

THE LUTHERAN

AMBASSADOR

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Spirit
of
Thanksgiving

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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AN ENCOURAGING WORD

Better days are ahead

I am a pre-millennialist. A small minority of Lutherans share this view (and a large majority of Baptists). My rule of interpreting prophecy is to be as literal as possible. I would be grateful if you might consider my opinion about what the Bible teaches concerning the end of the age. I find it to be an encouraging subject. If the a-millennialists are right I will be walking the streets of gold 1,000 years sooner. It's a win-win thing and we don't need to argue about it.

After the rapture of the church, the seven-year tribulation and a great battle in the Holy Land, Jesus will come to Earth and reign over it for 1,000 years. During this time, Satan will be bound and thrown into the bottomless pit and tribulation martyrs will reign on thrones (Revelation 20:1-4). King David will be raised up to reign in Jerusalem as a vice-regent under Christ (Jeremiah 30:9, Ezekiel 34:23 and Hosea 3:5). Stores of international weaponry will be turned into agricultural implements (Micah 4:1-3).

The prophet Isaiah has much to say about this era. It will be a time of great joy (9:3-4, 12:3ff., 14:7-8, 25:8-9, 30:29, and 42:1, 10-12). Wild animals will be transformed into gentle pets (11:6-9). The desert will bloom (35:1). The Earth will be filled with glorious worship and the knowledge of the Lord (11:9, 25:9, and 66:23). There will be phenomenal health, and people will live to pre-flood ages (65:20). Yet, amazingly, after 1,000 years of such benevolent leadership, prosperity and peace, nations will join with Satan after his release from the bottomless pit and attempt to war against Christ (Revelations 20:7-9). This will result in the final judgment and the lake of fire for the unrighteous and the ushering in of the new heavens, new Earth and new

Jerusalem for the children of God (Revelation 20:10ff).

A famous hymn writer named Isaac Watts wrote an Advent hymn about the millennium that we tend to sing at Christmas.

*Joy to the world! The Lord is come:
Let earth receive her King;
Let ev'ry heart prepare Him room,
And Heav'n and nature sing.*

*Joy to the world! The Savior reigns:
Let men their songs employ,
While fields and floods, rocks, hills,
and plains,
Repeat the sounding joy.*

*No more let sin and sorrow grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found.*

*He rules the world with truth and
grace
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness
And wonders of His love.*

Right now, the true Church of Christ has this promise by faith. Some day, perhaps soon, we will have it by sight. Better days are ahead. Maranatha!

— **Pastor Tom Olson**
St. Paul's Lutheran
Cloquet, Minn.



SOUND BITES

On the final day of judgment, no one will be able to stand before God and say to him, "I have been treated unfairly by you!"
— *Timothy George*

What happened to the kind of Christians whose hearts were on fire, who had no fear, who spoke the truth no matter what the consequence, who made the world uncomfortable, who were willing to follow Jesus wherever He went? What happened to the kind of Christians who were filled with passion and gratitude, and who every day were unable to get over the grace of God?
— *Michael Yaconelli*
Dangerous Wonder

Let us give thanks to God in words, that heaven and earth may hear that we are glad and that we give glory to God. And let us thank Him in deed. By a life which shows men that we are grateful to our heavenly Father.

— *O. Hallesby*
God's Word for Today

We must care for our bodies as though they were going to live forever, but we must care for our souls as if we are going to die tomorrow.
— *Augustine*



Sacrifice of **THANKSGIVING**

Sunday's arrival home follows a certain routine. Normally, as soon as we drive up and pile out of the van, our black lab, Beau, is waiting to pounce on us. Then, my seven children race to see who can get in the front door first without being licked.

But Sunday evening, Jan. 14, 2001, was different. As we turned onto our gravel driveway after church services, we were met by the orange-red glow of flames and more than a dozen fire trucks.

The fire chief told me that it was a total loss. Twenty-six years of building up a home, library and home business was suddenly destroyed. Everything. The fire was too hot and the trucks arrived too late. With my wife and children by my side, I stood stunned in front of our blazing house. The looks on my children's faces are still embedded in my memory. As the cold rain fell we watched in shock as our familiar walls slowly crumbled amidst billows of black smoke. At that moment, as in many such moments of loss that we all experience, the grace of God wrapped itself around us, assuring us that our Heavenly Father had a plan.

I didn't sleep that night. There was still a family to take care of, a church to pastor and a home business to run. As I lay awake, I prayed, "Lord, why did you take everything?"

The very next day, with the smell of smoke looming heavy in the air, God brought to mind that beautiful hymn by Fanny Crosby, "Count Your Blessings."

"When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed, When you are discouraged thinking all is lost, Count your many blessings, name them one by one, And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done."

I called my family together. "Let's count our blessings," I told them. And so our list began: physical safety, an expanded opportunity to witness, more gratefulness for what we do have, and a new focus on eternal treasures. As we started to list our blessings, an amazing thing happened: a spirit of hope replaced a spirit of heaviness. We thought of Isaiah 61:3, where God promises to give "beauty for ashes."

Our trial by fire moved our whole family to ponder deeply how we should respond to adversity. Specifically, God taught us three biblical truths of turning adversity into a sacrifice of thanksgiving. "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (I Thessalonians 5:18).

We give thanks as an act of faith and obedience

There will be times in our life when our heart seems too broken to "rejoice in all things," and giving thanks seems impossible. Yet, our omniscient God sometimes asks us to do the impossible because He wants us to trust Him completely. Rejoicing is not a mere happy feeling, but an act of faith that God is on the throne and is intimately concerned with the cares

of our heart. During times of adversity we must bring the sacrifices of praise by faith, realizing that God has a higher purpose. "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations" (I Peter 1:6).

Giving thanks gives more grace

An amazing thing happens when we obey the Lord and rejoice in trials, adversities and temptations. An obedient, grateful heart allows God to give us more grace to handle adversity (James 4:6). Counting our blessings after the fire did not remove the shock nor wipe away the grief. Almost two years later we are still recovering. But as we open our hearts to count the blessings bestowed upon us, we obtain strength to face the challenges of each new day. "Count it all joy," says James, "... knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience" (James 1:3).

A grateful heart allows us to be a comforter

God is able to comfort us as we open ourselves up to count His blessings. In turn, He entrusts us with the privilege of comforting and pointing heavenward others who go through adversity. First, there is our ministry to the household of faith. It is now much easier to comfort believers who experience what we did. Second, we have the opportunity to minister to the plight of the unsaved. The trials they experience and the eternal fires that await them can lead to despair apart from faith in Jesus. Our testimony of gratefulness prompts questions about the God we serve. "Blessed be God ... who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble" (II Corinthians 1:3-4).

Giving thanks in the midst of fiery trials may not be natural, but it is biblical. During this Thanksgiving season, make sure to thank God not just for the pleasant things of life, but also for your personal trials that refine you ever nearer the image of God. "But all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace of God, through the thanksgiving of many, might redound to the glory of God" (II Corinthians 4:15).

— **Pastor Ray Ballman**
Word of Truth Lutheran
Burleson, Texas



**As we started to list
our blessings, an
amazing thing
happened: a spirit of
hope replaced a spirit
of heaviness.**



Let your
Thankful spirit
BLOOM

Going into marriage, it is incredibly easy to have high expectations of your spouse. For instance, I expected that my husband, Eric, should have the ability to fix anything and everything — just like my dad did. I didn't think that was a lot to ask. I thought it was a standard quality that most men had. Needless to say, before we even said our vows, our marriage counselor had his work cut out for himself in setting me straight! He patiently explained to me that it would be best for our marriage if I did not have such impossible expectations.

Regardless of what my very patient husband can or can't do, it has only benefited me to acquire the attitude of having as few expectations as I possibly can. When I am in this state of mind, I find myself overwhelmed with gratefulness at anything he does to help or make my life more convenient. In turn, he so appreciates my gratefulness that he looks for opportunities to help me in even more ways. Thus, what starts with effort becomes a cycle of delightful surprises.

Eric and I have only been married two years, but in that short time, I have quickly learned that a thankful spirit makes a great difference in how we relate to each other, as well as how I relate to others.

I must admit that this change in attitude demands a complete reliance on the work of the Holy Spirit. This is not easy for a perfectionist who thinks others demand as much of themselves as she does. It is only because of the work that Christ has done in my life that I can be grateful in any way at all. When my life is purposefully focused on the cross — what a difference! I am overcome by what He has done for me. It overflows into all those other areas of life.

Just as Eric wants to please me when I have a loving and grateful heart, in the same way, I desire to please Christ because of His love for me, as well as to pass that love on to everyone else I come in contact with.

I Chronicles 16:8-12 says, "Oh give thanks to the Lord, call upon His name; Make known His deeds among the peoples, Sing to Him, sing praises to Him; Speak of all His wonders. Glory in his holy name; Let the heart of those who seek the Lord be

glad. Seek the Lord and His strength; Seek His face continually. Remember His wonderful deeds which He has done, His marvels and the judgments from His mouth."

When we are praising God and thanking Him for His wonders and His great deeds, we are displaying a grateful spirit that will draw others to Him. That thankful heart has such a drawing power to others because it shows contentment and a joy — it is a beautiful heart. A grateful heart forgets what it does not have and focuses on all the blessings it does have. What a tool for ministry that heart can be! Whatever the opportunities that might arise, they are chances to witness about what great things Christ has done in one's life. People may stop and wonder at one's joyfulness.

What causes that person to be so happy? It is Jesus!

A great example to me of this heart attitude was lived day by day through my parents. They have always had a desire to share what they have with others — a reflection of the thankfulness they themselves feel. It is their practice to invite others into their home who may not have family living nearby on Thanksgiving. In their loving and Christ-centered home, they seek to reach out to others because of what Jesus has done for them.

Let it be our prayer that Christ would do such a work in our own lives, that He would continue to mold and shape our hearts

into grateful and generous hearts, and that He would use them to reach out to others for His glory.

"For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. Do all things without grumbling or disputing; that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world" (Philippians 2:13-15).

— *Tara Hill*
Grace Free Lutheran
Plymouth, Minn.



Perhaps today

Advent's call to
holy living



A young minister was giving his sermon one Sunday when he lost his train of thought. Thankfully, he remembered what his homiletics professor had taught him in seminary: “If you ever lose your place while preaching your sermon, just repeat your theme and it will immediately come back to you.”

The pastor was preaching on the second coming of Jesus under the theme, “Behold, I Come Quickly.” So he repeated his theme, but nothing happened. The pastor repeated his theme a second time with more enthusiasm. Still, nothing happened. Finally, he repeated his theme a third time, this time leaning forward while pounding on the pulpit with his fist. He pounded so hard that he knocked the pulpit over and landed in the lap of a lady in the front row.

Embarrassed over what he had done the young pastor apologized to the lady by saying, “I’m so sorry for landing in your lap.” The woman responded by saying, “It isn’t your fault pastor. You told me you were coming three times!”

The Advent season is a time for us to focus on the coming of Jesus. Perhaps most often when we think of Advent we think of His first coming to pay the price for our sins. But in many places in Scripture we see that Jesus is coming again. We sometimes call this His second Advent or second coming, and it is good for us to focus on this coming as well.

A call to salvation

First, focusing on the Second Coming of Jesus is a call to salvation. It is a call to make sure that we are ready to meet Jesus.

During my childhood days I often heard about the second coming of Jesus, both in my church and in my home. The Scriptural picture that struck me the most was the picture of Jesus coming like a “thief in the night” (I Thessalonians 5:2).

I remember my dad telling us that a thief doesn’t announce his coming. He doesn’t send us a letter saying, “Look out! I will be coming to your house on Friday night.” He comes unexpectedly. He catches us by surprise. And the same is true with the return of Jesus. This warning was one of the things God used in my life to bring me to salvation. Because I didn’t know when Jesus was going to come again, I wanted to be ready.

Are you ready to meet Jesus? Are you trusting in Him as your Savior today?

If not, don’t wait until tomorrow. Jesus could come today.

A call to godly living

Second, focusing on the second coming of Jesus is a call to godly living. It is a call to live our lives in such a way that we will not be ashamed when Jesus comes again. “And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming” (I John

2:28).

While I was in high school I worked during the summer months at a local grocery store. I remember being in the back room getting ready to stock the shelves when one of my co-workers started throwing bottles of bleach to another worker. Sure enough, at that very time, the boss walked in and saw it all. After he left, my red-faced co-worker asked, “Why didn’t you tell me the boss was watching?” I said, “He came around the corner so fast I didn’t have time to warn you.”

As I reflect on that event, I can’t help but think of the return of Jesus. He will come unexpectedly. And that’s why it is important to live as if He could come today. “Perhaps today” should be our waking thought each morning.

A call to evangelism

Third, focusing on the second coming of Jesus is a call to evangelism. It is a call to proclaim the message of salvation before it is too late.

In his second epistle the Apostle Peter writes of those who, in the last days, will scoff at the return of Jesus. They will say, “Where is this coming he promised?” (II Peter 3:4). In other words, “We don’t believe that Jesus will come again. They have been talking about this for ages and it hasn’t happened.”

Peter tells us why Jesus has delayed His coming. It is because “He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish” (II Peter 3:9). In His mercy, Jesus is waiting for many more to come to salvation. But one day the patience of Jesus will come to an end. One day He will return. And that’s why we need to make this great truth known. We don’t know when Jesus will come again, but every day that goes by we are one day closer to His return.

As you celebrate the Advent season, rejoice in the fact that Jesus has already come to be our Savior. But don’t forget that He will come again. His certain return is a call to salvation, a call to godly living and a call to evangelism.

He will come unexpectedly. And that’s why it is important to live as if He could come today. Perhaps today should be our waking thought each morning.

— *Pastor Peter Franz*
Grace Free Lutheran
Plymouth, Minn.



40 *still* pressing on

AFLC celebrates 40 years



The AFLC began with an organizational conference in Thief River Falls, Minn., Oct. 25-28, 1962. The 40th anniversary of that beginning was marked by a return to Thief River Falls for a celebration, Oct. 26 and 27.

The anniversary observance began with three presentations and panel discussions on the three main reasons the group that formed the AFLC did not enter into the merger of the early 1960s that created the American Lutheran Church.

Dr. Francis Monseth, dean of the Free Lutheran Seminary, spoke on the subject of theology. He stated that the doctrine of the Word of God was the crucial theological issue under discussion in 1962. Lutheran Free Church theological professors of that day did not hold to a belief in the inerrancy of Scripture. Other theological issues that were of concern to the AFLC founders were ecumenism, membership in the World Council of Churches and a "Back to Rome" movement. The founders had a deep interest in the salvation of

souls and the advance of the Kingdom of God. They feared that membership in the merged church would lead to theological compromise.

After each presentation, panels, moderated by Loiell Dyrud, discussed questions on the topic. The panel on theology consisted of Dorothy Presteng and Pastors Bruce Dalager, Martin Horn and John Abel.

AFLC President Pastor Robert Lee was the presenter on the topic of polity. He spoke of the AFLC's belief in the freedom of the local congregation and the congregation's placement under the highest authority of all: the Spirit and Word of God. He discussed the scriptural and situational reasons for the emphasis in the AFLC on free congregations. He stated that the founder of the Lutheran Free Church movement, Georg Sverdrup, saw free congregations as a return to the New Testament picture of the nature of the church. The panel that continued the discussion on polity was made up of Robert Knutson, Rodney Kjersten and Pastors Martin Horn and Craig Johnson.

Pastor Raynard Huglen, one of

the founding pastors of the AFLC, gave a presentation on the third area of concern — the topic of piety. He spoke of piety involving an interest in emotional warmth, a concern for personal godliness and a denial of the world. The panel that further addressed the meaning of piety and its application for the present day included Kent Quanbeck, Philip Dyrud and Pastors Terry Olson and Elden Nelson.

The host congregation, Our Saviour's Lutheran of Thief River Falls, provided the site for all the sessions and served a banquet supper on Oct. 26. Thirty-seven people who registered indicated they were present at the 1962 conference. Another 197 people registered at the anniversary celebration.

A festival service followed the banquet. Special musical numbers were shared during the service by a trio from Grafton, N.D.; the four daughters of the second president of the AFLC, Pastor Richard and Leone Snipstead; Ralph and Phyllis Peterson; and Dr. Monseth and Pastor John Rieth. The 42 founding congregations of the AFLC were recognized



OPPOSITE PAGE: The Snipstead sisters (Karen Floan, Anne Presteng, Gwen Berge and Wendy Westlake) provided special music. **ABOVE:** Thirty-seven people present at the 1962 conference returned to Thief River Falls, Minn., for the 40th anniversary.



Judith Wold, a pioneer in the area of Christian Education, was honored.



Pastor Elden Nelson, AFLC vice president, presented a plaque to Pastor John and Ruby Abel, the AFLC's first mission director and missionaries to Brazil.

Festival service tapes available

A videotape or DVD of the evening anniversary service on Oct. 26 at Thief River Falls, Minn., is now available. The tape includes special music by Pastor John Rieth and Dr. Francis Monseth, the Snipstead sisters, and Ralph and Phyllis Peterson, as well as presentations to Mildred (Mrs. John Strand) Pastor John and Ruby Abel, Judith Wold, and Pastor Raynard Huglen. The tape concludes with the sermon by Pastor Robert Lee.

The total length is just more than one hour. The cost is \$10, including shipping and handling for either DVD or VHS tape.

Tapes of the three afternoon sessions on theology, polity and piety will be made available soon.

Send your requests to AFLC headquarters, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441, with the proper payment. Or, if you wish to expedite the process, send an email to hqmail@afcl.org and you will be billed.

and certificates were presented to representatives of the congregations. Thanks were given to early leaders of the AFLC and plaques were presented to Judith Wold, the first Executive Secretary of the Board of Publications and Parish Education and of the Women's Missionary Federation. Also receiving

thanks and a plaque were Pastor John and Ruby Abel, the AFLC's first director of missions and missionaries to Brazil, and Pastor Huglen, the first editor of *The Lutheran Ambassador*. Pastors Abel and Huglen are the two remaining pastors who were part of the first AFLC clergy roster.

See **PRESS ON**, page 14



Back in '62

As teens, they had unique memories

Pastor Bruce and Karen Dalager were high school juniors at the time of the organizational conference of the AFLC in October 1962. Karen was a member of Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, Thief River Falls, Minn., the host congregation, and Bruce was a member of the Salem Lutheran Church of the Wannaska Parish (LFC), 60 miles northeast of Thief River Falls. The churches were in the same district so there were district activities shared by adults and youths.

Karen: Both of us were raised in Christian homes and attended Lutheran Free congregations from the time we were born. My fami-

ly had attended Satersdal, a small country church, until it closed about four years before the merger and its members joined Our Saviour's in town.

Bruce: Our church, Salem, was very active for a small, country congregation. Dad was janitor for many years and mom was the choir director, Sunday school superintendent, and organist for as long as I can remember. So I guess if the church was open we were there.

Karen: We lived about a dozen miles from town but we didn't miss many church services or other activities. Both Mom and Dad were active in church and Dad served

many years on the Lake Bronson Bible Camp board.

Bruce: I felt inferior because of our economic state. But when it came to the knowledge of the Word and church polity, especially that of the LFC, I was confident of Dad's credentials.

His dad had attended Augsburg under Sverdrup and Oftedal, and he, too, had taken some classes at Augsburg. He attended a number of annual conferences and was a student of church history and LFC polity. In the court case held at International Falls regarding the use of the name Lutheran Free Church (not merged) he provided our defense attorney with material that was used in filing his brief and attended the trial. His vocal opposition to the merger resulted in episodes of literal persecution at the hands of fellow church members who joined our pastor in favoring the merger. He didn't speak about this, but his and Mom's tears told us kids something difficult was happening.

Karen: When our church voted to remain outside of the merged church, only a couple of families were unhappy with the decision. It was hard to see those families leave, especially the one we were related to. But the merger did

Bruce: not split our church.

Our church split. Most of the people left and joined neighboring ALC churches. But services continued to be held there for nearly 20 years, conducted largely by laymen. Now, though, we'd better get to our impressions.

Karen: Yours first.

I was told that the business meetings were for the adults, but I did sneak in a few times. It was very impressive to see the dignity and prayerful attitude of those in attendance, and I felt honored and surprised when asked to sing at one of the evening services and later to be elected National Devotional Life secretary for the Luther League. I remember that it

was a challenge to plan the conference and early youth gatherings because we had no idea how many people might attend. We were surprised and excited that so many did show up.

Bruce: My most vivid recollection is the business session held in the school gymnasium that elected Pastor Strand as president. There was a lot of activity, but there also seemed to be a very solemn spirit. And when it was announced that Pastor Strand had been elected and that he would not have a response until later, it seemed that there was tension in the air. The tension was not among the people in attendance. There was unity yet concern that the position was not filled yet. When Strand didn't immediately accept, I was struck with the importance of what had just occurred. This was no small thing that had been done. It was a matter that required fervent prayer. It seemed forever before Pastor Strand announced his decision. To me it seems like it was the next day (but I think my recollection is flawed) that Strand announced his acceptance. Whenever it occurred, however, I sensed a collective sigh of relief and thanks to God rising from the crowd.

Karen: Most of us northern Minnesota kids didn't know Pastor Strand because he lived in western North Dakota, but it was fun to hear that one of his sons was our age. I remember hearing after that first conference that the AFLC began with a few old pastors and Pastor Snipstead; that was the word circulating among people in the area who went with the merger.

Bruce: The traveling Ambassadors Team was a highlight. I know I looked forward to their visits. They were college guys but still seemed to like to be with us. Their testimony was a big encouragement. Now they're close to retirement, and we're grandparents. How amazingly God works! We hope He will continue to be gracious in using our beloved AFLC.



40 Years To remember



Remembering back 40 years isn't always easy. Nevertheless, that is what we asked of people who were at the 40th anniversary celebration in Thief River Falls, Minn., in October and also at the 1962 organizational conference of the AFLC.

Pastor George and Helen Knapp.

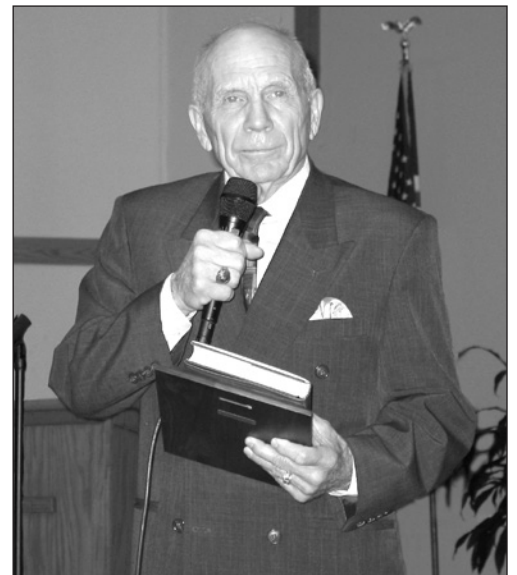
We asked people to share their most prominent memory. Some remembered the encouragement it was to see so many people in attendance. Concern about what was going on in the Lutheran Church and a desire to stay out of the merger was a strong memory to some. Others, in looking back, remember "going home with a confident feeling there would be a continuation of the Free Lutheran principles and teachings."

Certain events stood out to some. One, who was a teenager at the time, was struck by "the uncertainty and solemnity that surrounded the election of the first president." Another recalled when two offering plates were dropped, which he looks back upon as "inadvertently a great blessing as it broke the tension that was evident in that opening service."

The people who were there in 1962 were also asked what they remember being most hopeful about. One mentioned the hope of receiving continued training some day in a conservative, Lutheran school. A number of people expressed the hope that existed of staying out of the merger. Others were hopeful that the true Word of God would be preached and taught.

Hope was present in 1962, but it was to be expected that fear would make an appearance as well. What were those who were attending fearful of? Some were concerned "that nothing would come of the meeting ... that it would not develop ... that maybe we would not make it go." Others wondered if the needed leadership would arise.

See **REMEMBER**, page 18



40

years

PRESS ON, from page 11

In conjunction with the anniversary celebration, a book has been published by the AFLC's Ambassador Publications entitled: *Free and Living Congregations — The Dream That Would Not Die*. The chapters of the book, written by various individuals within the AFLC, teach on the concept, meaning, biblical basis and functioning of free and living congregations. It also has chapters on the history of the movement and the AFLC. The book also contains writings of the first president of the AFLC, Pastor John Strand, to whose memory the book is dedicated. The book's first volume was presented during the service to Pastor Strand's widow, Mildred Strand.

Pastor Lee brought the message at the festival service. He spoke on Philippians 3:12-14, which was part of the theme text of the 1962 conference. The call was to look forward with hopefulness, ask "Lord, what would you have me to do?" and "press on to the glory of God."

The anniversary observance concluded with a Sunday morning Reformation worship service, led by Pastor Terry Olson, pastor of the host congregation. Dr. Monseth shared the message from Romans 3:19-28. He spoke on how "the purpose of the law is to show us our utter spiritual bankruptcy," and "the gospel of grace pervades the whole Bible." He stated, "We are justified without any cause in us. We will never have peace by looking at ourselves or our performance. By faith alone, freely, gratuitously, we're pronounced righteous." In addressing the importance of the truth of justification by faith, Dr. Monseth declared, "We must guard this truth, rest in it — the future of the Church depends on it."

— *Pastor Craig Johnson*
Editor



TOP LEFT: Members of a panel discussed piety, one of three topics at the conference. **TOP RIGHT:** Dr. Francis Monseth and Chaplain John Rieth sang during the service. **MIDDLE RIGHT:** AFLC President Robert Lee brought the evening message. **MIDDLE:** Mildred Strand, widow of Pastor John Strand, was honored during the service. **BOTTOM:** Pastor Raynard Huglen, on the original clergy roster, was also honored.



Moneyless stewardship

Putting your gifts to work for God

We've heard of the cashless society, the paperless office, and even the meatless hamburger. But moneyless stewardship? Isn't money what stewardship is all about?

It's true that we think of money in connection with stewardship, and properly so. It is important that we be good stewards of whatever money we have, as seen in the parable in Luke 16. But consider Joseph in Potiphar's house. He was a steward. Paul, who said he had been entrusted with the gospel; he was a steward, too. In common use today, we have the steward of the ship, who manages the provisioning of food and attends passengers. And the ladies we now call flight attendants have historically been called stewardesses.

Stewardship doesn't always have to do with money. Therefore, one who does not think of himself as a steward because he has little or no money might have a greater stewardship than he imagines.

We are to be good stewards of everything we have been given, not just money. And one thing we have been given is talent — in the modern sense of abilities.

How does one be a steward of his or her talents? Here are some suggestions.

First, ask, "What do I have?" or rather, "What has God given me?" The Bible agrees with the obvious; we aren't all the same. We are made fearfully and wonderfully, and each of us has been given different gifts and abilities by God. We have been given spiritual gifts, as we read in I Corinthians 11. We also may have certain talents, which, while they are not specifically named in the Bible as spiritual gifts, are nevertheless gifts from God and intended for the Lord's service (see Romans 12:1).

In the analogy of I Corinthians 11, we are like a human body — one of us might be a hand, another an eye, another an ear, or a foot. We all have an important function to fulfill, but we are all part of the same body, and we need each other. In practical terms, our talent might be to organize, to coordinate how an effort can be

accomplished efficiently. It may be to repair, to dig in with our hands and work, to understand and dig truths out of Scripture. Maybe we do well one-on-one with people and have a heart for their souls. Maybe God has gifted us to preach. Maybe we have some sort of technical ability, athletic ability or business sense.

Second, ask, "How would God want me to use what He has given me for Him through my church?" Ask it of God in prayer. Ask it of your pastor and fellow believers. Sometimes we may not imagine that the ability we use in our life or work every day might be something God could use in an effective way for the furtherance of the gospel.

Third, start using your gift! Peter says, "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen" (I Peter 4:10-11). A good steward is one who puts to use for his master what his master entrusted to him. Hiding or burying your gift is not good stewardship.

Certainly we are to exercise good stewardship in financial matters. But the other areas of our lives require stewardship as well. What impressed Paul about the financial giving of the Macedonians was that "they gave themselves first to God" (II Corinthians 8:5). God wants *us* far more than He wants our possessions. Paul said, "I seek not yours, but you" (II Corinthians 12:14). Does God have *you*? Have we given to Him our talents and abilities? Ephesians 4:16 says, "From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work."

— **Pastor Jim Fugleberg**
St. Paul's Free Lutheran
Fargo, N.D.



WMF Refuge

A symbol of God's steadfastness

When you take a drive in your area, a significant structure draws your attention — a church steeple. Its sight brings an immediate connection to God. The majestic steeple is a strong symbol of steadfastness. “Behold, a king will reign righteously, and princes will rule justly. And each will be like a refuge from the wind, and a shelter from the storm, like streams of water in a dry country, like the shade of a huge rock in a parched land” (Isaiah 32:1-2).

Just think of the weather's continual buffeting on a steeple — from hot, dry weather or sunny with mild breezes, to gusting winds and pelting rains. Through it all it remains a strong, steadfast beacon offering comfort and strength in all situations.

What a comfort to know our Refuge is always near and ready to minister to us. He knows the bruises and pains of the various situations swirling around us: within our family, in our workplace. He knows that our fears of war and terrorism cause us great concern. He knows how dry and parched we may feel and how our spirits will flag. And in all these times He is there to bring restoration, peace and tranquility.

What a blessing to have God's sanctuaries throughout our land. Each steeple beckons openly to each of us, “Come unto me. Do you have a special need today? I'll listen. I'll comfort. I'll encourage. I'll warm your soul and dry your tears.”

“The name of our Lord is a strong tower; The righteous run into it and they are saved” (Proverbs 18:10).

— *Mary Christianson*
Calvary Free Lutheran
Fergus Falls, Minn.



VISION 2004

Giving with purpose

I am reading the new book from Henry Blackaby and Avery Willis, "On Mission with God — Living God's Purpose for His Glory." While reading this, I'm wondering how will we be able to give to the increased ministry opportunities once the student center at AFLBS is built. Our purpose is not just to have some nice big buildings, but also to join God in His mission work.

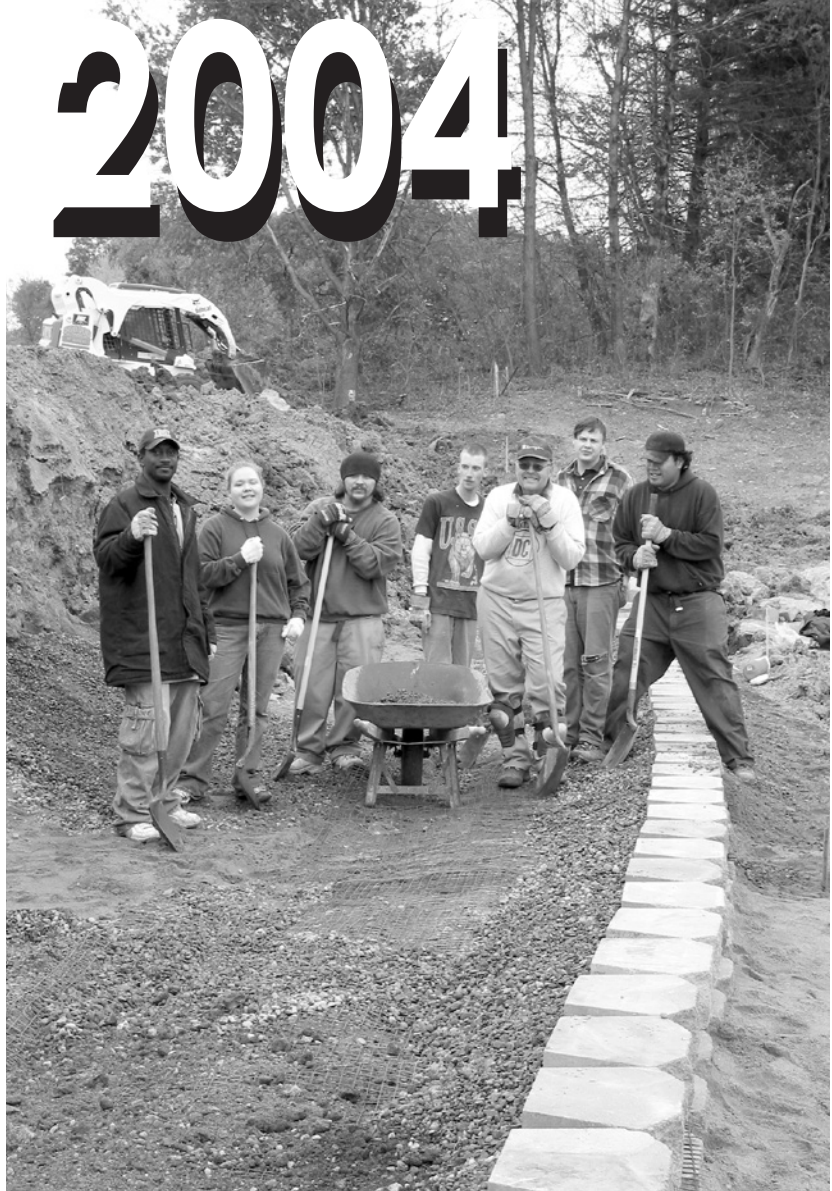
Blackaby and Willis' book focuses on God's mission rather than our missions. You may have thought you were saved just to go to heaven when you die, but God saved you to be on mission with Him to redeem a broken world. He's bringing you back to His original mission, where you can participate in His purpose of redeeming and reconciling a lost world to Him.

But how can one person do so much? Being on mission with God is a corporate mission. As Toby Travis of Faith Studies International said to our congregation recently, accomplishing the Great Commission is something the whole body does together. We have been given gifts so together we can accomplish God's mission. In that way God truly is glorified.

Some have said the easiest thing to do is to give money. To a certain extent that is true — it doesn't take much time to write a check. On the other hand, why do people have so many financial troubles? Why do we still have financial needs to operate the Bible school, support world missions, evangelism and youth ministry, etc.? Why is it often so hard for people who have so much to give? We must go back to the basics of Malachi 3:10: "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour so much blessing that you will not have enough room for it."

The members of our church council believe that if each of us gives 10 percent to the local church, we would have an abundance to accomplish God's mission. Purposeful giving takes an obedient heart and hand. Examine your records for this year. Have you been giving 10 percent of your gross earnings to the church? If not, are you willing to look at ways to give biblically? If you are willing, God has resources in your local church to help. As the capital campaign for Vision 2004 moves forward, we will be asking for dollars above and beyond a tithe. So it is important for you to keep giving to your local church.

As AFLC congregations are being supported with the whole tithe, each church can be actively supporting the



A group of volunteers, including current and former AFLBS students, spent nearly two weeks building this retaining wall on the edge of the schools' property.

greater mission of God through the AFLC. Has your congregation been supporting the schools' operating budget? Can your congregation consider ways to increase support of the operating budget so we can keep the costs affordable for the students? Has your congregation looked at increasing the amounts they send to youth ministry, evangelism, world missions, etc.?

The AFLC doesn't want your money. We want you in a right relationship with God. We want you living your life to the full and giving with a purpose. Jon Galland, the AFLC's development director, is able to visit with you personally and confidentially. Whether you give a little or a lot, when you are on mission with God, He gets all the glory, honor, and praise.

— *Steve Jankord*
Abiding Savior Free Lutheran Church
Sioux Falls, S.D.
Vision 2004 Capital Campaign Committee



A call to Brazil

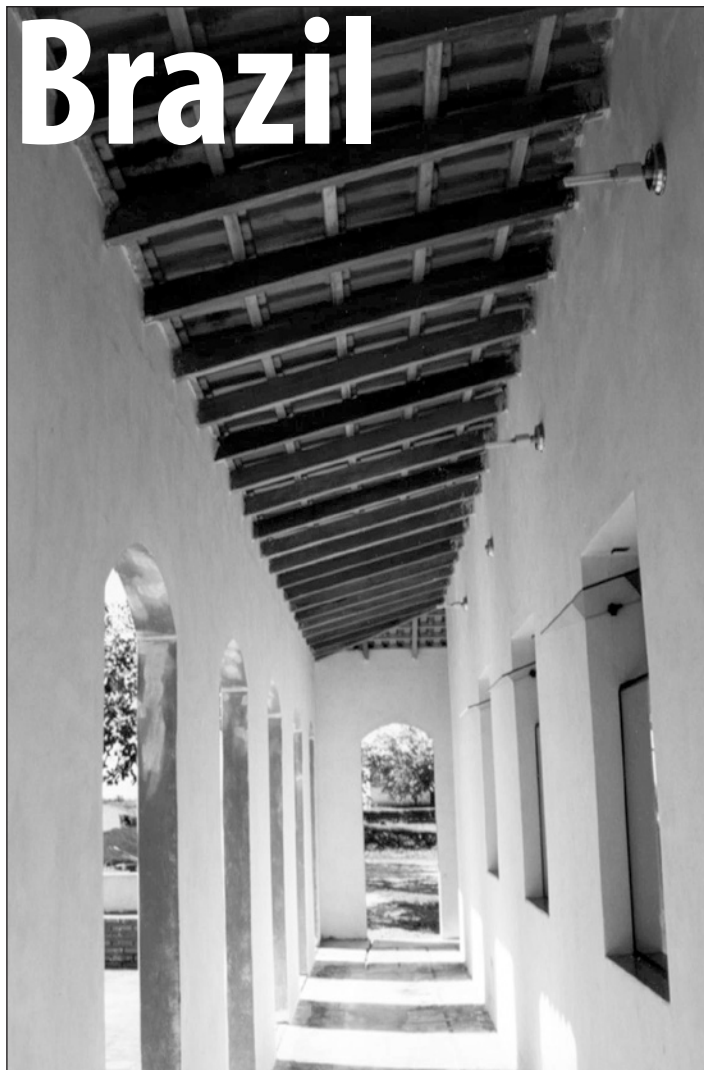
Have you been to Jesus for a life-giving drink? Has your thirsting soul been satisfied by His water of life? Jesus invited all who thirst after righteousness: "Let him come to me and drink" (John 7:37). You may say that you are saved. But what more does the Lord say? "Whosoever believes in Me ... out of his heart will flow rivers of living water" (vs. 38).

This past winter, my wife, Ruby, and I spent three and one-half months in Brazil. During the last part of January and through much of February we were with several other AFLC people. We were all trying to help in some way to encourage the missionaries in their programs and encourage the Brazilian pastors and lay people. We were not all together at the same place at the same time. Some helped at the Bible school in Campo Mourao with construction and in the infant home. Others worked with Jonathan and Tamba Abel to paint a new church and help out with evangelistic meetings.

One might ask, are these American visitors just making more work for the missionaries, or are they really helping? I believe they help prime the pump. Like having to pour water in at the top of a pump to get it to draw water, so it is in God's work. I believe we helped prime the pump in Brazil for spiritual work. Our presence and efforts encouraged our missionaries, Brazilian pastors and people.

What are you planning to do on your vacation or during your retirement years? I can't think of anything more exciting and blessed than to help on the mission field. Jesus' words are more true today than ever: "The harvest indeed is plentiful, but the laborers are few, therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest" (Matthew 9:37).

One of the greatest open doors in the world today is Brazil. Our AFLC mission is greatly understaffed there. Dozens of cities should have church-planting missionaries. Pray that workers will volunteer to enter this field while the doors are so open.



A new walkway marks the completion of the first phase of a project at the Bible school in Campo Mourao to renovate buildings to meet local codes. The project, completed with the help of several work teams from FLAPS, included new roofs with outer support walls to hold the weight.

We are planning to leave for Brazil near the end of January. Would you like to travel with us for a couple of weeks? Write us at: Box 97, Hitterdal, MN 56552. Welcome more pump primers!

— *Pastor John Abel*

REMEMBER, from page 13

Finally, those who were present in 1962 were asked to reflect on how God has since blessed them. "What has been the greatest blessing that has come to you because of the existence of the AFLC these past 40 years?" In their responses two things stood out in people's minds: "The exposure to the Word of God" and "the family of friends."

To one lady the greatest blessing has been "to be able to worship, pray, work and have fellowship with people

who believe the Bible is true as God wrote it." Others noted the blessing of "the Bible being upheld in its truth and purity," and also the "fellowship with so many fine Christian people" they have enjoyed over the years.

Having fellowship with those who were present in 1962 was a blessing many of us enjoyed in Thief River Falls. It was good to gather around the true Word of God and give thanks for the Lord's faithfulness and blessings over the last 40 years.

— *Pastor Craig Johnson*
Editor



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¡NAVIDAD!

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NATALE!

Fröhliche
Weihnachten!

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Members of Free Lutheran Church of Ella, Pepin, Wis., dedicated a new wing of their church on Oct. 20 during a special service. The addition includes a kitchen, fellowship hall, Sunday school rooms and, for the first time, indoor plumbing.

ARC to host retreat in January 2003

Other retreats in February

The ARC will host several retreats in January and February.

- The annual Pastors and Wives Retreat will be Jan. 14-16. The featured guest speaker is Pastor David L. Larsen, a former professor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Larson will speak on the primacy of preaching God's Word in post-modern times under the theme "Preach the Word." Workshops are scheduled with practical topics on small group evangelism, creative homiletics, ministry to college students and the elderly. There will be special workshops for wives, also.

- **SIDEbySIDE** and Junior Sno Daze, winter retreats for youths in seventh grade through high school and grades four through seven, is scheduled for Feb. 7-9. The retreats will feature sessions on "Truth." Speakers include youth leaders from throughout AFLC congregations. Registration fees are \$65 per student before Jan. 28.

- A prayer retreat has been rescheduled for Feb. 7-9. Special prayer leaders include Pastor David Johnson, Pastor Richard Gunderson and Pastor Kevin Olson. Pastor Earl Korhonen will lead worship and praise times. Registration is \$50 per person.

Call 1-888-748-3969 for more information about these retreats.

Nelsons denied work visas, must leave Portugal by December

Missionary family seeks prayers during transition

Attempts to secure permanent work visas in Portugal for the David Nelson family have failed. Their request for a work visa as a pastor was denied. Therefore, they have no other legal recourse and must leave Portugal as soon as possible. Please pray for them as this has been a very discouraging situation. They hope to leave the country by Dec. 17.

Also, please pray as they seek God's will for future service. They are looking to accept a call in the United States and serve the Lord in that capacity.

If you want to contact them in the U.S. after Dec. 18 the address is: c/o Rev. Gary Skramstad, 912 Oak Pond Ct, Sartell, MN 56377. Or call (320) 230-9111. Please remember that mail will not be forwarded to them from Portugal.

Johnson installed at Silverhill, Ala.

AFLC President Pastor Robert Lee installed Pastor David Johnson on Oct. 6 at Zion Lutheran Church in Silverhill, Ala., with the help of the congregation's council members. Those members include Charles Canning, Linda Gibbs, Pete Midgarden, Darlene Tasso, Ralph Utter and Harold Wells.

Zion Lutheran Church is located just north of Gulf Shores, Ala. The church was planted by the old Swedish Augustana Synod in 1905.



Pastor David Johnson and his wife, Cynthia.

Bible school and seminary to host Christmas choral concerts in December on campus

The Association Free Lutheran Bible School and Seminary will present a Christmas concert for family and friends during parents' weekend at the chapel on the campus in Plymouth, Minn. A gospel team worship service will begin at 8 p.m. December 6. The Bible school and seminary Christmas choral concert will begin at 7 p.m. Dec. 7 with refreshments following. On Dec. 8, two Christmas choral concerts will be presented at 2 and 4:30 p.m. with a light lunch after the second concert.

People and Places

AFLC member news

Pastor Paul Wigtel, East Grand Forks, Minn., has accepted a call to serve Word of Life Lutheran, Mankato, Minn. The congregation was most recently served by interim Pastor Tonnes Pollestad.

Loren Tungseth, Fergus Falls, Minn., was elected to a five-year term on the Home Missions Committee. **Pastor Steve Odegard**, Culbertson, Mont., was re-elected to a five-year term on the World Missions Committee.

Pastor Roy Johnson, Roseau, Minn., has accepted a call to serve the Minnesota congregations of Hope Lutheran, Northome, and Bethesda Lutheran, Mizpah. He currently serves Free Lutheran and Norland Free Lutheran, Roseau.

Tim Borg has accepted a call as a youth worker with Good Shepherd Free Lutheran, Cokato, Minn.

Taylor Lutheran Church, Taylor, N.D., was received onto the AFLC congregational roster by members of the Coordinating Committee. The church was most recently affiliated with the ELCA

Living Word Lutheran Church, Appleton, Wis., was received onto the AFLC congregational roster by the members of the Coordinating Committee. Duane Matz, who works for a Christian radio station, serves the new missions congregation.

Living Word Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D., was accepted onto the congregational roster by members of the Coordinating Committee. The new church is a sister congregation to Abiding Word Lutheran, Sioux Falls, which is served by Pastor Michael Brandt.

New Hope Lutheran, Janesville, Wis., was removed from the congregational roster at their request by the Coordinating Committee.

The members of **Emmaus Lutheran Church**, Bloomington, Minn., have put together a call committee to seek an associate pastor to join a current ministry team of six people. For more information, contact the church at (952) 884-4751.

Correction: A word was misprinted in "Piety" (pg. 11, Nov. 5). The sentence should read, "The dance hall and brothel are friends of long standing."



Trinity Free Lutheran Church, Minnewaukan, N.D., was moved Oct. 24. The church was in a low spot that was in danger of flooding from the waters of nearby Devils Lake. In fact, the heating ducts in the concrete foundation had flooded, so a settlement was made with the National Flood Insurance Program, which provided funds so the church could be moved. There was no room for other vehicles on US 281 through Minnewaukan. The church is now situated on Main Street.

AFLC memorials — October

Department given to ...

In memory of ...

Vision 2004

Rev. Vince Will, Martha Hultstrand, Paul Adrian, Wilma Rhodea, Mabel Raan, Angenette Turner, Arnold McCarlson, Alfred Lauen, Merle and Goldie Berven Gray

Home Missions

Ida Wateland, Gerald Knudsvig, Paul Adrian, King Auestad

Evangelism

Gladys Hegre

Miriam Infant Home

Roy Bjorklund

World Missions

Gladys Hegre, Paul Adrian

AFLBS

Oscar Moland, Martha Hultstrand, Alma Wold, Clara Kaldor

In honor of ...

Home Missions

Ken and Mary Nash

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences (10 months) – January 1 - October 31, 2002

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN OCTOBER	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$268,060.00	\$29,353.25	\$205,343.45	77
Youth Ministries . . .	55,413.00	9,051.45	51,809.36	93
Parish Education . . .	71,687.00	5,966.86	48,387.56	67
Seminary	118,938.00	8,305.50	102,910.53	87
Bible School	217,227.00	16,033.41	225,782.08	104
Home Missions	278,872.00	23,122.38	194,706.85	70
Church Extension . . .	23,093.00	456.58	16,451.66	71
World Missions	199,994.00	16,792.43	164,541.18	82
Personal Support . . .	288,000.00	28,246.70	286,570.76	99.5
TOTALS	\$1,521,284.00	\$137,324.56	\$1,296,503.43	85
TOTALS 2001	\$1,119,759.00	\$108,303.66	\$986,614.22	88
Goal 83%				

The Evangelism Department received \$5,440.39 in September for a total of \$60,833.77.

Thankful for dispensable leaders

It was a month before Thanksgiving, and yet the gathering in Thief River Falls, Minn., for the AFLC's 40th anniversary celebration was a time to give thanks. First and foremost we gave thanks to God. Jesus declared, "Apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5, NIV). Without God's help nothing of eternal value would have come out of the 1962 organizational conference. It would have been irrelevant how skilled the leaders were, how clear and solid the "Fundamental Principles" and "Rules for Work," how eloquent the writing, how powerful the heritage or how dedicated the people. If God had not been faithful we would have nothing to celebrate.

But God has been faithful. Each day of the past 40 years the Lord's compassions have never failed. "They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22-23). He has been "our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1). We have been able to say of the Lord, "He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will never be shaken" (Psalm 62:2).

Congregations have kept going, been planted and built up. The Word of God has been proclaimed throughout the world. Souls have been saved. People have come to know Jesus, all because God has been faithful. God is good.

As we think back over the past 40 years it is also good to give thanks for the people God has used. Someone at the anniversary celebration expressed the concern she had 40 years ago as to whether or not God would provide the "proper leadership" the new group needed. The Lord did provide what was needed, and for that we give thanks.

It is not easy to start something new. The first president of the AFLC, Pastor John Strand, wrote in the first issue of this magazine in Feb. 12, 1963, an article appropriately titled, "Fear." In the article Pastor Strand asked the question, "Do we have other fears than a fear of God? Yes, I am afraid we have. Therefore we must remember our Lord's admonition 'Fear not' as we enter upon the task set before us." He then encouraged the readers to remember, "He who equips the Church by His Spirit so she is equipped for every good work, will equip us as we wait on Him. While at times we may lack various physical equipment, we know God gives His Spirit, the only really necessary equipment,

to those who ask Him."

They had little other equipment than the Spirit and Word of God. The majority of Lutheran Free Church congregations went into the merger. The schools they had relied on for training were part of the merged church. They started out with no buildings or budget. Money and manpower seemed to be in short supply. But they had the promises of God and His Spirit was present, so they went forward by faith. We give thanks for their courage and faith and the example that is for us today.

Chapter 11 of Hebrews speaks of various ones who lived by faith in God and the ways the Lord used them. That is followed by the admonition, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin

that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us" (Hebrews 12:1). We are to take note of those who have gone before us; to "Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith" (Hebrews 13:7).

Often 40 years is considered the span of a generation. Much of the founding generation of our AFLC has passed on. And yet our congregations go on and our church body

looks to the future with hope because of the greatness of our God. We remember our founders and give thanks for them, but the fact that we can continue on reminds us that no individual is indispensable. We are all here just for a season. We serve as God enables us. Unless Jesus returns beforehand, the day will come for each of us when we will no longer be around. But God's work will carry on. Our faith rests in Him. It is His work. It is His Church. As the closing line of the hymn "A Mighty Fortress" declares, "Let goods and kindred go, This mortal life also; The body they may kill: God's truth abideth still, His kingdom is forever."

We look back and see leaders who were faithful but are no longer with us. We look around us and within us and we see that our challenges are great and our strength is small. And then we look up and we see that the great and gracious God our leaders trusted in and pointed to remains with us and will forever.

— **Pastor Craig Johnson**

**If God had not
been faithful,
we would have
nothing to
celebrate.**

BUILDING THE BASE

Back to the basics

The head football coach at a major university was asked what the key factor would be in winning their next big game. The coach responded, “Blocking and tackling. We need to focus on the fundamentals if we are going to succeed. Whichever team blocks the best and tackles the best will win the game.”

Modern football has become more wide open and sophisticated than it used to be, especially at the college and professional levels. The best teams utilize dozens of different formations on offense — up to four wide receivers, two or three tight ends, one running back (or even none) in the backfield, and players either shifting or in motion to confuse their opponents. The defenses counter with various lineups — including from three to five down-linemen, up to four linebackers or as few as none, even six or seven defensive backs, rather than the standard four. The complexities of football today have overshadowed the fundamentals that coach was trying to emphasize.

Football still comes down to its basic ingredients. The offensive unit must block the defense away from the football so they can score. And the defensive squad must tackle the opponents’ ball carriers before they

can score. Even the best strategy will fail unless the players execute their various assignments on each play. Miss a block and the defense throws the quarterback for a loss. Miss a tackle and the other team may score a touchdown. Blocking and tackling are what win football games.

I’d like to suggest a certain parallel to the Christian life. Like football, living as a Christian has both offensive and defensive aspects. On offense, believers must move forward and grow in their faith or it will become stagnant and die. On defense, Christians must face their enemies head on and stop them from destroying their spiritual life. We must both “block” and “tackle.”

The main offensive weapon is the Word of God, which will block the attacks of Satan. When Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness, he countered each attack with a passage from God’s Word. “Man shall not live by bread alone ... you shall worship the Lord your God and Him only ...” (Matthew 4:4, 10). As believers we must return to the basics of reading and memorizing Scripture if we are to grow and move forward in our faith. It’s common for pastors and teachers to emphasize Bible reading to their congregations and students. That’s a good strategy. But a successful Christian

life comes down to the execution — do we actually do it?

For defensive purposes, repentance is key. When sin makes an inroad into our lives and threatens to overpower us, it must be tackled and stopped in its tracks. Sin is a deceptive opponent. It may disguise its attack with various “sets and formations.” Rather than try to outsmart sin, we must tackle it straight on, admitting it before God and seeking His mercy and forgiveness.

Repentance is a good strategy to overcome sin — all believers know this. But again, success comes down to execution: taking time every day to bring our sin to God and asking His help to turn from it.

Blocking Satan’s attacks, and tackling the sins in our lives are fundamental to winning in the spiritual game of life.

— *Pastor John Mundfrom*
Spencer Creek Lutheran
Eugene, Ore.

