Writings From 19th Century Norway, Denmark, Sweden, and Finland*, by Mark Granquist. This volume collects and introduces writings of Rosenius, Grundtvig, Laestadius, and others, and is a most significant contribution to a growing interest in the spiritual heritage of Pietism.

- 2016 will be a good time to prepare for 2017, the Luther Year, and our AFLC parish education store is a good source for some excellent resources to add to your reading list: *The Reformation: How a Monk and Mallet Changed the World* by Stephen Nichols; *The Heroic Boldness of Martin Luther* by Stephen Lawson; and *Luther Discovers the Gospel* by Uuras Saarnivaara, first theology professor at our AFLC seminary.

GRATEFUL

Regular readers of *The Lutheran Ambassador* will notice that we are dependent on a wide range of writers ... including a couple willing to be enlisted on short notice whose work may be used more often. All of our writers are volunteers. It is a special delight for our staff to receive eager responses to our requests for articles, and then to read with appreciation the quality of their work, rarely requiring much editing. Thank you, fellow workers!

Three of our columns are prepared by writers for several issues, and we acknowledge with gratitude the excellent contributions to our magazine during 2015 of Liz Tonneson (*Encouraging Word*), Doris Stensland (*Encouraging Word*), Joan Culler (*Something to Share*), and Pastor Wes

The Lutheran Ambassador is blessed with a great family of readers, and we thank the Lord for each one of you.

Langaas (*Building the Base*).

Our writers do not usually have the privilege of hearing the encouraging words of appreciation that come to editors ... "the best issue ever," "challenging articles," "used one for our family devotions," "really made me think," etc. If you know some of the writers, give them a gift of appreciation, please.

The Lutheran Ambassador is blessed with a great family of readers, and we thank the Lord for each one of you.

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

Periodicals

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

association retreat center

STRENGTH & COURAGE FOR TODAY

BY DAN SHILSON

'How could this happen? She's pregnant, and it's not my baby!" These thoughts ran through Joseph's mind as he hurried down the dirt path to escape the words of his soon-to-be bride. The strength to later trust and believe that Mary had not betrayed him was given to Joseph by an angel sent from God during this supernatural moment (Matthew 1:20). Our strength also comes from God, freely given as a gift when we need it the most.

"If we are to die at the hands of the Philistines, then I will stand and fight him myself," David thought as he loaded the small stone into his thin but deadly sling. The courage to face the giant, in spite of his deep desire to run and hide, was given to David through faith from God (1 Samuel 17). Our courage to face the things in our life that are most crippling must also come from the gift of faith in our Savior.

In times when life seems uncertain, with an unstable political climate, a lack of trust in people who hold office at all levels,

and constant media attacks toward ideas and beliefs that we have considered pillars of our society, we must daily and deliberately ask God to give us His strength and His courage.

"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9). Joshua received this revelation in a tumultuous time when he was to take Moses' place—a time of change, uncertainty, stress and anxiety. The staff at the Association Retreat Center chose this as our theme verse for 2016 because it reminds us that we can face each day with great hope for our future.

Let us begin this new year focused on the promise from our Father, who loves us deeply and promises that He has "plans to prosper you" (Jeremiah 29:11), and has promised to "fight for you" (Exodus 14:14). Know that nothing can beat us; we can be strong and courageous, because He has already won the battle.

UPCOMING RETREATS

- Side X Side & Sno Daze AFLC Winter Retreats—Feb. 5-7
- Marriage Retreat—Feb. 12-14
- Women's Retreat—March 18-20
- iDisciple Retreat—April 1-3
- Men's Retreat—April 15-17

Register for these events at
www.twincitiesretreats.com

Shilson is the director of marketing, development and events at the ARC, which is located near Osceola, Wis.