



2025 • Issue 2

News

The Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

Who We Are

THE OPEN BIBLE

God's Word is the foundation of faith and life.

•

THE ASCENDING DOVE

The Holy Spirit ascending is symbolic of the freedom of the congregation and the power and guidance of the Spirit.

•

THE GREEN VINE

The vine is the emblem of the living congregation bearing fruit for the Lord.





WELLSPRING OF LIFE

A Bible verse has popped up on my radar a few times recently. It's from II Corinthians 9:8, "And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work." Paul leaves no room for doubt here. God's provision and grace is enough for us. It's sufficient and abundant, and it's for us in all situations at all times.

Later in the chapter, Paul calls this gift "inexpressible." Other versions describe it as "unspeakable," "indescribable," or "too wonderful for words." Truly, the message of the gospel abundantly fills the deepest need of humanity, to be reconciled with God and made his heir, and that is an extravagant gift.

That reality shapes how we live now. The immediate context of II Corinthians 9 is financial giving. We are generous in our giving to others because all we have belongs to God anyway, and he's been so good to us. But it goes further than that. Our forgiveness is quick and unconditional, because God has so freely forgiven us (at great cost to his Son). Our patience is slow to end, because God is so patient with me, "slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love" (Exodus 34:6). We are at peace, even in turbulent times, because God's provision and grace extend there too. And we love deeply, as he has so loved us.

This is my prayer for the AFLC. I pray that we would drink deeply from the wellspring of life, Jesus Christ, where we find forgiveness of sins and eternal life. I pray that our lives would be marked by freedom, freedom to love and serve one another with the extravagant and sacrificial love with which we have been loved.

In these next pages, you will read updates on all of our ministries. These ministries love you, and they exist to serve you. As you read, consider ways that you and your congregation can partner with them, not because of any requirement or obligation, but simply because we are all loved by God and united in mission to bring the good news of salvation and eternal life to all who will hear. May our lives together be marked by the joy, peace, and love that come with the freedom that Christ has won for us.

~ Pastor Micah Hjermstad



CONTACT

Pastor Micah Hjermstad, President
763.545.5631 • president@aflc.org



Partnering, Preparing, **AND PRESSING ON**



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• Church Planting

The Lord has been at work preparing the way for a new church plant in the growing Fargo/Moorhead area. Several years ago, members of St. Paul's Free Lutheran Church, Fargo, began praying and exploring this possibility, forming an advisory team to research effective strategies. In response, St. Paul's called Pastor Brandon and Ashley Marschner to serve as planting leaders. Over the past year, Brandon's time has been dedicated to prayer and preparation. This time has deepened relationships, shaped vision, and laid a foundation for this church plant. On September 10, the Marschners hosted their first informational gathering, with encouraging interest. The coming months will focus on outreach, Bible study, and building a healthy culture. Prayer, financial support, and partnership are needed as this new gathering grows into a lasting congregation.

The Home Missions department will be taking 17 people to the Acts 29 Conference in Dallas, Texas, at the end of October. Acts 29 offers church leaders decades of experience-proven training, guidance, and tools for planting churches designed to grow and thrive. We pray that this will be a great opportunity for the planters to grow, learn, and be encouraged in their ministries.

• Renewal

AFLC Home Missions' Fall Regional Conference, with the theme "Mission Clarity: Renewing Congregations for the Mission of God," is set for Saturday, Nov. 8. This one-day conference will be hosted by Emmaus Free Lutheran Church, in Bloomington, Minn. The congregation is an active part of the mission of our God. Not only is it a sacred space where God nourishes and feeds his people, but it is also a place that is sent on his mission. God has given us the privilege of being recipients and partners in his mission. However, it's easy to disconnect the theology of mission with the everyday practice, which fosters unhealthy ministry and hinders renewal in our hearts and congregations. We pray that this conference will be an encouraging and productive time for all attending. For those who aren't able to attend, recordings of the sessions and workshops will be posted on the Home Missions website later in November.

• Alaska

In September, Pastor Bob Lee, longtime KAKN station manager in Naknek, Alaska, retired. He and his wife, Margaret, have since relocated to the lower 48. For the past 15 years, Pastor Lee has faithfully served as "The Voice of Bristol Bay," while also serving in a pastoral role at Hilltop Christian Fellowship. Margaret served as a teacher in Naknek. We are deeply grateful for the many years of service and love the Lees have poured into the people of Alaska, and we pray that the Lord continues to bless and use them in this new chapter. We are also thankful for Maggie Johnson, who is stepping into the role of KAKN station manager. We look forward with excitement to how God will use her gifts in this vital ministry. Please join us in praying for KAKN, the Alaska Mission, and the ongoing gospel impact in the lives of those they serve in Alaska.

~Andy Coyle

CONTACT

Pastor Andy Coyle, Director
763.412.2018 • homemis@aflc.org
aflchomemissions.org



Awakening a love for GOD'S KINGDOM

The Women's Missionary Federation (WMF) has as its goal "to awaken and deepen interest in and love for the Kingdom of God at home and abroad and to unite the women of the AFLC into deeper fellowship and service through the projects of the WMF."

One of the ways we accomplish this is through prayer and financial support of specific AFLC ministries. Each fall, members of the national WMF Board meet with the directors/deans of those ministries during the AFLC all-boards conference. Based on the needs/requests shared, we determine to promote a project for each ministry. We share the details of the projects with local WMFs across the country so they can share in praying for and giving to those projects during the following year. We also share project details and articles highlighting each of the ministries in our WMF E-News mailings that are emailed directly to women throughout our AFLC. Our 2026 projects are listed below.

Christian Education

- Free Lutheran Bible College: Assists in updating the furnishings in the men's dorms. In October we had a chance to meet with the student body to tell them about the WMF and its ministry and leave them with one of our Bible studies and a food treat!
- Seminary: Provides each seminarian with \$100 every semester to buy needed books for their studies and yearly subscriptions to *The Lutheran Ambassador*. There is a special giving opportunity at the seminary housing to repair the playground area.
- Parish Education and Publications: Funds will go toward reformatting and reprinting the elementary Sunday school curriculum and online bookstore redesign.

Missions

- World Missions: Gifts are to be directed to missionary support at World Mission's discretion. We also have ongoing funds available to support short-term missionary assistants. A special opportunity for giving is a project at the mission house in Osceola, Wis., to replace gutters.
- Home Missions: Funds will go towards church planting conferences.

The WMF General Fund aids us in planning for:

- WMF Day held June 10, 2026, in Fargo, N.D., with speakers and music.
- The 2026 Bible study, titled *I Believe*, is written by Joyce Erickson.

Pre-orders are being taken for January delivery. Production of upcoming WMF Bible studies from start to finish can take up to three years. Writers are working on future studies now.

Our new officers elected at our 2025 WMF Day meeting are Jenna Lee as our new first vice president. Jenna will oversee our district WMF contacts plus the Nominating Committee. Joanne Herset is our new recording secretary, keeping us and our history correct.

Our prayer is that women from our churches would be in Bible study and developing a heart for missions. Would you pray with us over our projects and join us in meeting our financial goals for this year?

~Karen Pederson



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Linda Fugleberg, communication sec.
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CONTACT

Karen Pederson, President
wmfpres@gmail.com
Jenn Thorson, Executive Secretary
wmfcomm@aflc.org
aflc.org/women



The Life EVERLASTING

The phrase “I would be dead if ...” can end a multitude of ways. This is true of remote Alaskan villages, where many people would be dead if it were not for missionary airplanes. There’s more than one way to interpret this, too. I would be physically dead if it were not for the FLAPS planes and SEND North planes getting me to a hospital quickly. In the summer of 2019, I had a serious infection that led to sepsis. My organs were starting to shut down in the ER in Anchorage.

Many others in Alaska would be spiritually emaciated or even dead if no one flew to them to share and show them Jesus.

Through the countless people who have financially and prayerfully supported FLAPS, the Alaska Mission has been able to go to these villages with the truth and power of Christ. Bringing spiritual life to those who are dead. Giving encouragement to those who are spiritually emaciated. In an area where suicide is three times the national average, drug usage is high, and trauma is even higher, it doesn’t take much to entertain the lies that bring destruction.

We are incredibly blessed that God has provided for us to not only get to the villages but also enter them. Through vacation Bible school, we’re able to provide biblical truth through teaching and providing children with their own Bibles. Throughout the years we’ve gathered prayer warriors for them as they’ve either gotten to join the VBS team or heard the stories. I loved going back to the villages and hearing the kids say, “Remember when ...?” They always recall something positive and fun. It’s as if they are saying they remember the time they saw Jesus through a VBS team.

This past summer, nine people got to do just that: Susanna Benito, Katelyn Gresli, Dylan McQuery, Chris and Kristen McGuire, Jennifer and John Shrock, and Claire and Ethan Flude. Some served for two weeks, some for a month, and some for the whole duration of the VBS season. Life was given this summer! The gospel was proclaimed and lived out with the children. Even the occasional young adult or parent participated. There was laughter, hiking, crafts, games, and more to remind the kids of the truth of Jesus’ light as the winter brings coldness and darkness. I would be remiss if I did not also mention the life that was given to the VBS team members, too. They were challenged through health issues, getting out of their comfort zones, or issues with flying, but always came out better and closer to God.

Everything that has happened during the last few summer seasons would not have been possible without the body of Christ. If it weren’t for the people who support FLAPS, I would be dead, and so would many of the kids I love. With every ounce of my being, thank you! You truly have made a difference.

~Heather Hansen

CONTACT

Kevin Lee, Executive Director
763.412.2018 • flaps@afic.org
flapsministry.org

Milestones and the road ahead

*Celebrating God's faithfulness.
Preparing for what is next.*

2025

Milestone Reached!

• Excellence in Bible & Ministry

We celebrated the first cohort of graduates of our Bachelor of Arts in Bible & Ministry, an initial step in Goal #4 of our strategic plan. This program was designed to deepen biblical foundations and equip students for faithful service in His Kingdom. This graduating class represents years of prayer, planning, and partnership.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Nov. 22–23: Confirmation Refresh
Dec. 5–7: Christmas at FLBCS
Jan. 14–15: Seminary Symposium
April 10–11: Campus Days
Info and event registration at
flbc.edu/events

Connecting to a congregation

At the end of my freshman year at FLBC, I was asked by Dr. Nathan Olson to apply for a job opening as office administrator at his church, Living Word Lutheran, in Eagan, Minn. I can only credit the Lord working in my heart through those around me at FLBC to bring me there.

My role at Living Word is pretty unique. I spend much of my time doing office work such as service prep, event planning, and working with Dr. Olson and various church committees. I also do a lot of parish work, especially with the older women and young girls in the congregation. I love to teach confirmation and Bible studies, go on the occasional home/hospital visit, and take ladies out for lunch or coffee.



Sophia Lucht
2025 BA Graduate

If you would have asked me five years ago where I thought I would be in 2025, a church worker wouldn't have even made it on the list of possibilities. However, I wouldn't change a thing about where the Lord has led me. He was constantly working in my life and in my heart at FLBC, preparing me to take on a role such as this.

FLBC classes gave me a deep love for theology. I was encouraged by faculty, who were always willing to discuss theology both in and out of class. They grew to be close friends of mine and continue to support me as I work in the church and pursue higher theological education.

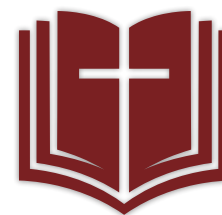
My heart for ministry has grown toward congregational education as I have come to appreciate the value of spending so much time learning about God's Word. I love to share about the depth of the Bible's message.

Through the close community of the school, the Lord also led me to many close friends. Today, though we attend various churches around the Twin Cities metro, we still stay in touch, getting together for weekly Bible studies and encouraging each other in our various vocations. They have truly shown me what it looks like to be a member of the Kingdom of God. This has been extremely valuable as I work in the congregation.

I am so thankful for the time I spent at FLBC. Because of the work of the Lord in my life through class, faculty, and friends, my focus and calling were brought to the glory and joy of the Gospel. I cannot wait to continue to share that joy wherever the Lord places me!

Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary
3134 East Medicine Lake Blvd.
Plymouth, MN 55441
763.544.9501 • info@flbc.edu • flbc.edu

CONTACT



Expanding programs

In May, four FLBC students were the first to receive the Bachelor of Arts degree in Bible and Ministry. That moment was the fruit of a ministry goal that was set in our strategic planning process more than three years prior.

Knowing that the Word of God is transformative and foundational to life and ministry, we recognized that a subset of our student body could benefit from a deeper dive into the riches of that Word beyond our typical two-year program. Many of our students are interested in congregational involvement that would be served by a deeper study in the curriculum we offer. This is especially true in areas such as youth work, missions, and church planting, as well as preparation for seminary. Knowing that God has gifted our school with a staff and faculty capable of mining the riches of his Word and equipping students with the tools to learn, study, and apply it to ministry, we pursued the goal of adding the BA program to our offerings.

This expanded program includes higher-level course offerings and internships in partnership with other AFLC ministries. For young men sensing a call to pastoral ministry, the program provides a framework that prepares them for success in our seminary. Students gain a robust understanding of the Word, bolstered by classes in biblical Greek, logic, philosophy, and church history. It's clear that this program is preparing young servants to positively impact service within our congregations.

Programs like this take time, planning, and support. We are so grateful for the congregations and individuals who support FLBCS! Without your prayers and financial generosity, this program would not be possible.

~ Pastor Adam Osier, FLBC dean



FLS

A busy campus, full of life

We're off to a great start at the Free Lutheran Seminary! We have 22 seminarians in the program—24 if we count a couple of special cases—and our campus is full of life with 22 children running around, most of them under the age of 10. This year we welcomed six new seminarians, while others are off on internship, putting their training into practice.

Our program is built around 90 credits of study, normally spread over three years, followed by a year-long internship. It's designed to prepare men for pastoral ministry, grounding them deeply in God's Word. Like our Bible College, we place a strong emphasis on both Old and New Testament studies, helping students grow into faithful ministers of the Word.

One exciting change to our program is the addition of a master's thesis requirement. Instead of just completing an internship project, students now research and present a substantial topic when they return from internship—an important step in sharpening their ability to serve and teach.

Life at the seminary is about more than academics. Our instructors commit to praying for and caring for each student, and the fellowship among the men is a blessing. They pray together, encourage one another, and share in the joys and challenges of everyday life.

When graduation comes, our seminarians step into congregations or mission fields debt-free, confident in God's calling, and equipped to serve His people. It's an exciting, busy, and joyful time here at the seminary—and we're grateful for what God is doing here.

~Dr. James Molstre, FLS dean



2025-26 ANNUAL FUND



To give, visit flbc.edu/give

2025

Strengthening Our Foundation

As FLBCS moves forward in equipping believers and strengthening local congregations, we are committed to building the financial stability needed to sustain this mission for generations to come.

Our 2025–2026 Annual Fund is a vital part of this foundation. It exists to provide the support that makes our ministry possible every day—support that directly impacts students, faculty, and congregations across the AFLC.

Why It Matters

Establishing students in the Word of God for life in Jesus Christ is a mission with eternal value. At FLBC, we watch young men and women “start here” and then go anywhere and everywhere, grounded in God’s Word. Our seminary trains future pastors to shepherd living, Christ-centered congregations—your next pastor may be studying here right now!

Bible college graduates will soon be sent out to start families, invest in their congregations, and bring the light of the Gospel to their communities, whether in their hometown, a new city, or across the world.

This mission doesn’t just happen. It takes a community of partners walking together—giving their time, talent, and resources—to equip these future leaders for faithful service.

The Impact of Your Partnership

Every year, generous friends of FLBCS make this mission possible by bridging the gap between the actual cost of education and what students pay.

This year’s student body includes 112 undergraduate and 24 seminary students. For every dollar billed to students, donors give another 50 cents through the annual fund. These gifts reduce the cost of educating, mentoring, housing, and feeding each student by almost 40 percent. The annual fund covers all ministry expenses not paid through tuition, room, board, and fees. Last year, we celebrated a milestone when the fund reached 109 percent of its \$1.3M goal.

Our next step?

This year’s goal is \$1.5M, running from August 2025 through July 2026, to sustain and grow the ministry of FLBCS.

The Path Forward

When you give to the annual fund, you’re helping pave the way for future ministry. Each gift strengthens the foundation that will carry students and pastors forward into a lifetime of service.

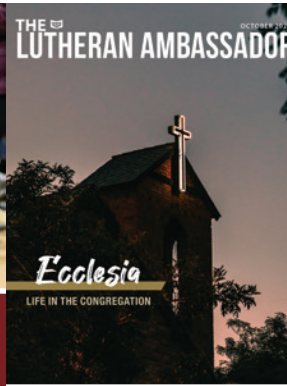
You can be part of this shared mission by supporting the Annual Fund today. To learn more, track our progress, or make a gift, visit flbc.edu/annualcampaign or contact Sherry Mork, director of Donor Relations, at sherry.mork@flbc.edu.

2026





A publication FOR THE LOCAL CONGREGATION



The Lutheran Ambassador is a monthly magazine published by the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations. Each month features a specific theme, carrying articles both practical and devotional. Our writers—all volunteer lay people and pastors from our local congregations—are a key feature in our publications. Our magazine also includes monthly columns geared toward building a strong devotional life, tackling the basics of our beliefs, and sharing life experiences in order to build up the Body of Christ. All of our articles and columns center around biblical, Lutheran doctrines and heritage.

Our magazine also features news and information from our local congregations, schools, and AFLC departments.

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CONTACT

Ruth Gunderson, Managing Editor
763.545.5631 • ruthg@aflc.org
aflc.org/lutheran-ambassador

DEVELOPMENT

BIBLICAL STEWARDSHIP

Charitable gift, tax, and estate planning with a biblical focus enable us to be good stewards of what God has given us. In giving back, we recognize his ownership of all that we have. We already have everything we need in Christ, and we believe God will provide according to his will. It is important to prayerfully plan for the distribution of our estate through wills and trusts to further the growth of his Kingdom.

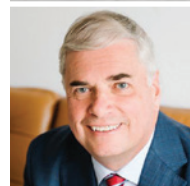
The biblical role of the Development department is to help connect people to God's calling to be faithful stewards. We will joyfully partner with you to create a culture of mutual encouragement, support, and challenge, as we seek together to be faithful to what God has entrusted to us.

We care about how the Lord is leading you. We welcome the opportunity to assist you in your planning and give God all the glory. Please call us for personal, confidential assistance. We will work with your attorney, CPA, or financial advisor to explain the many unique and wonderful opportunities for gifting to the AFLC. Perhaps your gift will be used by God to bring someone to a saving faith in Jesus Christ.

~Mark Sivertson



CONTACT



Mark Sivertson, J.D.,
Vice President • 605.496.2137
mark.sivertson@aflc.org



Making the best USE OF OUR TIME

“Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person” (Colossians 4:5–6).



Paul’s closing exhortation in Colossians is as urgent today as it was in the first century. Here Paul directs believers outward, toward those who do not yet know Christ. He calls for a way of life that reflects God’s wisdom and a way of speaking that reflects God’s grace. Central to this charge is his use of the Greek word *kairos* for “time.” Unlike the more common word *chronos*, *kairos* points to God-given opportunities—moments full of potential for the gospel. Paul urges us to make the best use of such occasions, recognizing that they are empowered by God’s Holy Spirit and are rare opportunities to join him in his work.

We live in a cultural moment where biblical truth has been questioned, dismissed, and even ridiculed. Yet beneath the skepticism we are seeing that there is also a deep hunger for what is real. Many in our country are weary of half-truths, polarization, and shallow answers. Increasingly, there is an openness to honest conversations about Jesus and Christianity, provided those conversations are marked by authenticity, humility, and compassion. This is precisely what Paul describes—speech that is gracious and seasoned with salt, engaging others in a way that awakens a thirst for Christ.

This is why the ministry of AFLC Evangelism and Discipleship exists. Our mission is to encourage, equip, and assist our AFLC congregations in making and equipping disciples who then make and equip more disciples. In a time of both challenge and opportunity, we want to help churches and individuals walk wisely, speak graciously, and make the most of the moment God has given us. We do that three ways.

- **In-Person Ministries:** Events like *Rekindle the Fire* and *Disciple Equipping Workshops* encourage and equip believers for faithful witness and practical disciple-making. We also are available to present evangelistic meetings as well as assist congregations in preparing for and carrying out effective special meetings.
- **Online Ministries:** Our website, the “Living as a Disciple” podcast, RightNow Media, and our social media presence all provide biblical teaching and encouragement. Our monthly newsletters and prayer meetings allow us to continue to grow together across the miles.
- **Ministry Materials Development:** Resources such as *The Discipleship Manual*, *Preparing to Share Your Faith*, and our future tools like *The Romans Road* are designed to help congregations and individuals engage outsiders with confidence and clarity.

These are some of the ways that we are here to encourage, equip, and assist you in carrying out this call to make the best use of the *kairos*—the God-appointed opportunities that are happening even now, in our everyday life. With this in mind, let us commit ourselves to walking in wisdom, speaking with grace, and making the most of every opportunity to point people to Christ.

~Pastor Randy Nelson

CONTACT

Pastor Randy Nelson, Director
763.412.2021 • evangelism@aflc.org
aflc.org/evangelism



Thank you for YOUR PARTNERSHIP

Your prayers and gifts enable us to produce biblical Lutheran educational and devotional resources to encourage faithful teaching of the Word of God.

Introducing our newest publication, a devotional booklet for teens, was a highlight of the Free Lutheran Youth (FLY) Convention for us this past summer. *Alive in Christ: 31 Days in the Word* was put together through the efforts of AFLC Parish Education, AFLC Youth Ministries, and 31 men and women writers from across the AFLC. Thanks to a generous donor, more than 800 youth and youth leaders who attended FLY were gifted a copy of the new devotional. Perfect for personal study of God's Word or in a small group or youth group setting, *Alive in Christ* is a tool to help the Word of Christ dwell richly in teens. "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17).

Ben Mobley, 15, a member of Solid Rock Free Lutheran, Anoka, Minn., shares what he likes about the new devotional: "I have found the devotional to be great because all the writers are different people from the AFLC. Personally knowing some of the writers is cool, and I love hearing them share the gospel in their own way." Emma McKenzie, Hope Lutheran, Minneapolis, is also enjoying the new devotional and explains, "I like that it encourages me to spend more time in the Word."

Here are some practical ways to use or share *Alive in Christ*:

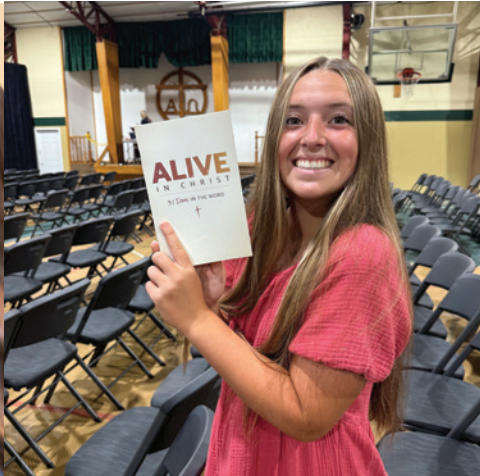
- Read it for personal or family devotions.
- Discuss it in a small group, youth group, or discipleship group.
- Give the booklet to friends and family.
- Mail the devotional to students away at college to encourage them in Christ.
- Provide copies for members of a sports team, drama club, or music group you have connections with in a high school or college in your community. Show hospitality by inviting them into your home and sharing a brief devotional time.

Additional copies of *Alive in Christ* can be purchased from Ambassador Publications for \$5 each.

Your generous gifts also enabled us to publish Volume VI in the AFLC Heritage Series, *From Freedom to Life: A History of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations*, in 2024. An exciting extension of this project is the production of an audiobook read by the author, Rev. Robert L. Lee. We are about halfway through the recording sessions and hope to release the audiobook later in 2026. Watch for more details on our website and social media.

If you haven't visited our website lately, come and explore! You'll find new resources, book reviews, blog articles, and recent Education Spotlights on our AFLC congregations, highlighting cradle roll ministry, opening chapel time in Sunday school, and a book club for youth.

~Marian Christopherson



TOP: Annaleigh Walvatne, Hope Lutheran, Minneapolis, holds a copy of *Alive in Christ*.

ABOVE: Pastor Robert Lee reads his book, *From Freedom to Life*, in a recording session with Luke Quanbeck.

Pray for current projects

- Redevelopment of online bookstore
- 10 Commandments board book
- Visual mission stories
- *From Freedom to Life* audiobook

CONTACT

Marian Christopherson, Director
Ambassador Publications
763.412.2010
parished@afcl.org
ambassadorpublications.org

BOARD MEMBERS

Pastor Dennis Norby, Chair
Leeanna Lunn, Secretary
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Inspired, equipped, and excited **TO SHARE CHRIST**

"Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it" (1 Peter 3:15).

Switzerland is a land of breathtaking mountains, beautiful lakes, and centuries of rich history. It is also a place where a small, family-centered church is laying the groundwork for a new generation of faith. At the El-Shadai Evangelical Lutheran Church in Geneva, the congregation may be small, but that doesn't stop their devotion or faithfulness.

It has been nearly 10 years since the AFLC church in Switzerland began. Augusto Fiuri, lay pastor of El-Shadai, grew up in an AFLC-Brazil congregation. Motivated by the need to better support his family, Augusto moved to Geneva, found a job, and soon moved his family there too. Augusto found a Portuguese-speaking church, and through many circumstances he was asked to lead and pastor the congregation. Even though he explained he was a "Free Lutheran," the congregation still wanted him to lead them because they "saw his life and family, and they wanted to be what he was," he said.

Augusto began to serve the congregation while still working full time. In 2016, the Annual Conference approved a cooperative church planting effort with AFLC-Brazil. (To read more about how Switzerland began, go to the AFLC World Missions website under fields of work.)

This last summer, Kyle Gorman and Isaiah Floan were sent to Geneva to serve as Missionary Assistants at the church. Through their observations, the church is like a big family, and the primary ministry focus is inward. All the members of the congregation attend every event, from Sunday sermons to community dinners and Bible studies.

"Attending church events is a normal part of life, and everyone always shows up, and I love that," said Kyle. Because of this, the congregation builds a deep, family-like community.

During Kyle and Isaiah's time there, Augusto asked them to primarily focus on encouraging the youth and young adults there to take more responsibility. While the youth participate in all the events and activities, Augusto is sensing a lack of fire in them. Augusto is praying that the young people of his church, and of Europe, would find their identity in Christ and nothing else. Additionally, he desires to see the youth there develop a passion for evangelism. That is a real spiritual need: a heart to evangelize.

In a secularized Europe, the biggest struggle is not competing faiths but indifference to the need for a Savior. In Geneva, Pastor Augusto prays that his congregation, specifically the younger generation, will be inspired, equipped, and excited to share the gospel with their community and to the spiritually hungry land of Switzerland. Augusto remains thankful for the ministry's growth under his care and continues to look and pray for the Lord to raise up a new full-time pastor to help lead the church in Geneva.

Continue to pray for the church in Geneva, that the members would be bold in their faith and that God would open the hearts of those in their community.

~Shelby Greven



BOARD MEMBERS

Dr. Craig Johnson, Chairman
Pastor Jerry Nelson • Mark Riley
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Ken Sletten • Bill Sheldon

CONTACT

Dr. Earl Korhonen, Executive Director
763.545.5631 • worldmis@aflc.org
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Special projects to encourage MINISTRY EFFORTS IN UGANDA

Paul told the Corinthians, “I will not be a burden to you, because what I want is not your possessions but you ... I will very gladly spend for you everything I have and expend myself as well” (II Corinthians 12:14–15). This pledge comes at the tail end of two letters that report the intense relational challenges that have occurred between the missionary and the foreigners among whom he had lived. Most recently, they had been rejecting him, preferring to be led by “super-apostles” (v. 11). With all his admonishments, pleas, and proofs of his sincerity, it would be such love, in the end, that won the hearts of the Corinthians.

The ministry moves on in Uganda with much less conflict than it did in Corinth! Nevertheless, I and my Ugandan teammates can still relate to a degree of 1) strain between ourselves and the ones whom Satan contends to steal from us, 2) intense expenditure of self, and 3) the feeling of pockets that are continually being emptied for the sake of ministry.

Paul had admitted to the Corinthians, “I robbed other churches by receiving support from them so as to serve you. And when I was with you and needed something ... the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied what I needed. I have kept myself from being a burden to you in any way and will continue to do so” (11:8–9).

I thank the AFLC for being my brothers from Macedonia. Not only do you support my presence in Uganda, but also the projects that we have accomplished there up until now. (These are listed under our World Missions website under the name “Special

Projects.”) Here are some we hope to accomplish in 2026:

- **Water Harvest:** Water, water everywhere, and not a drop to drink ... unless you put a tank beneath your church’s roof. Ambassador Institute realized this trick alongside the Journey Missions team of Jared Trost and his family when they came for a water mission in Uganda. Now tanks sit beneath church gutters and provide better water access to their villages. We hope to distribute our next round of tanks in the coming year.
- **Scholarships:** Some of our Ambassador Institute graduates are teenagers. (Six in the picture.) Alongside their discipleship in AI, perhaps we could also support their regular schooling. While fees can range, it can be up to around \$45 to send a Ugandan teen for a term of secondary school. In 2026, we would like to support the education of five AI students and/or family members in each of our 13 zones.
- **Teacher Workshops:** We love to gather our Ambassador Institute graduates for vital encouragement. These offer Christian fellowship, spiritual edification, training, incentive to open new classes, and contact with leaders and other AI zones.
- **Resources for AI Teachers:** This fund will provide printed Bibles, audio Bibles, and teacher guidebooks for AI graduates to help teach new disciples. Both English and local language translations are needed.

~Michael Rokenbrodt, missionary to Uganda

CONTACT

Dr. Earl Korhonen, Executive Director
763.545.5631 • worldmis@aflc.org
aflcworldmissions.org

aflcworldmissions.org/approved-special-projects



Our four CORE PRINCIPLES

Journey Missions, a ministry of AFLC World Missions, offers short-term, immersive mission trips that help participants step out of their comfort zones and engage in evangelism, discipleship, and community development. The ministry seeks to expand God's kingdom by partnering with AFLC missionaries and national church leaders. Short-term trips lasting one to three weeks, along with the Missionary Assistant Program (stays longer than two months), typically send participants to countries in Africa, Asia, South America, and Europe. The goal is to meet both the spiritual and physical needs of the communities served.

The typical trip includes four core principles:

Training and Preparation: Before starting their ministry trip, participants go through spiritual and practical training. This includes learning about the culture, language, and religious background of the destination, along with mission principles and strategies. It's also a time for personal reflection, team building, and prayer.

Hands-On Ministry: Once on the field, participants engage in various forms of ministry. Each trip is designed to provide participants with the opportunity to experience both the challenges and rewards of global mission work. This may involve:

- Evangelism and discipleship: Sharing the gospel with local people and helping them grow in faith through Bible studies, teaching, and personal relationships.
- Community outreach: Providing practical support such as construction work, help with local schools, or children's homes.
- Church support: Assisting local congregations, pastors, and church leaders with building and outreach efforts.

Cultural Immersion: A key part of Journey Missions is immersing oneself in a new culture to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges, joys, and realities faced by people in these countries. This could include learning the language, trying new foods, and participating in local customs and worship practices.

Spiritual Growth: Journey Missions is about spiritual transformation for participants as much as it is about serving others. The program encourages personal growth, broadens participants' understanding of the global church, and fosters a heart for missions.

For many, these trips become pivotal moments in their spiritual lives. Whether they return with a stronger sense of purpose, a passion for missions, or a calling to long-term service, the trips often leave a lasting impact.

Furthermore, communities and local churches benefit from practical help that supports long-term development, and spiritual outreach plants seeds for lasting change.

Journey Missions aims to give congregation members opportunities to engage with global needs. For those unable to participate in the field, Journey Missions encourages partnership through prayer, donations, and sharing the mission's needs with others.

Our hope for Journey Missions is to provide a transformative experience for both those taking part in the trips and those being served. It is an expression of the global church working together to make disciples of all nations. By participating, individuals deepen their faith, build meaningful relationships, and witness God's kingdom expanding throughout the world.

If you or your congregation are interested in learning more, we would be delighted to hear from you.

~Pastor Jon Nelson



CONTACT

Pastor Jon Nelson, Department Head
763.412.2042 • jon.nelson@afc.org
afcjourneymissions.org



LIVING GENEROUSLY



Paul stresses the importance of giving in chapters 8 and 9 of his second letter to the Corinthians. He emphasizes giving with correct intentions. He exhorts the Corinthians to not give grudgingly or because of pressure from others. He challenges them to give cheerfully and according to the desires and purposes of their hearts.

I often get excited about working in ministry. I have crazy ideas and can dream up all sorts of events and plans. I typically get too wrapped up in the *what*, *when*, and *where*, and then my husband gently asks, “*How* will it be paid for?” A ministry can only run successfully when it is funded. Did you know charitable financial donations declined worldwide by \$65 billion dollars since 2021? This sobering fact is multifaceted, but there are many reasons for those involved in AFLC Youth Ministries to be joyful.

Our financial supporters have a passion for our ministry of bringing the gospel message to youth. We serve to equip our local congregations with mutual support to ensure the gospel is delivered in a manner our youth can digest and internalize. We exist only because of your dedicated and joyful financial support.

Even better news, Youth Ministries has opportunities for all age groups to give!

Gen Alpha (born 2010–2025) has no relationship with paper money and coins. They are digital natives and need to be taught the value of money. They need to see their parents and trusted adults actively contributing financially. Our congregation encourages a Sunday school offering during our worship service. The money donated by children is also donated each month to a ministry they choose.

Gen Z (born 1997–2012) is most likely to give in ways other than financially. They see generosity not in dollars and cents, but in good deeds and actions. Youth within the AFLC should be encouraged to tithe. Understanding tithing at this age sets them on a course to continue supporting their favorite ministry and their local congregation in the future.

Millennials (Gen Y, born 1981–1996) give financially but typically in online-only formats. They are increasingly motivated by spontaneous giving. Youth Ministries has online options for giving. Look for QR codes and our website (aflc.org/youth/giving).

Gen X (born 1965–1980) give financially in various ways and often support favorite causes in a sustainable format. This generation may also still write a check! As this generation approaches retirement, they have a unique opportunity to visit with a financial planner to learn how to use retirement income in a taxably advantageous way. Gen Xers and Boomers (born 1946–1964) can also visit with the AFLC’s Development Department to find special projects and other giving opportunities available within Youth Ministries. If you happen to be older than 73, you can also take your required minimum distribution as a qualified charitable distribution.

We are so thankful for all the financial support within Youth Ministries and the AFLC. God loves a cheerful giver, and so does Youth Ministries.

~Michele Smith
AFLC Youth Board member

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CONTACT

Adam McCarlson, Director
763.545.5631 • youth@aflc.org
aflc.org/youth

The Association of Free Lutheran Congregations
3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441
763.545.5631 • www.aflc.org

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ASSOCIATION RETREAT CENTER

SERVING OTHERS

Numbers can reveal a plethora of different opinions on success or failure in life. Recently, I was asked how we track the number of people saved, baptized, or delivered while they are at the ARC. I spent many nights focusing on how we collect this information from our contract groups. There are many different methods, and they all seemed intrusive at best. As I went on through the season, I started to get discouraged because there was not a good solution presenting itself.

It is obvious that life-changing events do happen here. I ran the checklist. Are people saved here? Yes. Are people delivered here? Yes. Are marriages mended here? Yes. Are prayers miraculously answered here? Absolutely. Each one of these events is a reason to praise God and rejoice ... each one. That brought me to the conclusion that the most important number to be concerned with is ONE. Christians immediately think of God as the One, and he is. But he is our focus, not our mission. Our mission is our neighbor—sinner or saint. We are to focus on the individual in front of us.

At the ARC we strive to live out the mission

of taking care of everyone we encounter. From the one who needs paper towels to the one who needs prayer. Whether it is a guest or a staffer, each one is a mission field.

An elderly guest pulled me aside recently and infused truth into my mind: “Satan knows he can’t take you out, so he will do everything he can to wear you out. So don’t you dare get weary and give in. He will use sinners and saints alike to make your days difficult, to slow you down, and to make you want to quit.”

This brought me back to my search for numbers, one being the most important. One more early morning, one more camp, one more meal to cook, one more bed to make, one more young staff member to help see their full potential. All of this so that we can watch the Holy Spirit heal one more marriage, lead one more to salvation, and deliver one more from Satan. All to the glory of Christ and the hope of seeing the One in eternity.

~Kirk Rautio, Executive Director



CONTACT

ARC • 715.294.2877
info@arc-aflc.org
arc-aflc.org