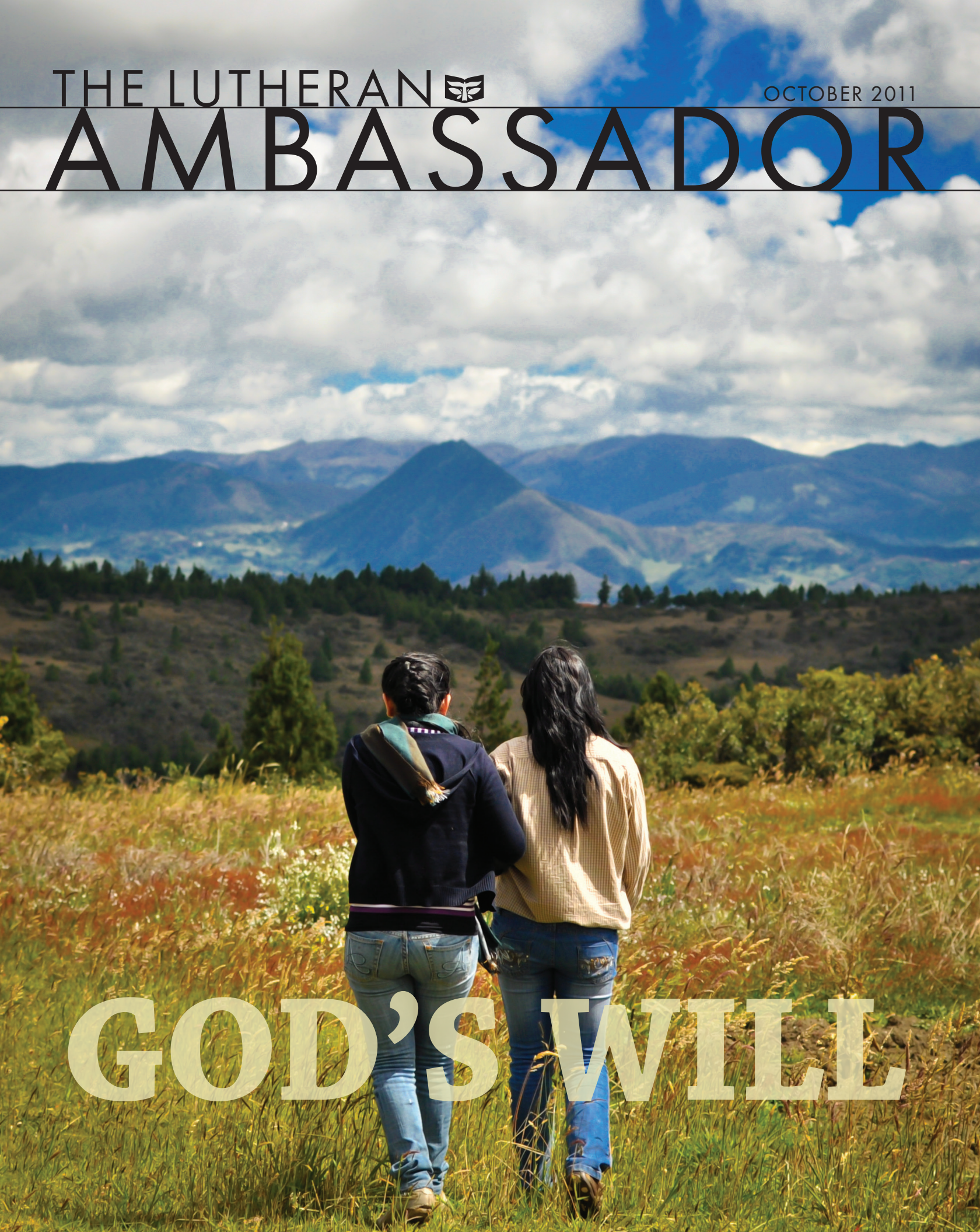


THE LUTHERAN 

OCTOBER 2011

AMBASSADOR



GOD'S WILL

On bondage

BY KAYLA PAIGE



To struggle was only a wriggle and a squirm, nothing more. Rocks scraped my tied hands; railroad tracks burned against bound ankles. Once the train came rushing down upon me, I would be a goner for sure. How strange to be so helpless! Earlier I had despaired merely at the idea of cooking for the crew all by my lonesome. When the stranger with the moustache offered a helping hand, I was delighted. But the fraud whisked me away—overwork was nothing compared to this gruesome death. Now I could only pray for deliverance.

Thankfully, no train came chugging into sight, black smoke pouring out as a dire beacon. Rescuers did arrive. In reality, no one even wanted me dead. A group of my friends simply agreed to put together a silent film for the pure enjoyment of it. Still, this little adventure parallels a much more serious danger, one which I've been contemplating lately.

Sin tends to be an imposter, presenting itself as somehow on our side. Once we welcome it past the threshold, it tangles us up in its snares and drags us away to die. From my own experience I know the progression: desire lures us away and gives birth to sin, while full-grown sin brings forth death (James 1:14-15). Satan wants us to think that we are stuck in these old patterns of life. But God Almighty not only rescues us from our predicament on the train tracks, He also saves us from further bondage.

At Christ's crucifixion, our old self also perished so that we may no longer be enslaved to sin but be alive to God (Romans 6:6, 11). Our flesh does not rule any longer, eager for rebellion without

consequences—desire of a deluded mind hijacked by the devil's lies. No longer, thank God! His Spirit fills us with His own character, thoughts, and desires as we "walk in newness of life"

(Romans 6:4). Yet following God does not happen all at once or without any struggle. To our dying day, the impulse to sin dwells in us, waging war against our inner being which delights in His ways (Romans 7:22-23). In this battle against temptation, the author of Hebrews calls us to resist even to the point of shedding our blood (12:4).

But what happens when we give up too soon, when we do what we do not want to do? Bound hand and foot by sin, we cannot rise and continue our walk of faith. Not on our own. Yet in that helpless state we can cry with the apostle Paul, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Romans 7:24-25). Before we even finish our plea, Jesus comes—and we needn't worry that He'll perform a slipshod rescue, skipping down the tracks carefree or letting us stumble and fall, still in our bonds. Certainly not! When Jesus sets us free, we are free indeed!

Paige is an AFLC Home Missions parish builder serving Good Shepherd Free Lutheran, Madison, S.D.

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10

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O Lord, you know what is best for me. Let this or that be done, as you wish. Give what you will, how much you will and when you will.

—Thomas à Kempis

[If the Lord sets you to guard a lonely post in perfect stillness from all active work, you ought to be just as content as to be in the midst of active warfare. It is no virtue to love the Master's work better than the Master's will.]

—Hannah Whitall Smith

There are two kinds of people: those who say to God, "Thy will be done," and those to whom God says, "All right, then, have it your way."

—C.S. Lewis

God is God. Because He is God, He is worthy of my trust and obedience. I will find rest nowhere but in His holy will, a will that is unspeakably beyond my highest notions of what He is up to.

—Elizabeth Elliot

God has wisely kept us in the dark concerning future events and reserved for Himself the knowledge of them, that He may train us up in a dependence upon Himself and a continued readiness for every event.

—Matthew Henry





WHEN GOD SAYS “GO”

By Megan Schierkolk

Seventeen students and leaders from across the United States traveled to Ecuador July 28 through August 17 to work with a group of Ecuadorian youth from Cuenca, where AFLTS graduate Pastor Darwin Paccha now serves.



As the Student Missions team met to debrief our three-week trip to Ecuador, there was one

theme that seemed to surface in nearly everyone's comments: God's plan. Throughout our visit, we were constantly reminded of what God's will really meant for us, both in why we were there and in what happened during the trip. Sitting with my team that afternoon, it hit me how God had been working in our lives to accomplish His will for our trip before we even left the United States. As children of God, we all must learn to recognize when and how He is speaking to us.



TOP LEFT: Patty, one of the Ecuadorian students. FAR LEFT: Megan Schierkolk, Rachel Menge and Hannah Lautner. MIDDLE LEFT: A group of Ecuadorian young men participate in a panel discussion. NEAR LEFT: Ruth Gunderson, Emily Gunderson, Emma Twedt, Sam Nelson and Brandon Marschner. TOP: Pastor Santiago Gomezcoello teaches a class. ABOVE: Campers, Americans and Ecuadorians together, headed out into the nearby woods in groups to pray.



First, God will reveal His will for us; He doesn't make us play guessing games. These may seem like obvious statements. However, when we are faced with a decision or an uncertain situation, we can sometimes feel overwhelmed by choices that need to be made or by that panic inside that screams, "What happens now?" This isn't what God wants for us. He knows that we are weak, and that if we were alone, the cares of life would overwhelm us completely.

In His mercy He has given us tools to know His will. Psalm 119:105 says, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." An important part of discerning God's will for our lives is staying in the Word. As our light, the Bible illuminates where we should and should not

go, guiding us as we make day-to-day decisions.

We have also been given the Holy Spirit, who works within us to give us either peace or doubts about a decision. As I looked at the Ecuador trip description several months beforehand, I felt a nudge to apply. It wasn't something I could explain exactly, but I could feel it was the Holy Spirit urging me to go.

God will also speak through those around us in order to show us His will. As Proverbs 11:14 says, "Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety."

Second, we can be confident that God will give us confirmation that we are following His will. He did that in a special way for me on this trip to Ecuador. In the few weeks before our

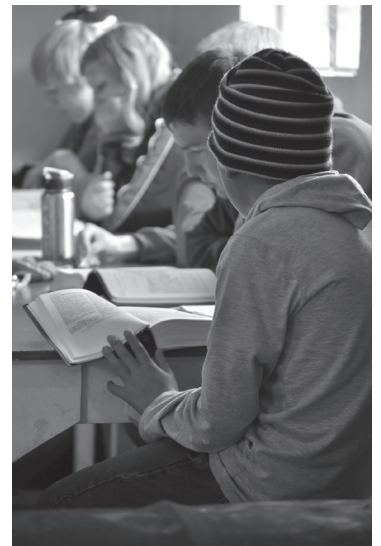
training started, I was feeling overwhelmed with the busyness of my summer, and was thinking that maybe signing up for the trip was not the best idea. After only one day of training, however, God reminded me of why I had applied and showed me that He wanted me on the trip. As our team came together, with each member occupying a special place that only he or she could fill, and as we felt God's hand of blessing on the relationships we built with the Ecuadorian youth, I was amazed by the calling God had placed on my heart and the hearts of my teammates. Applying for the trip was a step of faith for each of us, and God confirmed that step by blessing us as we went. Psalm 32:8 says, "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you

and watch over you." God, in His love, will continue to lead us and reaffirm our choices when we follow His will.

Finally, we need to remember that God's plan is perfect. Jeremiah 29:11 says, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." This verse tells us that God wants what is best for us, but it does not tell us that what is "best" will be easy. Halfway through our time in Ecuador, one of our team leaders had to return home due to a family emergency. As I struggled to understand why God would allow someone to experience something so difficult, I had to realize that "plans to prosper you and not to harm you" does not mean hard things won't



LEFT: Andrew Ulmer takes a moment to pray. ABOVE: Pastor Darwin Paccha helps lead a discussion. TOP RIGHT: Students listen during class. NEAR RIGHT: Seth Knutson and Melody Nash act out a Bible story.



happen. What it does mean is that God has a plan, and will make good come out of even the most painful circumstances. What He asks of us is that we say, "Thy will be done," and trust in the Lord.

One of the many things I learned on the Student Missions trip to Ecuador this summer was the importance of following God's will for my life. Philippians 2:13 tells us, "It is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure." What a peace and joy that comes when we leave our lives in the hands of our Savior, for there is no other plan that could be better for us than His.

Schierkolk is the daughter of Pastor Todd and Barb Schierkolk, who are AFLC missionaries serving in Mexico.



ABOVE MIDDLE: Brandon Marschner, Abbie Carlson and Hannah Lautner practice praise music with Ecuadorian students.

ABOVE: Zack Gann and Abby Kent lead a discussion on Jesus feeding the 5,000.

LEFT: Ecuadorian and American students took time during the Bible camp to discuss topics relevant to students today.

More photos on page 17.

THE HOLY FLIP



There's danger in taking God's Word out of context

By Nathan Dalager

I am sure that most of us have heard that old joke about the man who faced a decision in his life and was looking for God's will in the matter. He pulled down his Bible, plopped it on the table, and prayed, "God, what do you want me to do?" He closed his eyes, flipped open his Bible and stabbed his finger onto the page. He opened his eyes and read Matthew 27:5: "... and he went away and hanged himself." Well, that did not seem very helpful, so he repeated the process and opened his eyes to read Luke 10:37: "... and Jesus said to him, 'Go and do the same.'"

One of the main things that the Bible does is to show us what God's will is for our lives. The challenge that we sometimes face is that there are points in our lives when we as Christians may be honestly seeking God's will, and even by God's grace are willing to submit, but are at a loss to know what it is. What do we do then?

God's will for us is clear about many things: we are to feed the poor, be faithful to our spouses, pray for His aid, love God and our neighbors, share the gospel, etc. The Bible provides us with a wonderful blueprint for how to live within God's will. The more fully we immerse ourselves in His Word the more the Holy Spirit will

work in our lives to lead us to follow His will in the decisions we face.

But what do we do when we face a decision where we are not sure what God's will is? Such as, "Should I marry this person?" or "Should I take this job?" The Bible simply does not give us a specific answer to some questions we face. It often leaves us with generalities when we are looking for specifics. How are we to find God's answer when the Bible does not seem to include our question?

One shortcut that some Christians may be tempted to turn to when facing such a situation is sometimes called "holy flipping." They simply grab a Bible, flip it open, and look to

see if the verse their eyes land on has the answer; then repeat as necessary. Most Christians have had an experience where they have found help with a specific issue in their lives from a certain verse that they heard or read, so this idea of just taking a stab at Scripture is not completely groundless. God certainly is able to work.

The main problem with this method is that we are taking the Bible and trying to force it to say something that it isn't necessarily saying. It is the same basic mistake that Satan used when he tempted Jesus in Matthew 4. He took a snippet of the Bible that suited his purpose and dumped all the rest. This is how nearly all heretical movements get started; someone takes a little slice of Scripture and runs with it without allowing the Word to say what it says.

Here is where the caution that we must "use Scripture to interpret Scripture" comes from. It is possible to pick a phrase from the Bible to justify almost any action if we treat God's Word like a Magic-8 Ball, ignoring the intended meaning and peeling a verse out of context. This is a very dangerous path. We also presume to have quite a remarkable degree of insight from the Holy Spirit to be confident that if our finger lands on Isaiah 20:1 we have God's clear go ahead, but if it

lands on verse 2 we should try again, since God clearly doesn't mean for us to walk around naked and barefoot for the next three years.

The simple fact of the matter is that the Bible does not give a specific answer to some questions we face. For us to try to force God to give us an answer on our terms is foolish and the direct opposite of submitting to His will.

This is the same reason that casting lots can get us into trouble. This method is found in Scripture, even in the early church, but to allow a major decision in our lives to be decided by a coin flip, just because we can't find a specific verse to solve our problem, is an attempt to make God answer on our terms—yes or no. Perhaps His answer is, "Not yet," or, "I have something better coming." He also provides us with other ways of finding His will. Prayer and waiting on Him, fellow Christians (Proverbs 11:14), circumstances in life opening and closing doors, and our own God-led reasoning are all better guides to finding His will than saying, "OK, God. Give me my answer ..." flip, flip, flip.

Dalager is a member of Our Savior's Lutheran, Argyle, Minn.

When God uses our CIRCUMSTANCES

By Pastor John & Lorilee Mundfrom

M

any people wonder, “Does God use the circumstances in my life to give me direction and guide me into His will?” This question has no simple yes or no answer.

The Scriptures do not give direct answers to questions like, “Should I take this new job?” or, “Should I buy this home?” or, “Is it God’s will for me to marry this person?” But that doesn’t mean we will not find guidance in God’s Word to help make these decisions.

God gives us many clear truths in the Bible that can assist us in these situations. We know it would not be His will to pursue a path that leads us into sinful behavior. That would contradict what He has clearly told us. And there are many other statements about using godly wisdom and common sense that can also apply, such as Proverbs 3:5-6, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths.”

So then, the brief answer to the question of circumstances and God’s will is that yes, God often uses our circumstances to lead us in the direction He wants us to go. But at the same time, not every thing that happens to us is of God’s doing. To some degree, we can manipulate circumstances to fit our own desires. While God is ultimately

in control of this world, He does not dictate to us what choices we should make or determine for us what we should be doing. We have great freedom to make these decisions. But we must also remember that our enemies (the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh) are able to influence these circumstances, as well. Here is when it is important to seek God in His revealed Word and test those circumstances by what He has told us.

Whenever we find ourselves facing difficult decisions, the Lord invites us to pray and ask Him to reveal His will for us. We can trust that He will answer such requests, just read Jeremiah 33:3: “Call on me, and I will answer you.”

Sometimes, if we are tempted to follow a poor direction, God may use circumstances to block the way and keep us from going there. Other times, He might use circumstances to open a door where the path had previously been closed.

As we look back on our lives together we can say that God has led us through more than a few circumstances of

trouble and sorrow, but also through a great number of wonderful experiences.

My husband and I have lived in various communities during the time he has been a parish pastor. And, in every place, if I needed to find a job, there was one available for me. When we moved to Michigan in 1985, we lived there two years before I was hired as the music teacher in the newly-consolidated school district. A stipulation of this consolidation was that the new district would start a music program since neither of the districts involved had been able to offer music for many years. That meant hiring a part-time teacher, which fit my need completely, and I had the privilege of setting the groundwork for this new program.

Several years later when we moved to Bismarck, N.D., I knew that having a job would be necessary for our family situation. And God provided me with a job teaching music at a Christian school that was a perfect fit for my family’s schedule. God knew our circumstances and He provided what was needed.

In 1995 we moved to Beulah, N.D., and I did not have a job for about a year. But then, just as the need for additional income grew, God opened the door to a full-time music position in a school district about 50 miles away. He also provided daily journey mercies to travel back and forth (some-

times through snow storms and blizzards) to my teaching job. Again, He knew our circumstances and provided just what we needed.

After moving to Oregon, I was privileged to stay home for the first few months. But then, knowing I needed to find a job, I went looking one day and found a listing for a credit union. I applied for the job and was called back for an interview the same day. God led me into a pleasant work environment which has provided our family with good additional income and benefits for more than 10 years.

These examples relate only to God’s guidance in finding a job, but we have also experienced His direction in countless other circumstances during our 37 years of marriage.

Now, as we move on to new doors of ministry, we trust that God will provide just what we need. He always has, He always will. He is, after all, God. He does not change; He does not go back on His promise of care for His children no matter if their circumstances change. He is God. We can trust Him. He made us, He cares for us, and He loves us. He is our provider. God is good all the time.

The Mundfroms, formerly of Eugene, Ore., are in the process of transitioning to Beresford, S.D., where Pastor Mundfrom has accepted a call to serve Skrejsrud Lutheran Church.



Maintaining UNITY when working corporately

By Matt Olson



God's will is something that Christians are continually seeking. We desire to know His will for our career paths, marriage, kids, and many other typical earthly activities.

Each of us can likely identify several personal situations where God's will was manifested in our lives. Since our God is incredibly creative (just look at creation) and not limited in methods, God's will is revealed personally to us in unique ways. The methods can be direct or indirect and the revelation can be obvious or hidden, as God knows what it takes to effectively get each Christian's attention.

Our local congregations should seek God's will for activities and strategic direction. This concept is not difficult for

church members to understand. However, the process of seeking God's will can, at times, prove difficult to navigate in a congregation. The uniqueness (personality, family situation, Christian life experiences) of each member can lead to numerous ideas that all seem (to any member) to be God's will for their congregation. This same uniqueness is often the source of difficulty as congregations seek God's will.

God's will in the pastoral call process

My family and I attend Faith Free Lutheran Church in

south Minneapolis. Our congregation recently navigated the pastoral call process and I was elected to the call committee.

Our congregation uses a biblically based (I Corinthians 14:40), orderly approach to elect a call committee during a congregational meeting. From seven very qualified floor nominations, three people were elected. The democratic process led us to a call committee consisting of a male theology professor (age 62), a female piano teacher (age 26), and a male design engineer (age 39). God's will was accomplished in the election results as He provided three unique people for the call committee.

Those of us on the call committee met within one week after our election. Each one of us had been given one or two names to consider by members not on the call committee.

Interestingly, the names had one common denominator even though they came from five unique members. God's will appeared to be evident in our first meeting. As we prayed and discussed our approach, it was apparent that each call committee member believed that we should start the call process using the names that had been recommended to us. We didn't know who to contact first, so we decided to pray for God's will over the next week and reconvene as a committee in seven days.

When the call committee reconvened, God's will was more clear than the previous week, but not crystal clear. We had been told that one of the men we were considering was currently not available for a call, so that left us with two names. Without any obvious signs from God, we decided to send our



initial contact to the candidate whom we had discussed first at our initial call committee meeting.

Contacts and congregational meetings

The first candidate we contacted was interested in our call. We interviewed him and then invited him to speak for a trial sermon. The interviews went well, and we decided to call a congregational meeting two weeks later for the purpose of calling the candidate. Those of us on the call committee thought that God's will was coming together. But two days before our congregational meeting we received a letter indicating that the candidate wanted his name withdrawn from call consideration. Even with this information we decided to hold the congregational meeting with the intent of voting to call the

candidate.

At the meeting, the congregation was informed of the candidate's desire to withdraw his name from consideration. They were also informed that an official call could get the candidate to reconsider. The meeting contained 20 minutes of lively discussion regarding God's will and whether we were following Him by voting to call a candidate that had withdrawn his name just two days prior to our congregational meeting. After the discussion, a ballot vote was taken and the congregation decided not to call the candidate. Even though we on the call committee thought that a call should have been sent to the candidate to allow him to reconsider, God's will for the congregation concerning our first candidate had been accomplished through a simple democratic process.

God's will for our congregation was complete

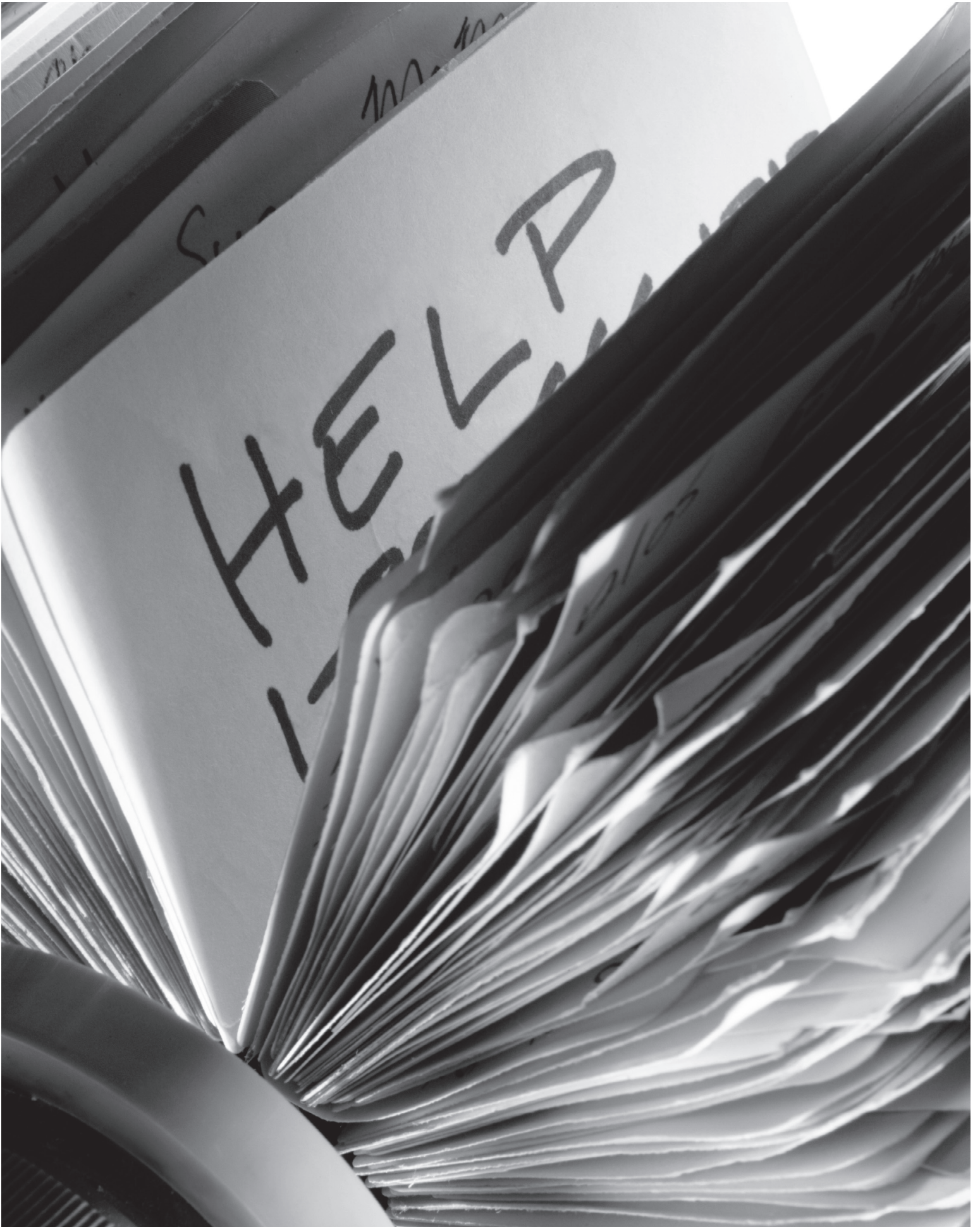
Our third call committee meeting was quick as we were down to only one name from our original three. We contacted the candidate and interviewed him. Since he had previously preached at our congregation we didn't have him for a trial sermon. When we called another congregational meeting, the vote was unanimous to call the candidate. The call was issued and the candidate—Jason Gudim—accepted. He was planning to graduate from AFLTS this spring, and a congregational call confirmed God's will for him as a pastor.

Pastor Gudim has been faithfully serving us for three months, and it certainly appears that God's will was accomplished through a series of events in the call process. Our

bylaws followed the biblical principle of order, and this likely minimized conflict. However, it did not eliminate the conflict. This is not surprising in a sinful world.

As each member examines his or her role in the congregation, they should realize that God's will is that all men are saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4). The congregation is one tool that God uses to accomplish this will. God's design for the congregation works best if each member puts God's will in front of his or her own will (Ephesians 4:1-3).

Olson is a member of Faith Free Lutheran, Minneapolis.



When asking for GUIDANCE

By Michael Osthus

The book of Proverbs is a great source of wisdom—giving instruction for godly living and illustrating truth. But sometimes I wonder if Christians really follow these guidelines. Do we accept the truth in it?

Proverbs 11:14 states, “For lack of guidance a nation falls, but victory is won through many advisers.” It’s a simple statement displaying the benefit of conferring with others while making important decisions. From my experience and observations, however, going to other Christians when making decisions or seeking God’s will is a lost discipline—or one in need of some restoration.

Although I have seen some strong examples of Christians seeking godly counsel, most Christians seem to ride things out on their own. Are we simply lacking godly counselors with whom to talk? I remember once at Bible camp, our evening speaker mentioned a certified way to shock your pastor: go to him in his office and ask for some guidance in your Christian walk. Sadly, especially among teenagers and young adults, it’s almost unheard of to seek advice from the very men who have committed their lives to our spiritual wellbeing.

Most people have parents they can talk to, whether they are 17 and considering college or 47 and consider-

ing moving to another state. More than that, there are other Christians—young and old, men and women—who are available to talk and pray with us. We certainly aren’t lacking in resources, so why don’t we use them?

Sometimes people can look at decision-making as a test of independence. Putting it bluntly, making decisions on your own shows strength and going to others for advice shows weakness. This viewpoint can have merit, depending on the situation—there is a risk of relying only on people for direction instead of God. But this viewpoint is not all encompassing and can even be damaging, working together with a pride that tells us, “I don’t need anyone to help me.” As a Bible school graduate and recent parish builder, I’ve sometimes thought, “I shouldn’t have these questions anymore; I need to be the leader and not submit my concerns to others.” Although it is practical for leadership to be discreet and not discourage other people by modeling confusion and despair, both forms of pride lead to destruction

(Proverbs 16:18) and leaders are often the people who need to be the most humble and ask for the most advice. Many verses in Proverbs specifically reference leaders needing extra input when making important decisions that will influence others.

Fear can also prevent us from seeking counsel. Admitting that you need help does make you vulnerable, and there is a chance of disappointment or getting hurt. Those you seek advice from may not understand your question and confuse you more, they may give you general help when you want something specific, they may blow off the issue or they may even share your problems with other people. Maybe something like this has happened already and you don’t want to go through it again. But just as much as pride, this fear can be devastating and is certainly not from God. Seeking godly counsel is a step of faith—both toward the person with whom you meet and toward God Himself.

But why should we take that step in the first place? Talking to someone else can bring more viewpoints into the decision process. Someone besides you could bring a fresh perspective to the issue or even a solution you hadn’t thought of before. No matter how old you are, there are people you can go to who have more wisdom than you. Specifically, another person, such as your pastor or mentor, might know more of

the Bible than you, and thereby be more able to point you to God and His plans. Sometimes the Bible won’t give a clear answer to a question. In these cases, other Christians who have already gone through the same situations can bless you greatly when you talk, pray and study the Scriptures together. Although there may not be a right or wrong answer, you can see what they did in the past and together seek to glorify God in the future.

Finally, I would suggest that seeking godly counsel is a way that the body of Christ can fully live out the apostle Paul’s call in Galatians 6:2: “Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” Don’t we have to share burdens to bear burdens? Seeking counsel from each other is an act of humility, yet also boldness. It is a time for brothers and sisters in the body of Christ to come together, sometimes with repentance, and seek the face of God. It’s a time of ministry to build up and encourage each other. It is a time of worship when we come together to recognize that God’s wisdom is far above our own. It is also a step to trust God and follow the pattern He has made for us, knowing that He always leads us in the truth.

Osthus, a 2010 graduate of AFLBS, is a member of Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran, Lakeville, Minn.

Discerning God's will

BY RACHEL RUMOHR

As God's children, we are called to be conformed to the image of Christ, bear fruit in His name, and bring glory to Him. While the Bible in some situations tells us clearly how to do this in our lives, there are many times that it doesn't specifically say what to do, such as where to go to school, get a job, who to marry, or what we should do each day. However, God promises that He is always with us, and that He directs our paths if we trust and obey Him.

Proverbs 3:5-6 promises, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him and He will make your paths straight."

Seeking God continually in His Word often will show us what His will is for our lives. He will lead us through our morning devotions, group Bible studies, and maybe even through a friend sharing a testimony of His leading in his or her life. God works in many ways—we must always keep our ears and our eyes open.

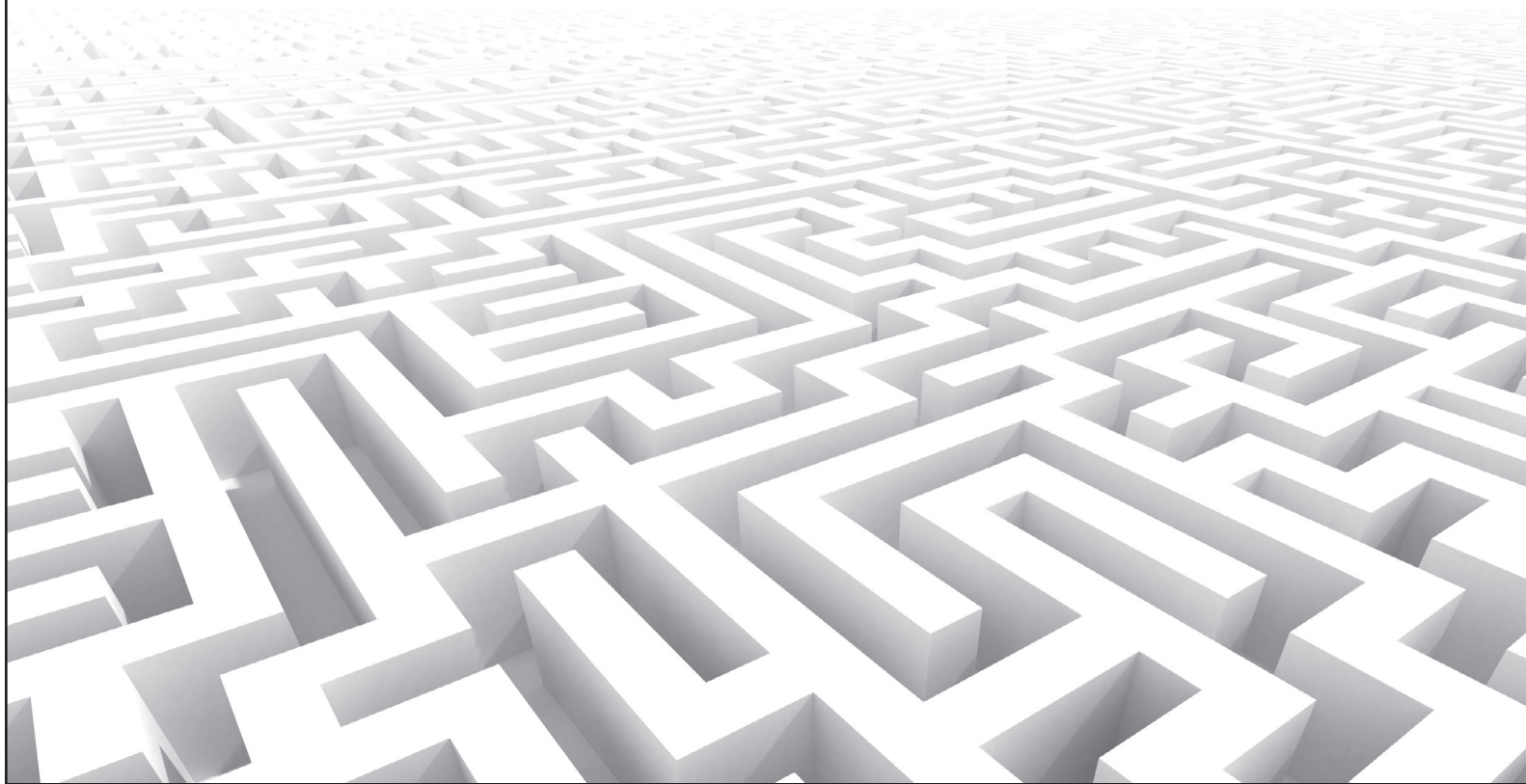
Communing with God in prayer is a time for Him to change our hearts. Many times God's will isn't what we want to do at first,

but He has the power to change our hearts and lives. Psalm 37:4 says, "Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart." Our desires are to be God's desires, and when we delight ourselves in Him, He will conform our hearts to His.

In times when God clearly doesn't tell us what to do in His Word, we must continue to keep our eyes on Him. Trusting that God will guide us is crucial in our walk with Him, as well as obeying whatever He does tell us. When we don't discipline ourselves to trust and obey, we fall into doubting God and trying to make decisions on our own.

God has wonderful plans for each one of us. Whatever steps we take, if we trust and obey Him, He will direct the paths that we take. We are not puppets. We are free in Christ, and as we walk with God, He never lets go of our hands.

Rumohr, who was recently married to Jordan Rumohr, is a parish builder at Calvary Free Lutheran, Mesa, Ariz.





MORE PHOTOS FROM ECUADOR

LEFT: Members of the Student Missions team to Ecuador were (front row, from left) Ruth Gunderson, Sam Menge, Rachel Menge, Brandon Marschner, and Drew Peterson, (middle row) Emily Gunderson, Melody Nash, Megan Schierkolk, Abby Kent, Hannah Lautner and Emma Twedt, (back row) Zack Gann, Seth Knutson, Isaiah Marschner, Sam Nelson, Abbie Carlson and Andrew Ulmer.



MIDDLE LEFT: Leslie Landivar and Taty Parra recite a Bible story from memory during a study on Evangelism.

LEFT: A group of students act out a Bible story for the rest of the campers.

TOP: Melody Nash took some time out for her devotions while at the camp.

ABOVE: Sam Menge, who led the Student Missions trip, helps students work on their Bible stories during training days at the AFLC Schools prior to leaving.



There I am amongst them

BY BEN DAHL

Seat belts? Check. Flight controls? Free and correct. Instruments? Set. Fuel? On. Mixture? Rich. Elevator trim? Set for takeoff. Throttle? 1800 RPM. Lights? On. Flaps? Set for takeoff. Emergency locator beacon? Tracking.

"Alright, here we go."

Jeremy flips on the radio and speaks, "Naknek traffic, six niner four one echo will be departing runway three two to the north. Naknek traffic."

The FLAPS Cessna 175 barrels down the runway and in only a few short moments we are airborne.

We fly north along Bristol Bay looking out over the fishing boats with their nets in the water. It is now the peak of the salmon run and there are hundreds of boats in the water. In the plane are pilot Pastor Jeremy Crowell, Pastor Jeff Swanson and myself. We are flying up to a small village called Ekwok for the Sunday afternoon service. It's only a 30-minute flight over the Alaskan tundra but there is much to see. Pastor Swanson spots a moose and calf and we circle around for a closer look.

We finally cross the shores of the Nushagak River and land in Ekwok. After giving up on finding the tie downs, we walk into town. Pastor Swanson goes around knocking on doors and inviting people to church while Jeremy and I head over to the Ekwok Bible Chapel. The mossy green chapel looks more like an old one-room schoolhouse rather than a church, but the body of Christ does not depend on a building. Inside, there are six wooden pews with old Baptist hymnals and Bibles. Behind the pulpit hangs a wooden cross, and to the right stands a table and keyboard. The building feels warm as the clouds silently drizzle rain outside.

Billy and Julia are the first to show up for the service. They are a wonderful older native couple who never pass up an opportunity to hear the Word. Billy will talk your ear off while Julia sits quietly looking through the hymnal or conversing in the Yupik language with the other ladies. Billy also happens to believe that church is a discussion and will often engage the pastor with questions or comments throughout the sermon. I think his character adds a lot to the message.

Soon we have a nearly full chapel, nine people in all. As voices and music fill the air with the melodies of beloved hymns, I am



again reminded of the words of Jesus in Matthew 18:20, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I amongst them." I smile to myself, as I know that even here, in one of the most remote villages in the world, Jesus is present.

Matthew 5:14,16 says, "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. ... In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

Dahl has worked as a Home Missions parish worker this summer in Alaska and is now working at Good Shepherd, Camarillo, Calif.

Until Christ is formed in you

BY PASTOR NATE JORE

Please come and pray for my daughter.”

The call came from Jowali, a Muslim friend of mine in the village, whose daughter had been attacked by demons. Why would a Muslim man ask a Christian to come and pray? He had gone first to the local Imam (Muslim spiritual leader) who came and prayed over the girl for an hour. When there was no change in her, he advised Jowali to take her to a Muslim witchdoctor. In Uganda, Islam is often mingled with traditional animistic religion or witchcraft. After the witchdoctor also failed to cast out the demons, Jowali called me to come and pray. He had been a friend of mine for some time and had come to admire this Jesus whom I talked with him about.

I have to say that my heart rate was up and I was nervous as I drove to the village that day. I was confident in the truth of the Word of God, but this was a test that I had not yet experienced in my life. I committed my actions to the Lord and asked Him for wisdom and for His Name to be glorified.

The girl was delivered that day from the demons who were tormenting her. After the family saw that the power of God was greater than the demons, they decided that as a family they were turning to Christ. Praise His Name! We later brought them two Bibles and a Mega Voice audio player with recorded Bibles stories in the local language, as well as a pair of reading glasses for Jowali so that he could read for himself. His daughter was given a new name, Talitha, after the girl whom Jesus had raised from the dead with the words, “*Talitha, koum*” in Mark 5:41. The name was to remind her that her life had been given back to her through the power and love of Jesus.

The Apostle Paul likened the process of “Christ being formed” in someone to the process of childbirth (Galatians 4:19). I have been present for the birth of my four children and can testify that childbirth is a test of endurance. It is a process that is slow and painful, but in the end brings new life. The spiritual birthing of a



Keep up with news from the Jores by visiting their blog: www.thejorefamily.wordpress.com.

person is also a process that is often slow and painful.

As I write we are still “in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed” in Jowali and his family. Jowali has four wives and 29 living children. They have grown up in a culture and home completely devoid of the Word of God and knowledge of Christ. There is a deep-rooted history in their family of involvement in witchcraft and animism. I wish I could report that Talitha has been completely delivered, but the truth is that the demons have continued to attack Talitha from time to time since her initial deliverance. We are in the process of leading her in “cleaning house” through confessing and renouncing her past sins. We have also been working with Jowali to tear down the spiritual strongholds in his life and family (II Corinthians 10:4). We ask you to join with us in praying for Jowali, Talitha, and their family.

Jore and his wife, Rhoda, and four children are AFLC missionaries serving in Jinja, Uganda.

Lutherans for Life national conference

Theme: 'Adopted in Christ'

Nearly 200 Lutherans gathered Aug. 5-6 under the theme, "Adopted in Christ," for the national conference of Lutherans For Life (LFL) in Irving, Texas.

Dr. Russell D. Moore, author of *Adopted for Life: The Priority of Adoption for Christian Families*, said in his keynote address, "If we as pro-life people can understand that the issue of orphan care—whether that's advocating for unborn orphans, or advocating for born orphans in the United States or around the world—is not simply stopping bad things from happening to children. ... Instead, there is also a deeper issue here, which is that our advocacy for women and children who are under assault by forces so dark and evil that we cannot even contemplate it, can teach us and show us how to be the Church, how to embrace the gospel, how to live in the unity of the Spirit ..."

Workshops, led by Jean Amundson with a panel of family members, and Jeannette Clausen, on "Adoption: Not First Choice, but a Choice of Love," focused on different aspects of adoption. AFLC Pastor Col. John Eidsome discussed "Preachers and Politics: What Does the IRS Allow?" Pastor Dr. James I. Lamb explored "In Vitro Fertilization—Promise or Peril?" And Dr. Kurt Senske lead a workshop on "A Picture of Possibilities—Strategies to Live Out Our Calling."

Dr. Lamb, LFL executive director, in his opening worship sermon, focused on the conference theme, based on Galatians 4:4-5. "Adopted in Christ—it is this relationship of having a God we can call Father that moves us not to just be against what our culture of death is for, but to be for what our Father who is God is for. That's what is being expressed in LFL's mission statement, 'Equipping Lutherans to be gospel-motivated voices for Life.'"

The 2012 Lutherans For Life national conference has been set for August 3-4 at the Eaglewood Resort and Spa, Itasca, Ill. (Chicago area), under the theme "Equipping the Saints for Life." For more information contact LFL at 888.364.LIFE; info@lutheransforlife.org; www.lutheransforlife.org.



Pastor Jason Gudim was ordained and installed as pastor of Faith Free Lutheran, Minneapolis, on July 24. Pictured are (from left) Kevin Olson, Pastor Jerry Moan, Pastor Elden Nelson (AFLC president), Pastor Jason Gudim, Pastor Phil Haugen and Lavon Bohling.

ARC to host Christmas Festival event

The Association Retreat Center, Osceola, Wis., has planned a Christmas Festival event for Friday and Saturday, Dec. 9-10. Featured during the two-day event will be a music and drama, "The Christmas Boy," which will revisit the true meaning of Christmas through the music of Steve Gamble. Performances will be held at 7 p.m. Dec. 9 and 3 and 7 p.m. Dec. 10.

The Christmas Festival will be held from 10:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. in Dec. 10 and will include a holiday bake sale, an arts and crafts festival, games, hayrides and a Christmas praise concert from 6 to 6:30

p.m. A registration form is available for those who wish to apply as an arts and crafts vendor.

The ARC will open up housing for those who wish to attend both days. The cost is \$25/person with a maximum of \$100/family. Included in the price is breakfast.

All funds raised through this event will be used to support the ministry of the ARC.

For more information on this event, contact the ARC by e-mail at arcregistration@centurytel.net or call 800-294-2877, or visit the ARC Web site at www.arc-aflc.org.

WMF plans to mark 50 years with retreat

It is with great excitement and thankfulness to God that the national Women's Missionary Federation is preparing to host a women's retreat March 23-25, 2012, at the Association Retreat Center in Osceola, Wis., in celebration of 50 years of the WMF of the AFLC.

We will be meeting under the theme: "Jesus: Yesterday, Today, Forever," taken from Hebrews 13: 7-8: "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."

As we prepare for this special retreat, we are asking for your help in providing us with pictures of any WMF events, such as rallies and WMF Days so that we can make some photo boards. If you have any that you can share with us, please send them to Phyllis Peterson at 420 Ash Road, Portland, ND 58274. Digital files may be e-mailed to aimforlife@polarcomm.com.

Mark your calendars for this time of celebration and praise.

Stillwater Free Lutheran celebrates 100 years



Formed in 1911, the Kalispell, Mont., congregation joined the AFLC in 1964

By Bonnie Upton

On July 8, 1911, the cornerstone service for the Stillwater Norsk Luterske Menighed was held on an acre of land north of Kalispell, Mont., in the beautiful Flathead Valley surrounded by majestic mountains. The church has seen many changes in the 100 years since that day, but one thing remains the same—the Word of God and its truth.

It was a big step for those early members to change from Norwegian to English-speaking services in the 1930s and to officially become Stillwater Free Lutheran Church and join the AFLC in 1964. A huge leap of faith was taken in 1975 when the church became a Home Mission congregation. Less than five years later the congregation was involved in a building project that more than doubled the size of the church building to accommodate the growth we were confident the Lord would provide. And He did.

Serving our congregation as pastors since 1975 have been Dale Mellgren, Jeff Swanson, Ken Wilsdon, and Tim Bartholomew (our current pastor).

An addition to the building was constructed in 1998, adding a larger entry so the front steps would be indoors and a lift could be incorporated. All of the additions have maintained the original charm of the old building—the hand-carved altar, communion rail, baptismal font and pulpit.

The well-attended centennial celebration on July 9-10 was exciting and inspiring as members of the congregation re-lived the past in pictures and memories. Members of the congregation's youth, the Free Flyers, built a *lov hytte* and sold Norwegian goodies. A Stillwater centennial cookbook, mugs, plates, bookmarks, and updated history books were available. There were auctions, games, singing, worship, and an annual favorite—pit-roasted pork dinner. Congregation members were honored to have Pastor Elden Nelson, president of the AFLC, and his wife, Faith, join them for this happy occasion.

The spire of Stillwater Free Lutheran Church at 1401 Church Drive has ever pointed upward these past 100 years. It is our prayer that it may continue to be a beacon for many more years. Hebrews 10:23 says, "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful." May all who come behind us find us faithful.

People and Places

Amazing Grace Lutheran, Mitchell, S.D., was recently added to the AFLC congregational roster by members of the Coordinating Committee.

Pastor Roy Johnson has retired as pastor of the Northome, Minn., parish (Hope and Bethesda), and is living near Bigfork, Minn.

Pastor Frank Cherney resigned as pastor of Trinity Free Lutheran, Janesville, Wis., having accepted a call to serve the newly organized Home Missions congregation of New Hope Free Lutheran, Jamestown, N.D.

Pastor Walter Beaman, East Grand Forks, Minn., is serving as interim pastor of Christ Lutheran Church, Stover, Mo.

Pastor Jeremy Vance has resigned as pastor of Zion Free Lutheran, Wadena, Minn., and Bethany Free Lutheran, Bluegrass, Minn.

Pastor Randy Nelson has accepted a call to serve Peace Lutheran, St. Francis, Kan. He has resigned from Lisbon Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran, Newark, Ill., which he served since 1999.

United Lutheran, Manteca, Calif., was recently added to the AFLC congregational roster by members of the Coordinating Committee. The church is served by interim Pastor Edward Kok.

Pastor Cal Willard has resigned from serving Free Lutheran Church of Roseau, Roseau, Minn., and Norland Free Lutheran, Salol, Minn., having accepted a call to serve Calvary Lutheran, Everett, Wash.

Pastor Ebassa Berhanu has resigned from serving Maranatha Free Lutheran, Spring Lake Park, Minn., and will serve a Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod congregation.

Pastor Arne Halbakken has resigned as pastor of First Lutheran, Ellendale, Minn.

Stephen Quanbeck and **Ben Dahl** have accepted a call to serve as parish workers for one year at Good Shepherd Lutheran, Camarillo, Calif. Both are 2011 AFLBS graduates.

Living Hope, St. Michael, Minn., has moved from the St. Michael/Albertville Middle School West where they have been worshiping for several years, to share a facility with CONNECT Church, and will now be meeting on Sunday evenings at 6:30 p.m. The congregation was planted in 2002 by Emmaus Lutheran, Bloomington, Minn., and has been served by licensed pastor Bob Halverson.

Members of **Scandia Free Lutheran**, rural Glenwood, Minn., served by Pastor Ron Knutson, celebrated its 40th anniversary on Aug. 21. Speaking for the occasion were former pastors Richard Gunderson and Dennis Gray, and AFLC President Elden Nelson.

Loren Tungseth has accepted a part-time position of director of resource management for AFLC Home Missions. Tungseth will focus on overseeing the ministry in Alaska, coordinating Home Missions "Come Join Us" presentations at AFLC churches, and oversight of Home Mission finances. His Home Missions Committee term will be filled by Tom Caouette, Maple Grove.

Dr. Gordon Myrah, pastor of Trinity Lutheran, Brookings, Ore., since 1980, retired from parish ministry in August.

James Taylor, 81, of Upper St. Clair, Pa., died Aug. 29. Taylor served on several AFLC boards and commissions, including the AFLC Coordinating Committee and the World Missions Committee. Taylor was an elder at Ruthfred Lutheran, Bethel Park, Pa. Surviving are his wife, Delores "Dee" (Conley), two children, Kevin (Carol) Taylor, Woodstock, Md., and Leslie (Mike) Molina, Miami, Fla., and four grandchildren. The service was Sept. 3 at Ruthfred Lutheran Church. In lieu of flowers memorials may be made to Ruthfred Lutheran Church, South Park and Patterson Rd, Bethel Park, PA 15102 or Washington City Mission 84 W. Wheeling St., Washington, PA 15301.

AFLC memorials: July & August

AFLBS

Stella Olson, Ruth Claus (2), Arnie Kooiman (3), Gertrude Sparby, Lyell Johnson, Keith Nash (3)

AFLTS

Harvey Smette, Keith Nash, Merle and Goldie Gray, Arnold and Alice Rokke, Marion Haugen, Mildred Kolpacofs, Gerd Lyseng, Arnie Kooiman, Lyell Johnson

Evangelism

Lyell Johnson
Keith Nash

Home Missions

Loren Hage, Stella Olson, Harvey Smette, Cathryn Coraff, Gertrude Sparby, Keith Nash (2), Daryl Pearson, Lyell Johnson, Harlow LeRohl

Parish Education

Pastor John Strand
Lillian Bergstedt
Margaret Sahlberg
Pauline Lindquist

Vision

Arnie Kooiman

World Missions

Mamie Willman

AFLC BENEVOLENCES Jan. 1-August 31, 2011

FUND	REC'D IN AUGUST	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$24,825	\$190,289	\$210,200
Evangelism	10,066	70,967	84,741
Youth Ministries	9,380	80,157	96,199
Parish Education	14,076	81,580	74,896
Seminary	15,369	138,989	131,100
Bible School	49,517	320,749	312,693
Home Missions	29,951	287,456	313,344
World Missions	27,330	275,627	177,564
Personal Support	29,699	246,406	215,711
TOTALS	\$210,213	\$1,692,221	\$1,616,448
Contact the individual departments for further information about specific financial needs.			

As I was saying ...

Eighteen years ago I wrote my last editorial as editor of the *Lutheran Ambassador*, never expecting that the opportunity to serve our church family in this way would come again. Our fellowship owes a debt of gratitude to Pastor Craig Johnson (and to his congregation) for his years of ministry as editor, and for his commitment to publishing an excellent voice for our congregations.

It is an understatement to note that there have been many changes since 1993, in the world of church magazines as well as in my personal world. The technological cutting edge for our publishing purposes

20 years ago was the fax machine. Managing editor Solveig Hjermsstad, our printer Ellis Bloomfield, and I learned to significantly speed up the editing and printing process



Pastor Robert Lee

by faxing, no longer depending on the postal service for mailing our work back and forth. I was also beginning to use a personal computer with its spell check and word count tools for word processing. Today the publishing process relies on e-mail and advanced word processing and design programs that make our earlier tools seem positively primitive in comparison.

During most of my brief tenure as editor I was a parish pastor serving in northern Illinois, following 10 years on the AFLC Schools faculty. My wife, Gloria, and I still had living parents, and our son and daughter were attending the Association Free Lutheran Bible School. Today, after 15 years as AFLC president, I have re-

turned to a full-time faculty ministry. Our children both have celebrated their 40th birthdays, and we are the proud grandparents of five boys. This fall I hope to attend my 50th high school class reunion in Escanaba, Mich.

Technological advances in the publishing world make possible a magazine that is consistently improving, and I am especially looking forward to working with our gifted managing editor, Ruth Gunderson, who is responsible for the professionalism and just plain hard work that go into each issue. Advances

in my personal world include age, of course, so be prepared for an occasional note of “geezer-ness” in the editorials, as well as a few grandchildren illustrations. The year 2012 will mark the golden anniversary of the AFLC, and one of my goals is to devote significant space in our church paper to this important milestone throughout the year.

The opening editorial by our first editor, Pastor Raynard Huglen, in the first issue of the *Lutheran Ambassador*, spoke of a task that was “strange and difficult,” to be undertaken with “fear and trembling.” But he also included a note of confidence in the Lord and His ability to supply the wisdom that was so necessary. For a second time I assume the position of editor with the same confidence, and remind you to remember this ministry in prayer.

“And now we will proceed to the task in Jesus’ name.”

Remember the HIS Fund

Every month there is a special promotional emphasis among our congregations, when one of our common endeavors is highlighted—except for November and December, when all ministries are promoted. During the month of October, the HIS Fund is remembered, perhaps the most unfamiliar of our projects.

HIS stands for Help In Service, and it is a special fund to assist laborers for the Lord who may encounter emergency financial distress. It is administered by the

For a second time I assume the position of editor with the same confidence [in the Lord], and remind you to remember this ministry in prayer.

AFLC Benefits Board, in consultation with the AFLC president, and grants are given confidentially when the needs become known. This endeavor is rightly named, for it is His fund, and all provision is from Him.

It has been customary for many of our congregations to receive a special offering during the month of October for the HIS Fund, while other congregations include it in their annual budgets. Individual gifts are also gratefully received.

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

Periodicals

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

association *retreat* center

Giving God His due honor

BY GENE VUKONICH

Your life and what you do with it is important to God. It's often been said that the loneliest moment in life is when you have just experienced that which you thought would deliver the ultimate satisfaction, and it has let you down.

So what direction do we take to discern God's will for our lives? Evangelist Ravi Zacharias tied our life's work to our worship of God in an address to a student body. He spoke about what worship is, what worship does, and why worship is the key to meaning in life. He stated that there are three indispensable ingredients for meaning in worship: a sense of wonder, truth, and love. A sense of wonder appeals to the conscience while a sense of love appeals to the will. You cannot worship God without emotion any more than you can love your family without emotion.

The Lord says in Malachi 1:6, "If then I am a father, where is my honor?" In India, the word for father is *pita* and the word for mother is *mata*. But fathers are never called *pita*. Instead, they are called *pitaji* and mothers are called *mataji*. The best translation of the word *ji* would be our word *sir*. What God is saying is: "You've gotten close to me, You call me Daddy, but please don't forget the 'sir.'" You cannot worship God without reverence. Some things in life are sacred. When you worship God, all of your life becomes sacred. Don't forget the respect He is due.

"When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that not evil? And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that not evil? ... You bring what has been taken by violence or is lame or sick, and this

you bring as your offering! 'Shall I accept that from your hand?' says the LORD" (Malachi 1:8, 13, ESV). Sacrilege is taking something that belongs to God and using it profanely. Sacrilege also consists of giving something to God that means nothing to you.

If you are an athlete, run under the power of God to the glory of God. If you're a vocalist, let your voice sound forth His praise with all that is within you. If you are a preacher, preach with your heart's passion, and if you are a student, with your mind study—give it everything you've got. Whatever you are doing should be done to the glory of God, because everything has meaning.

Prioritize your devotional hours every day of your life. Let nothing violate it and you will never regret it. Discipline your life to give Him your best. Allow God to be the ultimate point of all references.

As we desire to know God's will for our lives, we will notice that God has given us special gifts. We could use them to show off to others around us, but there is one place I cannot show off: my prayer closet. Paul reminds us in II Corinthians 5:10, "For we must all stand before Christ to be judged. We will each receive whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done in this earthly body" (NLT).

Vukonich, a member of Amery Free Lutheran, Amery, Wis., serves as head of the maintenance staff at the ARC, Osceola, Wis.