



## FLY 2011





# Sowing &

BY KAYLA PAIGE

**E**nrobed in blue, we followed Andrew Hanson's gestures as he conducted us from the triumphant swelling of the chorus into hushed intensity. I remember singing solemn-eyed the words, "O Lord, when I am weary / When I feel the days I'm living are in vain / My God, help me be faithful to the word You have given to proclaim."

As the music continued we built in volume and yielded to joy. Even during my time in the AFLBS Proclaim Choir, I reveled in that well-beloved song, "This Is My Word." Yet at that point I couldn't truly appreciate the lyrics.

By now I've experienced enough of the tears and laughter of serving God to understand those words better. Just a few weeks ago, while in Russia teaching second-graders about Jesus, I felt again the weight of weariness. "Was I living in vain?" I wondered to myself after an exhausting day of trying to communicate truth across cultural barriers with no evidence of changing hearts. Was I simply wasting my time, money, effort, and love?

Yearning for some peace from God's Word I came across these verses from Psalm 126, "Those who sow in tears will reap with shouts of joy. Though one goes along weeping, carrying the bag of seed, he will surely come back with shouts of joy, carrying his sheaves." Sowing the Word of the kingdom is back-breaking labor which yields few immediate results. Birds snatch away the seeds, rocky ground leaves them rootless, thorns choke the life from them (Matthew 13: 3-7). Weeping may seem like the most



# reaping

natural response.

But the sack of seed is only one small part of the process. God tills and turns the soil so it can receive the seed. The Lord sends people to scatter and others to water. He gives sun and rain, and in due time the harvest ripens and some go out to reap.

Then joy lights every face. We live in this hope, eagerly expecting sheaves not because of the skill in our hands but because of the faithfulness of God Almighty. For what are we? Paul expresses our role in I Corinthians 3:7, "Neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth." Only He can create good soil which produces grain itself. We put our faith in the Word of His mouth.

A farmer believes that beneath that top layer of soil the dead-dry seeds are giving way to groping roots and green unfurled. Behind the squirms and blank expressions of second-graders we pray, too, that the Lord works the quiet miracle of new life. When signs of faith first appear, we commit those to His keeping, as well. Surely we will come back with shouts of joy, bearing the sheaves. Only let us not grow weary and give up, "for in due season we will reap" (Galatians 6:9). Remain "faithful, brave, and true" while proclaiming the Word, certain that some of the seeds will fall on good soil and grow to bear their own crop. Anticipating the harvest, we can burst into joyful song!

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

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From FLY 2011

Jesus, the Lord of wrath, would suffer His own wrath  
to save us from it.

—Pastor Dana Coyle  
Wednesday evening speaker

[ The law and the gospel make a perfect combination: the one shows us our  
filth and the other cleans us from it. ]

— Pastor Eric Westlake  
Thursday evening speaker

Recognize that the seed of the Word of God has  
been planted in you and is growing.

—Pastor Brett Boe  
Senior high Bible study leader

It's not about what you feel that day. It's about what  
Christ has done for you.

—Pastor Todd Erickson  
Friday evening speaker





OUR KING  
ANSWERED.  
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JESUS, MANY  
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HIS MOTHER  
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JESUS FLOW  
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MISSION, HE CAME  
ND TOOK THE BODY AWAY. HE WAS ACCOMPANIED BY NICODEM  
ES, IN STRIPS OF L  
EN, THIS WAS IN ACCORDANCE WITH JEWISH BURIAL CUSTOMS. A  
WB WAS NEARBY. THE L  
JESUS THERE, EARLY ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK, WHILE E  
D AND SAID, "THEY HA  
N THE LORD OUT OF THE TOMB, AND WE DON'T KNOW WH  
STRIPS OF LINEN LYING THERE, BUT DID NOT GO IN. THEN SIMON PETER, WHO WAS BEHE  
NALLY THE OTHER DISCIPLE, W  
ND SAW TWO ANGELS IN WHITE, SEAT  
RE, BUT SHE DID NOT REALIZE THAT  
ND SAID OUT IN ARAMAIC, "RABBO  
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CIPLES  
VERJOYED WITH  
DYMUS ONE  
ISCIPLES WERE IN THE  
HIM, "MY LORD AND MY G  
T JESUS IS THE CHRIST, THE SON OF  
I'M GOING OUT TO FISH," SIMON PETER TO  
O," THEY ANSWERED. HE SAID, "THROW YOUR NET  
HE HAD TAKEN  
BRING SOME OF THE FISH YOU HAVE JUST CAUGHT," SIMON PE  
HAD AND GAVE IT TO THEM, AND DID THE SAME THING. HE FISH  
MANY MARKS. AGAIN JESUS SAID, "SIMON SON OF JOHN, DO YOU  
LOVE ME? YOU KNOW THAT I LOVE YOU," JESUS SAID, "FEED MY SHEEP."  
WHICH PETER WOULD  
ORIFY GOD. THEN HE SAID TO HIM  
ST SAID, "IF I WANT TO, I CAN REMAIN ALIVE UNTIL I RETURN WHO  
TESTIFIES TO THESE THINGS AND WHO WRITES THEM DOWN  
WISTED TO GIVE HIM A CROWN OF THORNS AND PUT IT ON HIM  
ED AGAINST HIM. WHEN JESUS CAME TO HIM, HE SAID, "DO NOT  
WISTED, "WE HAVE A LAW AND ACCORDING TO THAT LAW, WE  
OWER EITHER TO FREE YOU OR TO CRUCIFY YOU?" JESUS AN  
ANYONE WHO CLAIMS TO BE A KING OPPOSES CAESAR."  
OUTED, "TAKE HIM AWAY. TAKE HIM AWAY. CRUCIFY HIM."  
ED GOLGOTHA. HERE THEY CRUCIFIED HIM, AND WITH HIM  
IN ARAMAIC, LATIN AND GREEK. THE CHIEF PRIESTS OF  
THE JEWISH RELIGION WERE DIVIDING UP HIS CLOTHES. THE  
WHICH THE SOLDIERS WERE DRAWING THE LOT OF JESUS  
TIME ON THE CRUCIFIX. PETER, WHO HAD BEEN THE FIRST  
NK JESUS SAID, "IT IS FINISHED. MY LORD, MY LORD, MY LORD,  
PORT CAME DOWN FROM THE TOP OF THE CRUCIFIX.  
THE HEAVENS TO GIVE HIM A SIGN AND A SEAL OF HIS REIGN.





# IT IS WRITTEN

JESUS DID MANY OTHER MIRACULOUS SIGNS  
IN THE PRESENCE OF HIS DISCIPLES,  
WHICH ARE NOT RECORDED IN THIS BOOK.  
BUT THESE ARE WRITTEN  
THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE  
THAT JESUS IS THE CHRIST,  
THE SON OF GOD,  
AND THAT BY BELIEVING  
YOU MAY HAVE LIFE IN HIS NAME.

~ JOHN 20:30-31



BY PASTOR CRAIG JOHNSON

**O**n July 4, 1776, the colonists in America declared their independence and freedom from England. Beginning on July 4, 2011, 1,776 people gathered in Estes Park, Colo., to rejoice in the freedom that is found in Jesus.

The Free Lutheran Youth national convention took place July 4-8 at the YMCA of the Rockies. Students and adults came from all over the country to spend time worshiping the Lord, studying God's Word, making new friends, enjoying the beauty of God's creation and having fun. The 1,776 in attendance included 1,054 students, 79 children, 233 counselors and 410 adults and staff.

The theme of the convention was "It Is Written." That theme was expanded upon during the morning Bible studies as students were encouraged to view God's Word as a gracious, practical and useful gift. Pastor Jonathan Unverzagt, Onalaska, Wis., taught the study for the junior high students and Pastor Brett Boe of Dalton, Minn., taught the high school students.

Also in the mornings, following the Bible study time, a wide variety of electives were offered. Students from the Association Free Lutheran Bible School put on a musical as a way of sharing information about life at AFLBS. Teaching was done on what the Bible says about the end times. A student shared about how God has helped him battle mental illness. Sessions were held on discerning truth, why we can trust that the Bible is true and what it means to stand on the truth. Some electives were also offered encouraging and teaching adults who are involved in youth ministry.

In the afternoons at FLY a number of recreation opportunities were available. Hiking in the surrounding area and venturing into the nearby Rocky Mountain National Park was a popular option. For those interested in sports, basketball, volleyball and ultimate Frisbee tournaments were held. A miniature golf course and a swimming pool were available. Artists were given a chance to use their talents in areas of painting, language art and charcoal art. A talent show was held one afternoon. Another afternoon the "wildest compilation of youth group games in the history of mankind" was conducted at the Friday Fun Freakout.

The Thursday afternoon of FLY was set aside for local youth groups to gather and discuss what God was doing in their lives. They spent time praying for their local youth group and congregation and taking part in various fun activities as a group.

The evening services were a time of worship with music, an offering and preaching of God's Word. Ancient truths that had been written were declared. Hymns of the church were sung, sometimes set to new arrangements. Some of the music included newer songs that declare timeless truths. The song "Manifesto" was sung at the opening service of the convention and at the convention's close. The words of the song state a belief in the one true God. It declares: "We are free; He died and lives again. We will be a people free from sin. We'll be free; a kingdom with no end." The song also includes the words of the Lord's Prayer. It epitomized what many students at the convention desired, to hear and pro-

claim the truths of Scripture.

Scriptural truths were presented each evening. Often the truth was not necessarily easy to hear, but it was still welcomed by the students. Pastor Dana Coyle of Newark, Ill., shared about the reality of God's wrath. He also shared the good news of how the wrath of God has been satisfied by Jesus at the cross.

Counselors were available after the evening services for students to meet with if they wanted to pray and talk with someone about starting a relationship with Jesus. Counselors were also available in the evenings and during the day to talk with students about other issues they may have been wrestling with.

After the evening services was a break time, followed by an event called "NightLYF." NightLYF included humorous games, videos, and testimonies that were part pre-recorded and part live. The students sharing testimonies discussed struggles they had gone through such as battling depression, contemplating suicide, and issues with family and friends. They also spoke of finding hope and strength in Jesus.

At one evening's NightLYF a visual drama portrayed the story of Jesus at the cross. The hymn "Softly and Tenderly" was sung. Those in attendance were then asked to leave the building in silence.

On Thursday evening The Skit Guys' Tommy Woodard and Eddie James taught God's Word using comedy and drama. They have produced a number of DVDs and have videos on the Internet that are widely popular with many students and youth groups. At the convention they shared during part of the evening service and during the hour of NightLYF.

The two-year process of planning the FLY convention was led by FLY President Daniel Keinanen and the 2011 FLY committee, with assistance from the AFLC Youth Board and Youth Ministries Director Jason Holt. During the convention Pastor Brett Boe was elected president for FLY 2013, which is planned for July 1-5 at Estes Park.

A highlight video from FLY 2011 is available on the convention's Web site: [aflc.org/youth/fly](http://aflc.org/youth/fly). Also available on the same site are videos of the messages from the evening services.

At the Thursday evening service, Pastor Eric Westlake of Zumbrota, Minn., shared the law, stating: "You'll never know you need a Savior unless you know you're a sinner." He also declared the gospel: the good news of what Jesus has done and how He can clean up lives. The invitation was given at the close for ones to come forward if they wanted to make a commitment to Christ. Many responded and were connected with counselors. Another invitation was then given for ones to come forward and express thanks to God. Many responded to that invitation as well. The song was sung, "Savior, He can move the mountains. My God is mighty to save." At the convention in the mountains, the God who can move mountains demonstrated again that He is mighty to save.





LEFT: Students play a part in an elective skit.  
 ABOVE: A student listens during a workshop.  
 TOP: A visual drama depicting Jesus' work on the cross during NightLYF.







# GOD'S LOVE HAS NO END



During ARTiculate at FLY 2011, teens and adults had the opportunity to attend a workshop where they learned how to write about their faith in an historical psalm patterned after Psalm 136. The following are excerpts from their work:

Many people have impacted my life,  
*for God's love has no end.*  
My parents take care of me everyday,  
*for God's love has no end.*  
At FLY 2011 Pastor Jonathan Unverzagt taught me that Jesus  
lives in me,  
*for God's love has no end.*  
Pastor Eric Rasmussen has taught me the Bible in confirmation  
and youth group,  
*for God's love has no end.*

By Matthew Lein  
Calvary Free Lutheran, Fergus Falls, Minn.

There have been many sad events with happiness,  
*for God's love has no end.*  
My grandma was sick for six months and recovered,  
*for God's love has no end.*  
My dad never came home from jail; it was heartbreaking,  
*but God's love has no end.*  
Happiness came forth with my Savior Jesus,  
*for God's love has no end.*

By Rachel Beekman  
First Baptist, Nogalas, Ariz.

I have had several moments that contributed to my spiritual  
growth,  
*for God's love has no end.*  
My baptism into a life with the Lord,  
*for God's love has no end.*  
My confirmation to proclaim my faith,  
*for God's love has no end.*  
And attendance at FLY to help me understand my life in Jesus,  
*for God's love has no end.*

By Morgan Mattheis  
Prince of Peace Lutheran, Beulah, N.D.

God is the God of answered prayer,  
*for God's love has no end.*  
When I came searching for God, He revealed Himself to me  
through His Word,  
*for God's love has no end.*  
When I lost my focus and life got hard, God calmed life's storms,  
*for God's love has no end.*  
I prayed with answers already assumed. God knew better and  
answered according to His will.  
*for God's love has no end.*

By George Lautner  
Abiding Savior Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D.

In my life there have been times of God's revealing presence,  
*for God's love has no end.*  
During my life-changing Bible school years, God's Word truly  
became God breathed to me,  
*for God's love has no end.*  
A resident in our son's case unit said that our handicapped son  
was God's gift to me,  
*for God's love has no end.*  
Our handicapped son signed that Jesus was present in his hospi-  
tal room,  
*for God's love has no end.*

By Faith Nelson  
Grace Free Lutheran, Maple Grove, Minn.

I am thankful for how many times God has answered my  
prayers,  
*for God's love has no end.*  
My dad had cancer twice, and I prayed everyday that he would  
be healed,  
*for God's love has no end.*  
Last month we got the news that the cancer is completely gone;  
it will never come back,  
*for God's love has no end.*  
My brother and I were in a rollover, and I prayed we would both  
be okay. All we had were a couple of scratches,  
*for God's love has no end.*

By Gabbie Plessner  
Chippewa Lutheran, Brandon, Minn.

Give thanks for God's faithfulness as He has answered prayers in  
my life,  
*for God's love has no end.*  
The birth of my children and their acceptance of Christ in their  
lives,  
*for God's love has no end.*  
The placement of prayerful and encouraging people in my life,  
*for God's love has no end.*  
His provisions for my family as we have been called into the  
ministry,  
*for God's love has no end.*

By Christine Lautner  
Abiding Savior Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D.

Compiled by Linda Lein  
Calvary Free Lutheran, Fergus Falls, Minn.



# DON'T DREAD THE DESCENT

BY ANDREW KNEELAND

**T**he problem with having a youth convention in the mountains is that, eventually, we need to come back down.

For the 11th time, the Free Lutheran Youth Convention was held in Estes Park, Colo., about 1.4 miles above sea level. And for the 11th time, the hundreds of students who made the journey up were forced to make the journey down.

We're not alone. Peter, James and John dealt with this, too. After Jesus was transfigured before them on a high mountain, the three disciples had to face the reality of returning to the masses. Fortunately for them, and for us, the same Jesus who revealed His glory on the heights joined them for the trek back home.

At the 2011 FLY Convention, Jesus revealed his glory to more than 1,700 students through dozens of godly men and women. The theme of the convention was "It Is Written," and the evening speakers focused their message on the promises of Scripture, specifically of the law and gospel.

It was a convicting week. The beautiful promise of the gospel cannot be fully appreciated without an understanding of the excruciating details of the law. As it is written in 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." That verse becomes even sweeter when we start to grasp the magnitude of God's holy wrath. Hundreds of students took Christ up on that offer of forgiveness and purification, many for the first time.

Further encouragement and application was given in the elective hours and morning Bible studies. Here's a sampling:

Nathan Olson taught us how to pray for and respond to the persecuted church. Pastor Wade Mobley shared a few biblical principles on money management. Pastor John Eidsmoe took students through the book of Daniel and shared on the proper application of civil disobedience. Pastor Tim Johnson relayed what God has to say about authority, and Elizabeth Lackey helped students navigate through grief and depression.

Sarah Langness told students that God doesn't make mistakes, and that His view of you should change the way you view yourself. Eric and Leslie Ludy explored how the gospel calls believers to be God's hands and feet to the lost, weak and poor.

Jerry Nelson helped us re-charge our spiritual batteries, and David Osthus helped prepare students for college-level science classes.

David Olson explored the true meaning of worship, and Mark Olson helped train students to share the life-transforming message of Christ. Ryan Tonneson talked about what Christians should do after giving their lives to Jesus, and Analaya Unverzagt helped students discover God's will for their lives.

Pastor Brett Boe, of the Dalton Free Lutheran Parish, Dalton, Minn., and president of the 2013 FLY Committee, took the senior high students through the books of Peter during the morning Bible study hour. Boe guided new believers through the first steps of their infant faith, and taught that salvation is the goal of our faith, and should fill us with inexpressible joy.

During the junior high Bible study hour each morning, Pastor Jonathan Unverzagt of Christ is Lord Free Lutheran, Onalaska, Wis., taught on the mystery of "Christ in me."

It was an encouraging and uplifting week in a mountain paradise; hearts were won, spirits were refreshed and lives were changed as we stood in the presence of God. There's really no need to dread the descent.

After receiving the two tablets on Mt. Sinai, Moses' face was literally aglow from his nearness to God. As he made the hike down the mountain, his radiant face gradually faded. Moses hid this dimming by putting a veil over his face, and would eagerly wait another chance to be in the presence of God.

We don't need a veil. In fact, God can continually reflect His glory through our lives.

It can be tough to come back to the real world after a mountain-top experience like FLY 2011, but thanks to the mystery of "Christ in me," Jesus comes down the mountain with us. And His glory shines through us.

"And we all, with unveiled face, *beholding the glory of the Lord*, are being *transformed into the same image* from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit" (II Corinthians 3:18, ESV, my emphasis).

*Kneeland is a member of Abiding Savior Free Lutheran, Tucson, Ariz.*





LEFT: Pastor Todd Erickson spoke Friday evening.  
ABOVE: Students laugh during Jordan Langness' elective.  
TOP: Campers did the wave while waiting to take the large group picture.





# A LIFE CHANGED

BY CASSIDY BABCOCK

## WHAT IS LIFE LIKE AT HOME?

For 15 years, I thought I had experienced firsthand what hell was like. My father had physically abused me and my family. There was a constant fear in my house. My father is a sex addict, too. When we confronted him about it, the abuse and fighting got worse. So we learned to deal with it.

My father traveled a lot, giving him the perfect opportunity to find prostitutes to satisfy his wants. He found one and moved her to our hometown. My mom started suspecting things. When my mom confronted my dad, everything broke loose. Events occurred that I should never have seen.

My parents divorced and my dad married this prostitute. They stole all of our money, leaving us pretty much broke. My mom is struggling to keep us off the streets. She has four kids to try to support. My father and his wife continue to threaten us. They have children and are not fit parents for them. They twist God's words and think that they are prophets of Jesus and are doing what God wants.

I am the second parent to my two brothers. One has high functioning autism and has harmful physical outbreaks, and the other is clingy because he has no father. I haven't experienced childhood myself and here I am trying to help raise these kids.

It becomes overwhelming and hard for me. Sometimes I

haven't been able to handle it. I have been in and out of the hospital because of suicide attempts. I honestly thought this was how I had to live life: resentful, upset, and depressed.

My family has been to church and we do believe in Jesus Christ. But we haven't given our total selves to Him. We tried to control and write our own story. We constantly blamed God for watching our torture and not doing anything about it. I have never felt so much hate for something or someone in my life. It should have been aimed toward Satan, but we were confused and directed it toward our Savior.

## HOW DID YOU GET TO FLY?

My best friend, Abby Avila, asked me to go with her. When Abby told me about the cost, I knew that we could not afford it. Abby replied that she would find a way to pay for me. People I do not know generously gave money to help send me to FLY.

## WHY DID YOU SURRENDER TO JESUS?

I think FLY was just the perfect opportunity for me to open up. I attended some workshops and Bible studies at the beginning of the week and got so overwhelmed with questions about God and my past and the relationship between them. I couldn't keep it in





LEFT: Students take notes during an elective.  
MIDDLE: Daniel Keinanen, outgoing president of FLY, prays with students after a service.  
ABOVE: Nicholas Tifft, Abiding Savior, Sioux Falls, S.D., gives his testimony.

anymore. I decided to open up to my counselor, Rachel Sudenga. When I did I could see the warmth and caring in her eyes and her soft words of faith melted my heart. I listened to what she and others were saying about Jesus and the Bible. I talked about it more and more with Rachel and Liz Avila and then decided that I wanted to be saved and that I needed Jesus more than ever.

I was terrified. I didn't want to give up the power and control I thought I had. They finally just said that if I wanted to I had to go for it. It was so hard to sit there and talk to Jesus. I didn't know what to say and if I was ready to say it. Finally I told Him that I needed Him and I was ready for Him to be in me and ready to follow Him. I cried like a baby.

I looked at my skin and was expecting a halo glow. I didn't see or feel anything and started to worry that maybe it was too late for me. But Liz and Abby reassured me that it would catch up to me in time. Sure enough I felt changed and like loads of worry, hate, and other feelings were off my back. I laid it down on Jesus, and I could feel Him take it away and put it on Himself to save me.

I felt an urge to call my dad and do the unthinkable: forgive him. I knew Jesus wanted me to do it, so I did. To be in a relationship with Jesus is the most incredible thing I have ever experienced.

Since FLY I learned that God was always there walking with us in our pain. He never let go of our hands. I learned that God is our

Savior and I should not think otherwise. All the darkness has led me closer to Jesus and to His open arms. My pain was intended for my happiness in the end. I have finally seen that.

## HOW WILL YOU STAY CONNECTED TO JESUS NOW THAT FLY IS OVER?

Before FLY I cannot remember reading the Bible, let alone opening it. In order to stay connected to Jesus, I am planning to meet with someone who can explain the verses of the Bible to me and help me practice it in my own life. I haven't been attending church in so long and cannot wait to break that practice. I am planning to get active in my faith and not hide in the shadows. I want to be the person God created me to be and help others grow in Him as I have. I am praying every single night, whether it be pleading for change or just explaining my gratitude and love for Him. I am not only speaking to Jesus, but listening.

*Babcock, Hudson, Wis., traveled with a group of teens from Abiding Savior Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D.*



# A job well done

*The Ambassador says farewell to its editor*

By Pastor Jerry Moan

What could be sweeter than to hear from the lips of the Master, “Well done, good and faithful servant”? Only by sheer grace can any mortal anticipate such approval. Yet in this life it is certainly fitting that we express our appreciation and thanks to God for our fellow workers—those who have been used of the Lord through the years to sharpen, challenge, encourage and bless us. In fact, Scripture admonishes us to do so:

“We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work” (1 Thessalonians 5:12–13a, ESV).

This expresses our heart toward our faithful editor, Pastor Craig Johnson, for his labor of love for the AFLC through the years. Craig has served as editor of *The Lutheran Ambassador* for nearly two decades, starting back in 1993. He grew up as a die-hard Dodgers fan in Astoria, Ore., graduating from high school in 1980 and from Willamette University in 1984.

Looking back, Craig can sense how God was preparing him during his younger years for this calling: “I worked on school newspapers in high school and college and studied writing and journalism,” he recalls, noting that, at one point, he even thought about a career in journalism. “I’ve always enjoyed newspapers and magazines and writing.”

Craig toyed with being a sports writer and had an opportunity to cover the football team in college. He has seen how “God can use various experiences” to prepare us for future ministry.

It was my privilege to get to know Craig as a classmate at the Free Lutheran Seminary. After graduating in 1988, Craig served Spencer Creek Lutheran, Eugene, Ore., from 1988–1997, was involved in church planting in Beaverton, Ore., from 1997–99, and has since shepherded Bethany Free Lutheran in his hometown of Astoria, Ore.

**Q** Pastor Craig, how does one juggle the ongoing editorial responsibilities of selecting themes and articles, securing writers, polishing editorials, and editing submissions while seeking to meet the needs of a congregation?

**A** That can be complicated. I’ve always been a pastor first and editor second and try to fit the magazine work around the needs of the congregation. I’ve been a full-time pastor all the time I’ve served as editor. Solveig [Hjermstad] and Ruth [Gunderson] have been understanding and the congregations I’ve served have been supportive. The thought has been that there’s value in having the editor be a pastor—that it keeps the magazine connected to the congregations. I believe that’s valuable but it can be tough to find the time if you’re serving a busy, active congregation.

**Q** Just out of curiosity, how many editorials do you suppose you have penned during your editorship?

**A** We were doing 22 issues a year when I started. Then it went to 16 a year for a few years, and now we’re at 12. [Estimated grand total is] 248, I believe.

**Q** Has there been a sense of vision that has guided you in the work?

**A** Early on Pastor John Strand encouraged me to view the magazine as the voice of the congregations. It’s the congregations sharing with the congregations. We serve the congregation. I’ve tried to continually be thinking—*What do the congregations need? What are the congregations interested in? What’s going on in the congregations?*

**Q** What would you see as one of the biggest challenges for the editor?

**A** Finding writers is maybe the ongoing challenge. We know there are folks in the church body with gifts and with stories to share, but finding them is sometimes a challenge.

**Q** What are some of the things you’ve been especially thankful for in your years of service?

**A** The people I’ve been blessed to work with—Solveig, Ruth, Bea Anderson, Charlotte Fruehauf and our printer Ellis Bloomfield; ones who have served as advisors—Pastor Bob Lee, Pastor Elden Nelson and others. And to people around the country who have prayed and been supportive. I’m also grateful for the opportunity to share in an expanded ministry role like this. I’ve appreciated the opportunity to be creative and serve the church body. I’ve felt a freedom to serve.

**Q** What would be your vision for the ministry of *The Lutheran Ambassador* in the days ahead?

**A** I trust it will continue to be congregation-centered and focused. I expect that the online presence with the Web site and Facebook page will expand.

**Q** Any thoughts on how life might change with fewer deadlines looming? Any concerns about “editor’s withdrawal” syndrome?

**A** I’m still very much a full-time pastor so I’m not expecting a bunch of free time. But it will be a change not having the monthly deadline. I hope to continue to do some writing but it’ll take discipline to do it without having a deadline.

Readers, if you’ve been blessed by Pastor Craig’s ministry, why not tell him so? You can e-mail him at [craigj@teleport.com](mailto:craigj@teleport.com).





TOP LEFT: Pastor Craig Johnson, who serves Bethany Free Lutheran, Astoria, Ore., has served as the editor of *The Lutheran Ambassador* since 1993. As he leaves the editor's position, he plans to focus on congregational ministry, pursue writing and possibly further education.

ABOVE: Pastor Craig Johnson traveled to Uganda, Africa, in 2008, where he visited with AFLC missionaries Pastor Nate and Rhoda Jore.

TOP RIGHT: Pastor Craig Johnson (far right) arrived at the 2005 FLY Convention via limo.

Well done, brother. Thanks for your faithful work and blessings on the path ahead. "Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith." (Hebrews 13:7).

*Moan, who is a full-time faculty member at the AFLC Schools in Plymouth, Minn., is a member of The Lutheran Ambassador editorial board.*

MIDDLE: Johnson during his 2008 trip to Uganda and Tanzania, Africa.

ABOVE: Johnson and Pastor Brian Davidson.



# it *is* written

BY JORDAN LANGNESS

**H**aving been able to watch hundreds of youth respond to the call of Jesus Christ and His gospel message of salvation, being surrounded by loved ones and a jaw-dropping backdrop of the snow-capped mountains of God's creation, and experiencing afresh the fellowship of the body of Christ, I am at a loss as how to best communicate the full impact of the most recent FLY convention upon my life. I think one of the girls in my youth group said it best when she stated, "I don't think one word is adequate to describe FLY; awesome is an understatement."

For me, FLY 2011 somewhat began way back in the fall of 2009 as I began my duties as the youth board liaison to the FLY Committee. The meetings came and went and suddenly it was July and I was on my way to Colorado to help with the final prep work. What a strange experience it is to stand in the Longhouse void of chairs, stage, people, tables, sound equipment, and everything else needed to put on a great convention. After getting things set up and discussing our final preparations, it was time to await the rest of the 1,776 people who were on their way to FLY. In some sense, I felt as if I now knew what the colonialists felt after Paul Revere rode through the streets alarming the citizens of the imminent arrival of the British troops.

Within just a few hours, most of those 1,776 people were on the campus of the YMCA and pouring into the Longhouse for the first evening service. As the services and festivities of FLY continued throughout the week, it was very evident that Someone else who was not counted among the 1,776 people had showed up: the Living God! Every night we encountered the truths of Scripture as the speakers brought before us the Word of the Lord. The Holy Spirit had been working in them and coordinated a series of messages that clearly showed us our sinful condition, the living wrath of a holy and righteous God toward that sin, and His amazing gift of placing His immeasurable wrath on His perfect Son who offers to us His perfection as He took our sin upon Himself.

God's Word does not return void, and the Word that went

forth that week resulted in hundreds of youths responding to God's call in their lives, dealing with unconfessed sin, recommitting themselves to following Jesus, and some even meeting Jesus for the first time! What a privilege to be a part of this work.

As I consider again the theme, "It Is Written," one word in particular stands out to me—is. You see, it *is* written. It isn't past tense or future tense. It is present tense. All too often we encounter the Lord in a special way at a conference, convention, retreat, or camp, and then get back home and slowly lose that freshness and excitement. Instead of remembering the Lord's call, it becomes a fond memory stored away for a different day. However, this theme reminds us that the Word that so powerfully moved among us during the week of FLY did not exist only at FLY, but is contained in each one of those New Testaments that was handed to every student. It is found in every Bible that can be downloaded onto your smart phone. That Word can convict, refresh, and rejuvenate each one of us right here at home as we come before the Lord bowed in prayer with our Bible in our lap.

It is up to us to determine what we are going to do with the Word that the Lord has made so readily available to each and every one of us. Will we get into it daily and allow it to transform our lives as we continue to believe that Jesus is the Christ? Or will we be content to go back to the life that we had pre-FLY? The choice is yours, but whatever you chose, remember that it *is* written.

"Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:30-31).

Head to [www.aflc.org/youth/fly](http://www.aflc.org/youth/fly) to check out the evening messages.

*Langness, a member of the AFLC Youth Board, is a youth worker at Prince of Peace Lutheran, Beulah, N.D.*







# A call to God's mission

BY LORI WILLARD

**W**hat would I do without my youth group?" That was my cry as a teenager. As a young wife and mom, I would say, "What would I do without my women's Bible studies?" Of course, our heart's cry should also be, "What would I do without my Jesus?"

Much is learned in those church programs—the Bible coming alive in our lives, fellowship bonds becoming stronger, caring for others as we identify with them—we become family, the family of God.

Those ties also go beyond the walls of our church as we become involved in other ministries in our community and beyond.

As a young girl, I was intrigued with missions as my vacation Bible school teacher, Mrs. Norma Haag, read a story of Amy Carmichael to

us. A few years later, at Dickey Lake Bible Camp, I gave my heart to Jesus. At another Bible camp, the pastor gave an altar call and asked, "Is the Lord calling you into missions?"

I stepped forward and told the Lord, "I'll go wherever You want me to go."

After my years at AFLBS (1974-76), I remember telling my mom, "I feel the Lord is calling me into full-time ministry, but I don't know what or where."

Mom told me that before I was born, she had prayed that I

would go into full-time ministry, but she was not going to say anything to me until I told her about my call. The Lord made it clear to me as I soon found myself becoming a pastor's wife.

One ministry adventure took us to the Army. As a chaplain's wife, I became involved in Protestant Women of the Chapel (PWOC). The weekly Bible study quickly became a continuation of my AFLBS years as we learned many practical aspects of the Christian life.

Being involved in congregational ministry brings me great joy as I come alongside my husband. Recently, the Lord has been showing me the importance of prayer. I don't always need to *do* but instead just *be*. It is important to focus on Jesus through personal devotions, then, as the Lord leads, I can *do*.

Supporting the start-up and growth of Mission Aviation Training Academy (MATA) truly answered the call I had as a little girl. As office manager, I had the privilege of encouraging and praying for mission-bound aviators and their families. One of my duties was to speak in churches, making congregations aware of mission aviation and inspiring them to support missions.

The Lord builds various experiences in our lives to further His work. As I have been *being* here in our small country town of Roseau, Minn., the Lord nudged me into using the various experiences He has given me to encourage missionaries (once again) and to inspire churches (once again), but this time in our own AFLC through the office of second vice president. Thank you, Lord, for the opportunity to share and work with AFLC women in the years ahead.

Hebrews 10:23-25 says, "Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we confess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching." Aren't you glad you're a part of the family of God?

*Willard, the newly elected second vice president of the Women's Missionary Federation, lives in Roseau, Minn.*





# Picking up the pieces

BY PASTOR ANDY COYLE

**S**t. Paul's Lutheran Church, built in 1827, was known to be one of the most beautiful and historic buildings in Odessa, Ukraine. In fact, it was the largest Lutheran church in the former Russian empire. Thousands worshiped our Lord there for roughly 110 years. However, due to the strong atheistic agenda of the Soviet regime, this beautiful church was closed down. The cross was removed, and this house of worship was transformed into a library, a gymnasium, and later a storehouse. Neglect and vandalism added to the abuse, and in 1976 the church was set on fire. Besides the stone exterior, all was lost. This once beautiful church, a symbol of a thriving Lutheran community, was left in ruins.

Similarly, the body of Christ can be seen in this bit of history. Spiritual and social devastation was designed and carried out to brutal perfection by an oppressive, atheistic government. Families, society and the church were left in ruins.

Yet it did not remain this way. Jesus said in Matthew 16:18 "... I will build my church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it." We are thankful that despite the trials, God is faithful and He is indeed building His Church. Religious freedom, granted in 1992, has allowed for the gradual rebuilding of the Body of Christ here. God is working through his Word and Spirit to bring life once again to the Church in Ukraine.

God has called Monica and me to join this movement of God in helping rebuild this spiritual house. Congregations are struggling. Godly and mature leadership is needed at all levels. One of



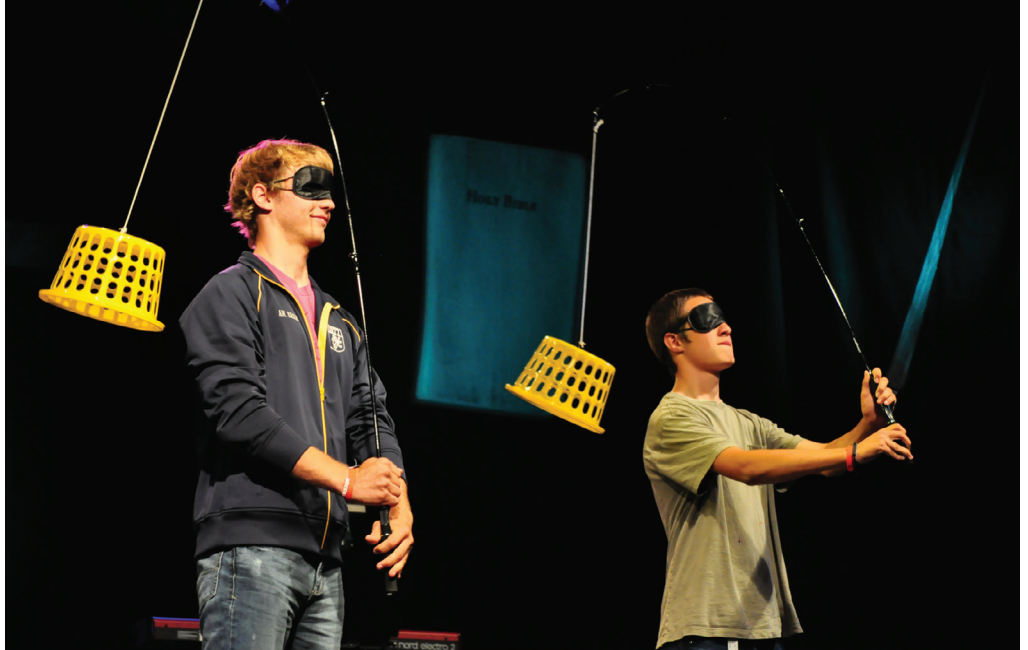
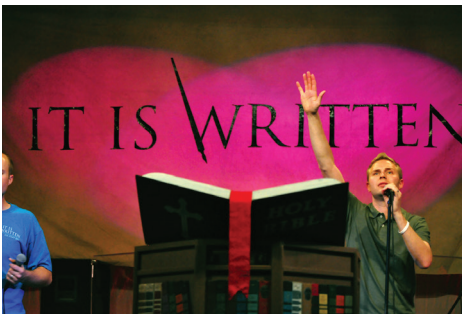
the key tools God is using is biblical training. With each passing month, we move closer and closer to our intended mission: Bible school ministry. In fact, a Bible school is scheduled to open a year from now in the fall of 2012. This school is designed to be a place where young men and women are taught the Word of God and trained for ministry at the congregational level. It is a big vision and a vital cog in the rebuilding of the Church.

Today, after eight years of restoration, St. Paul's Lutheran Church has returned to its former glory. It is once again a house of worship. While the physical reconstruction simply requires brick, mortar, and funding, the spiritual rebuilding of the Church has taken much longer. Seventy years of cultural, spiritual, familial destruction isn't easy to dispose. Much like the cathedral, this young church by the grace of God is picking up the pieces. People are finding forgiveness and restoration in Christ.

I would encourage you to pray for the Lutheran Church in Ukraine. Pray for God's Word to penetrate hearts. Pray for people to come to repentance and faith in Christ. Finally, pray for this Bible school and the students who will attend. We are so thankful for your prayers for us in these past few months, and as we look to God in the future. Praise be to our Lord as He faithfully builds His Church.

*Coyle and his wife, Monica, and their three children are AFLC missionaries on loan to East European Missions Network and are serving in Odessa, Ukraine.*





TOP TO BOTTOM: The theme of FLY 2011. Pastor Eric Westlake. Youth groups arrived Monday, tired after many hours on their buses. Amanda Aldrich takes part in a youth ministry workshop. Elise Hylden speaks at a workshop on loneliness.

TOP: Students were challenged with a Minute to Win It competition each night during NightLYF.

MIDDLE: Grandpa "Mikey" Johnson narrated a story time during NightLYF.

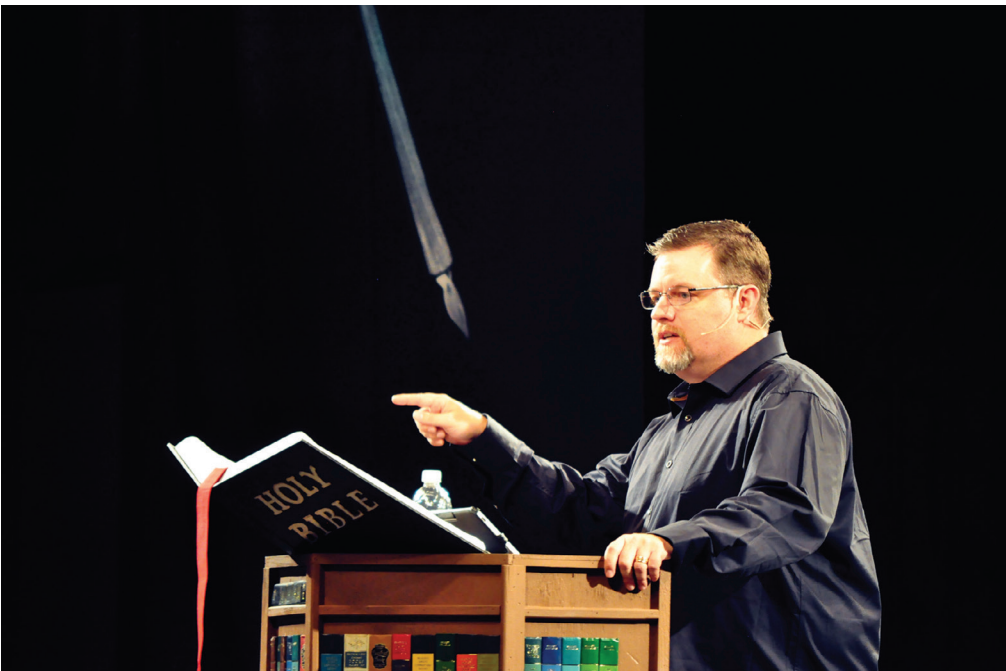
ABOVE LEFT: Jordan Langness dressed up as a redneck for his workshop aimed at helping kids break through the ordinary to be themselves.

ABOVE RIGHT: Students met in the Longhouse each evening for services and NightLYF.





ABOVE: The Skit Guy's Tommy Woodard and Eddie James were a featured highlight Thursday night at FLY. The comedy duo performed a quick skit to introduce the message, and were then featured during NightLYF. Among their many skits was a portrayal of Adam and Eve



ABOVE: Chris Rosebrough, founder of Pirate Christian Radio, was the featured speaker Monday night to kick off the week at the YMCA of the Rockies in Estes Park, Colo.

RIGHT: Elected to the 2013 FLY Committee are Nathan Olson, Jon Langness, David Olson, Pastor Brett Boe and Christina Osthus.



Stephen Quanbeck, Owen Parsley and Tim Herset bring some fun to the closing night,





# Latin American Lutheran Mission celebrates 75 years

This year marks the 75th anniversary of Latin American Lutheran Mission's beginnings. Our pioneering founder, Myrtle Nordin, first evangelized in Colombia, South America. Later she redirected her efforts to the Hispanic peoples in South Texas and Northern Mexico. In Colombia the result was a Lutheran work which has continued to the present. In Mexico many pastors were trained and deployed and to this day a robust Evangelical Lutheran Church of Mexico with 20 congregations is growing and reaching out with the love of Jesus in their rapidly changing world.

Our Christian calling is to keep the challenges of world missions, evangelism and church planting always before us. For many years the mission has continued to be an inter-Lutheran faith ministry providing semi-annual training in doctrine and practice for the pastors and leaders of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Mexico. The mission's coordination of short-term mission groups has been a transforma-

tive experience for hundreds of youth and adults and a significant aspect of the missions' ministry for more than 25 years. Since 2004 we have concentrated on empowering the women's movement of the Lutheran Church of Mexico, and have sponsored ten workshops to equip teachers for the Christian education ministries of the churches of Mexico.

Under the theme, "An Unchanging Gospel for a Changing World," the Latin American Lutheran Mission invites the participation of Lutherans everywhere to join them Nov. 11-13 at Wooddale Lutheran Church, 4003 Wooddale Avenue S., St. Louis Park, Minn., to celebrate what Jesus has done. There will be special presentations on understanding the changes and trends which challenge mission work today, a celebration of the service of both staff and the many volunteers from across the Lutheran spectrum who have given so much of themselves in Jesus' name, and, of course, a look at future opportunities and directions.

Among the memorable events in this conference will be a concert by Lutheran musician Dave Anderson as well as the music of the Kinsmen Quartet. Our Mexican pastors and their families have been planning and practicing great music for us, as well. The Saturday evening banquet and dinner will feature a keynote address and the installation service of a new director for the mission.

A revised and updated edition of the history of the mission is being printed and will be available at the celebration.

The public is cordially invited to attend the sessions beginning on Friday at 1:30 and continuing on Saturday at 10 a.m. through the evening banquet and program at 5:30 p.m. Mark your calendars. A lot of prayer and planning has gone into making this a most impactful conference, a season of refreshment from the presence of the Lord. Registration for the sake of meal planning is encouraged either by calling Rose Marie Anderson at 952-470-0109 or on-line at [lalm-elcm.org](http://lalm-elcm.org).

## People and Places

**Pastor Tom Baker**, Plainview, Texas, has accepted a call to serve as chaplain at Marshall Formby Prison and JB Wheeler Prison in Plainview.

**Pastor John Mundfrom**, Eugene, Ore., has accepted a call to serve Skrefsrud Lutheran Church, rural Beresford, S.D.

Members of the Coordinating Committee accepted a resolution of

affiliation from **New Hope Lutheran**, Jamestown, N.D.

**Pastor Roy Johnson** has resigned from serving Hope Lutheran, Northome, Minn., and will retire.

**Pastor Louis Balderach** has resigned from serving Faith Lutheran, Weslaco, Texas, and will retire.

**Pastor Jason Gudim**, a 2011 graduate of AFLTS, was ordained and installed at Faith Lutheran, Minneapolis, with Pastor Elden Nelson officiating.

**St. Paul's Lutheran**, Leitersburg, Md., celebrated the congregation's 185th anniversary on Aug. 7. **Zion-Sarpsborg Lutheran**, Dalton, Minn., celebrated the congregation's 100th anniversary on Aug. 7.

## ARC to host Classics' Retreat

The Classics Retreat will be held Sept. 9-11 for those ages 55 and older. The cost is \$75/person or \$130/couple. Leaders will be Jim and Cindy Lilly, Hope Lutheran, Minneapolis and Pastor John and Barbara Skeie.

The Lillys have served their church in various capacities for the last 21 years. They are currently short term mission assistants with the AFLC, working in Cuenca, Ecuador. They will present a unique and challenging approach to saying yes to God by examining "which side of the cross you are living on."

The Skeies have been in ministry for more than 50 years. John, a retired pastor, is currently serving part-time as chaplain at Good Samaritan Home, New Hope, Minn.

For more information, contact the ARC by e-mail at [arcregistration@centurytel.net](mailto:arcregistration@centurytel.net) or call 800-294-2877, or visit the ARC Web site at [www.arc-aflc.org](http://www.arc-aflc.org).

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

FUND	REC'D IN JULY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$20,540	\$165,464	\$190,623
Evangelism	5,065	60,901	76,018
Youth Ministries	4,978	70,777	87,254
Parish Education	6,799	67,504	68,499
Seminary	11,733	123,620	121,129
Bible School	33,753	271,233	279,917
Home Missions	32,160	257,505	283,658
World Missions	21,713	248,298	162,066
Personal Support	34,392	216,707	185,755
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$171,134</b>	<b>\$1,482,008</b>	<b>\$1,454,918</b>

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



# Serving the congregation

When Solveig Hjermstad called me one evening in 1992, I thought she was going to ask me to write an article for *The Lutheran Ambassador*. I was surprised when, instead, she told me I was being considered for the position of editor of the magazine. The next year I started in the position and now, 18 years later, I am still a little surprised that I have been given the privilege of serving our congregations in this way.

Next issue Pastor Robert Lee will begin serving as interim editor of the magazine. Pastor Lee was my predecessor, serving as editor from 1990 to 1993. He was president of the AFLC from 1992 to 2007 and has been teaching at the AFLC Schools since 2007. I am thankful he is willing to use his talents and gifts to, once again, serve as editor.



Pastor Craig Johnson

As I look back on these past 18 years it is with much thanksgiving. I am thankful for Solveig Hjermstad, Ruth Gunderson, Bea Anderson and Charlotte Fruehauf, who I have been able to partner with in this work. I have been blessed to have such capable, gifted, creative and faithful co-workers. I am thankful for Ellis Bloomfield who has so faithfully served as our printer all these years. I appreciate advice and encouragement I have received over the years from many different people, including AFLC presidents Pastor Lee and Pastor Elden Nelson. I appreciate the freedom and support the AFLC Coordinating Committee has provided. I am thankful for ideas and input the Editorial Board has

given.

I am thankful for the congregations that I have pastored while serving as editor: Spencer Creek Lutheran, Eugene, Ore., and Bethany Lutheran, Astoria, Oregon. They have been supportive and encouraging and it has been a joy to serve them. I will continue to serve Bethany. Before I am a writer or editor I am a pastor, and I give thanks that I will continue to have that privilege. It is great to be a part of a local congregation.

I am also thankful for the recent Free Lutheran Youth convention and the teaching from God's Word we were able to feast on there.

As babies grow parents anticipate the time when they can start feeding them solid food. Spiritually, however, adults sometimes feed students "baby food" when they are ready for something a little more solid. A lot of solid food was shared at the FLY convention. Messages were on the law and the gospel, the wrath of God and how the wrath was satisfied in Christ. Students ate it up.

FLY 2011 had a lot of fun times. There were games and skits, a lot of laughter and some silliness. That's part of the joy of a youth gathering. Students, though, need and want more than just entertainment. When solid teaching from God's Word is presented in a well-prepared, clear and compelling manner, they respond.

I went away from FLY 2011 full of hope

for the future of our AFLC. We have many young adults and students with sharp minds and tender hearts. They care about God's Word and want to see it taught faithfully and accurately. They want to reach people with the love of Christ.

I hope those students—when they read verses like Ephesians 5:25: "Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her"—will think of their local congregation and love her like Jesus does. The local congregation usually isn't as big and exciting as events like FLY, but Jesus loves her and

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I am a pastor, and I give thanks  
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treasures her. The congregation is at the center of His work in the world.

I believe in the AFLC because I believe in the vision that "the congregation is the right form of the Kingdom of God on earth" (Fundamental Principle 1). As editor, as I have thought about the ministry of this magazine, I have tried to continually ask: "What does the local congregation need? What will serve the congregation?"

I am thankful to God and thankful to you, readers, for letting me serve our congregations in this ministry. Thanks be to God.



*something to share*

# Meaningful worship

BY RACHEL SCHIERKOLK

During every kids club, at the end of the lesson, my third and fourth graders would line up as speedily as they could to recite a Bible verse we had memorized. Omar was 10 at the time, as lovable as he was rambunctious, and on this particular day, very excited because after memorizing the verse all by himself he was now first in line for a prize.

In English the verse reads, “Thanks be to God for His ineffable gift.” The word *ineffable* is no more a part of a typical Spanish speaking child’s vocabulary than it is of an English speaking one’s. I explained that ineffable meant something like *indescribable*, but Omar was a bit too excited to pay much attention.

With his head tilted back, he opened his mouth and proclaimed, “Thanks be to God for his inflatable gift!”

I tried not to laugh and repeated the verse a couple of times before letting him try again. Enthusiastically he promised me that this time he had it right. “Thanks be to God for His inflammable gift!”

This time I couldn’t quite keep the laughter inside. Eventually Omar successfully learned his verse, but I’m still uncertain as to whether he ever understood the meaning of *ineffable*.

Sometimes I wonder whether we are not a little like Omar. How often do we go through a Sunday morning service and actually ponder what we are doing and saying? How do we put meaning back into what has become meaningless to us?

Consider liturgy. It can be difficult to appreciate the full meaning of words that are not our own. When recited mindlessly, liturgy can become a boring and lifeless practice, which some associate with a dead faith. While it’s easy to dismiss this as their problem, ask yourself when was the last time you were moved by some aspect of your church’s liturgy—not meaning that it produced an emotional display, but rather that it made an impression on you. The true purpose of liturgy is not to fulfill tradition but to glorify God.

Another area which we sometimes deprive of meaning is prayer. Although Jesus did give us a pattern of how to pray in the Lord’s Prayer, all too often we pray essentially the same prayers over and over with little comprehension and appreciation of the fact that we are communicating with the Lord of the universe. We treat it as routine and ordinary, not remembering just what an extraordinary gift it is to have that intimate connection with our Savior. Try to imagine your faith walk without access to this precious gift.

One final area to evaluate is that of worship. While a contemporary worship service may seem vibrant, too often our closed eyes and raised hands are empty demonstrations. It is easy to focus all our energy on what I call the “worshiper’s nirvana”—the point after a few songs when we finally get into our “spiritual groove” and actually “feel” as though we are having a spiritual experience. In this case the purpose of raising one’s hands or closing one’s eyes is no longer surrender to the Almighty God, but a physically expressed search for a certain emotional response. If the words we sing are not meant to glorify His name, then they have no meaning.

This past July at the FLY convention, thousands of youth were blessed with the opportunity to reaffirm or perhaps discover for the first time, a relationship with Christ. Events like this can cause us to think in powerful ways on the awesomeness of being a God-follower. However, God doesn’t require a convention to put meaning back into our worship of Him. The greatest thing we can do if we genuinely desire that our Christian lives and practices be meaningful is to ask God that He would make them so. No one desires it more than He does, and ultimately He is the only one able to change our hearts and put meaning back into the meaningless.

*Schierkolk, who just finished her junior year at AFLBS, is the daughter of AFLC missionaries Pastor Todd and Barb Schierkolk.*