



2026 • Issue 1

# 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.





## RENEWAL & SPIRITUAL LIFE

**S**pring is my favorite season. I write that with a measure of trepidation because I really love summer and everything that season brings. But for me, nothing beats the return of warm sunshine, the joy of new life sprouting up from the ground, and the refreshment of spring rain.

It's possible that part of my affinity for what spring brings comes from shared themes in our spiritual life. Revival and renewal are words that convey life springing up from the dark and the winter cold of sin and its consequences. The Apostle Peter said it best: "Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19–20). By confessing our sin and need for a Savior, we find hope, refreshment, and joy in the finished work of Christ on the cross.

We need revival. That statement has come to be a bit polarizing because of how it has been interpreted over the years. But at its most basic level, Christians heartily agree that we need forgiveness and life from the One who blotted out our sins and conquered death! We need new life, and the good news is that we have it in Christ.

That renewal certainly describes our personal life with Christ, but sometimes we also use that word and associated thoughts to describe congregational life. Congregations

need renewal and refreshment, too. Georg Sverdrup said it this way, "This is the upbuilding of the congregation: renewal by faith, a sacred union with Christ, growth in purity and virtue, increase in freedom and life." He also made an important observation: "The most important question for every pastor and every congregation is this: Is God's Word truly preached in its severity and in its life-giving power?"

I pray that the theme of AFLC congregations would be the powerful, life-giving message of the gospel for sinners such as me. I pray that message would spark revival and renewal, beginning in our own hearts and extending to our congregations and to the ends of the earth.

Lars Oftedal was a brother to one of the founders of the Free Lutheran movement in America, Sven Oftedal. Lars wrote the hymn "My Heart is Longing to Praise My Savior." In it, he penned,

*O blessed Jesus, what you have given,  
Through dying on the cross in bitter pain,  
Has filled my heart with the peace of heaven;  
My winter's gone and spring is mine again.*

~ Pastor Micah Hjermstad

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# Staying true to our FIRST PRIORITIES



## BOARD MEMBERS

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“Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments.”

—Deuteronomy 7:9

**I** have heard the phrase, “It’s in the constitution,” a lot on the news lately. It is important to check to make sure our nation is following its own guiding documents. The same is true for our WMF! Our WMF Constitution was written back in 1962 by women who desired to “awaken and deepen interest in and love for the Kingdom of God at home and abroad, thus sharing in the great missionary enterprise of the Christian Church ...” Those women wrote the WMF Constitution to guide the women of the WMF in fulfilling that purpose. In 2026, the women of the WMF are still following that original constitution.

Their first priority was monthly WMF Bible studies, which are still written by our own AFLC WMF women, edited by our pastors and wives, published, printed, and shipped. Our desire is for ladies around the country to study 11 lessons together. It’s important to follow our constitution, but more important is to be in the Bible, knowing God’s Word!

Their second priority was “distributing literature and information concerning the missions of the WMF.” The WMF Board fulfills this emphasis through our monthly WMF E-News and WMF Spotlight, which focus on our projects for World Missions, Home Missions, Parish Education, and the Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary. Additionally, we are bringing a motion to expand our projects to include Youth Ministries and Evangelism and Discipleship at the WMF Day business meeting. Those two ministries didn’t exist when the WMF Constitution was written; we will vote on including them this year in our giving.

The third priority in our constitution is “Personal involvement and financial contributions to the Ministries of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations through its regularly established boards.” During the All Boards meeting at AFLC headquarters each fall, each ministry board chair meets with our WMF Board to inform us of specific needs and projects they have. Our board selects one project per ministry to focus on for the year. Those projects are promoted in the WMF E-News and through our resource packets that are sent to each of our local WMFs. The projects are also promoted at our WMF Day Advisory Board meeting, which consists of district WMF officers, as well as during a conference call in February to those district WMF officers.

The WMF Constitution goes on to state its purpose “to unite all women of the AFLC into deeper fellowship of consecrated service for the missions and charities and the Christian Education program of our Association.” Members of our WMF Board consistently meet and pray over our missionaries, ministries, and WMF E-News articles as we desire to unite all women of the AFLC and encourage them to go home and share the ministries of our AFLC that we support, prayerfully and financially.

~Karen Pederson



# Opportunities to serve God ON THE MISSION FIELD

**W**e rejoice in the Lord for the many opportunities we've had this year and are looking forward to having in years to come. It's been truly a pleasure to be involved with our local congregations, missionaries, and, of course, our ministry team members and missionary assistants.

Journey Missions is an avenue to see and experience an AFLC foreign field that has been prayed for and supported over the years while personally participating in the work in a hands-on and tangible way. Whether on a short-term ministry trip or serving as a missionary assistant, the vision for this ministry is for people to serve our Lord Jesus cross-culturally.

As we look at 2026, we have trips scheduled again for churches and congregation members to join. This spring, Journey Missions led a trip to Brazil for the ministry's Carnival camp and the FLBC team to Oaxaca, Mexico, through the cross-cultural ministry program. During both trips, it was a blessing to see individuals plugging into international ministry. Looking towards summer and late 2026, Journey Missions is planning a Czech Republic trip in July led by Andrew and Miri (Klusová) Carlson, an August trip to Nogales, Ariz., and a potential Israel trip in November.

We also work with congregations on planning and coordinating trips, so if there's an additional trip that you would like to take to one of our fields, we are very happy to have those discussions too. We are here to serve our congregations and help our church members see our mission fields.

Journey Missions has been blessed by our missionary assistants who are seeking to serve internationally for a longer period under our missionaries and ministries. The missionary assistant program gives people opportunities to serve overseas in a timeframe longer than a typical ministry trip and is suitable for college students through retirees. The hope is to give opportunities for people to invest in our fields in a way they wouldn't be able to on a short-term team.

So far in 2026 we have had two missionary assistants on the field. Joey Richardson (Paraguay) and Michelle Abel (Brazil) have served with our AFLC missionaries/ministries. We are thankful for their service this spring.

As I think about the people who are serving and who have served with and through Journey Missions, I praise the Lord for those who "go," fulfilling the call the Lord has placed on their lives for this time. People are excited to travel and see the work the Lord has done, and we're thankful that they have chosen to utilize Journey Missions.

I also rejoice as the Lord calls and sends out others through your finances and prayers. You have, and continue, to provide fellow believers an opportunity to serve the Lord in a new and powerful way. We give glory to God and praise Him for you senders; you are having a great impact on the world for Jesus!

~Pastor Jon Nelson



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# Strengthening our MISSION CLARITY



## PARTNERSHIP

**Pray:** Lift up your Home Missions board and staff, Renewal initiatives, and the Alaska Mission.

**Give:** Your gifts fund church planting, Renewal programs, and the Alaska Mission.

**Encourage:** Adopt a planter or congregation. Send letters and care packages, or organize mission teams to strengthen and bless our workers.

**Learn:** Use our videos & podcasts to grow in your theological, practical, and philosophical understanding of ministry.

**Plant and Connect:** Consider if God is calling you to plant or support new work.

## BOARD MEMBERS

Dana Hagen, Chairman  
Pastor Matthew Ballmann  
Pastor Jon Langness  
John Greven • Jeremy Zeltinger  
Pastor Nick Schultz • Hans Tanner

**A** FLC Home Missions has taken steps this past year to strengthen clarity in both mission and organization for greater gospel impact. With a desire to faithfully steward this calling, there is a renewed focus ensuring that every effort is guided by clear purpose and wise stewardship. That purpose remains simple and unchanged: to plant and renew free, living, and Lutheran congregations across America. This theological foundation reflects a commitment to the gospel, spiritually vibrant faith, and teachings centered on God's Word and the means of grace. Flowing from this identity, Home Missions is guided by four core values that shape its mission.

**Mission Clarity** affirms the local congregation as God's primary instrument for evangelism and discipleship, driving efforts to plant and strengthen churches. **Word–Spirit–Sacrament** grounds all ministry in Scripture, the Holy Spirit, and the means of grace. **Multiplication** focuses on reproducing disciples, leaders, and congregations. **Gospel Optimism** expresses confident hope in God's power to transform lives and advance His kingdom. Together, these values anchor an identity as Free, Living, and Lutheran while mobilizing its mission forward. This mission is carried forward through three strategic ministry fronts.

- The **Alaska Mission** is focused on evangelism, cultivating indigenous leadership, and establishing healthy congregations in the Bristol Bay region. To support this, a clear structure is being nurtured, with the Alaska Mission director\* providing on-the-ground leadership, serving as pastor of Hilltop Christian Fellowship, and connecting the mission to the broader AFLC. A newly formed Alaska Mission Committee will offer strategic guidance and encouragement while existing aviation (FLAPS) and radio ministries (BBC) continue their vital operational roles. At the same time, financial realities present a challenge, with a long-standing deficit requiring a shift toward a missionary support model that broadens partnership and strengthens sustainability.

- **Congregational Renewal** addresses the reality that many churches are experiencing decline due to natural life cycles and ministry challenges. This initiative focuses on assessment, training, coaching, and ongoing resources, all supported by a newly created renewal director\* position, which will provide relational and strategic guidance. Bi-annual regional renewal conferences diving into thoughtful ministry issues are a foundational part of this ministry.

- **Church planting** spreads the gospel through new congregations centered on Word, sacrament, and life in Christ. AFLC Home Missions is seeking to cultivate a culture where church planting is a normal, joyful part of its mission, renewing a shared vision that new congregations are the most effective way to reach people with the gospel. At the core of this effort is the "plant pipeline," a clear process guiding prospective planters through calling, assessment, training, and deployment. Once deployed, they receive ongoing support through coaching, cohorts, and resources.

~Andy Coyle

\*Home Missions is seeking to fill these positions

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# A SEASON OF CHANGE

## *and faithful stewardship*

**M**inistry is rarely static. It grows, it shifts, it responds to the faithful provision—and the real constraints—that the Lord gives us. AFLC Youth Ministries finds itself in one of those shifting seasons right now, and we want to be transparent with you about it.

You may already know that our director, Adam McCarlson, has spent this past year on a hybrid seminary internship, serving a local congregation while continuing to support Youth Ministries part-time. As part of that internship, he took a three-month leave of absence from Youth Ministries to dedicate himself fully to the congregation he was serving. I'm grateful to all those who made this a reality.

Effective July 1, the Youth Board is moving the Director of Youth Ministries position from full-time to three-quarter time. Honestly, this change reflects reality more than it creates a new one. Since we hired Adam in 2023, we've encouraged him to dedicate ten hours a week to continuing education during his seminary studies, and his internship year has meant even less than full-time availability for Youth Ministries. The move to three-quarter time is simply an honest accounting of how things have already been. And it's the fiscally responsible thing to do. Like many ministries in the AFLC and at large, giving trends have tightened, and being faithful stewards of what the Lord—and you—have provided means making hard calls before they make themselves.

You've also likely heard that Adam has accepted a congregational call, fulfilling the requirements for ordination—an added blessing on top of an already full year. We are grateful to the Lord and to the congregation who has called him.

We don't share any of this to sound an alarm. The ministry is healthy. Our staff is strong. Chris Rasmussen, Daniel Keinanen, Jordan Langness, and Dr. Dan Hurner continue to serve with incredible dedication alongside Adam. We could not do what we do without them or the countless volunteers in our local congregations who give their time and gifts to this ministry. To all of you: thank you. Words on a page feel inadequate, but they are offered sincerely.

As we look ahead, we're grateful for every congregation and individual who prays for and gives to Youth Ministries. Your support equips local churches to WIN teens to Christ, BUILD them in His truth, EQUIP them to share their faith, and MULTIPLY disciples. That mission hasn't changed. And we trust the Lord who began this work to carry it to completion.

~Pastor Ryan Tonneson, Youth Board chairman



### YOUTH BOARD

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 Wendy Greven, Vice Chair  
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 Michele Smith  
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### STAFF

Dr. Dan Hurner, Networking Coor.  
 Daniel Keinanen, FLY Convention Coor.  
 Jordan Langness, Training Coordinator  
 Chris Rasmussen, Administrative Coor.  
 Adam McCarlson, National Youth Dir.

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# Engaging your COMMUNITY for Christ



**W**e live in a post-Christian, world where many of your neighbors—especially those under 30—misunderstand Christianity, have never been inside a church, or carry real hurt from past experiences. The Lord’s call remains clear: love God with all that we are and love our neighbors as ourselves. That tension is where AFLC Evangelism & Discipleship wants to come alongside you. Our purpose is to help your congregation turn this challenging cultural moment into a God-given opportunity by equipping ordinary believers to live and love as disciples, and to engage your community for Christ right where He has placed you.

### Online and digital help for teaching and encouraging

We offer digital encouragement to help you think biblically about loving God and neighbor in a post-Christian culture. Through our website, social media, monthly email newsletter, and the “Living as a Disciple” podcast, your congregation can access practical teaching that keeps the Great Commandments and Great Commission in view throughout the month. Our monthly online prayer meeting (fourth Monday, 6 p.m. CT) gives your members a way to join others across the AFLC in praying specifically for evangelism and discipleship in your community, and to be encouraged by what God is doing in other congregations.

### Ministry materials equip people to share Christ

We develop biblical, Lutheran ministry materials designed for use in your local setting. The updated *Discipleship Manual* helps pastors and lay leaders walk with people as they follow Jesus, applying the Great Commission to everyday life in the congregation. Pamphlets and equipping resources such as “Preparing to Share Your Faith” and “Baptism Is Not Magic” put simple, clear tools directly into the hands of your members. Additional projects are under way as the Lord provides, all with

the same goal: helping your people share Christ clearly and disciple new believers faithfully.

### In-person ministry and Disciple-Equipping Workshops

We are seeing a spiritual hunger for personal connection and genuine, face-to-face conversation, especially among those 30 and younger. In response, our preaching, teaching, and Disciple Equipping Workshops in local congregations have become a central part of how we can serve you. These workshops help your congregation consider what it looks like to love neighbors in your specific community, develop “relational bridges” such as parenting classes, marriage enrichment, or community helps that build friendships and open doors for gospel conversations.

Along with these local and regional opportunities, we also host Rekindle the Fire each year on the Tuesday before Annual Conference, an afternoon gathering to fan into flame a love for God and neighbor and to encourage both pastors and laypeople in our shared partnership in the gospel.

### How your congregation can benefit

We would be honored to talk with you about engaging your community for Christ more intentionally. We can help you discern your community’s needs, identify relational-bridge ministries that fit your context, and plan either an in-person workshop or participation in one of our broader events as a next step. You can find more information, request workshops, and access resources at [aflc.org/evangelism](http://aflc.org/evangelism), or by contacting our office at [evangelism@aflc.org](mailto:evangelism@aflc.org). By His grace, we will continue to encourage, equip, and assist AFLC congregations in making and equipping disciples who make and equip disciples, beginning with loving God and loving the neighbors on your own street.

~Pastor Randy Nelson

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*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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**DEVELOPMENT**

**INVESTING FOR ETERNITY**  
*According to God's riches*

**T**he Development Department is committed to being a valuable resource for our partners as they prayerfully consider the future distribution of their estates. We believe Christian-based estate planning helps grantors provide for their families and leave lasting witnesses of faith and devotion to Christ.

While we do not provide legal or tax advice, we do offer various effective methods for saving estate and income taxes. We believe that everything belongs to the Lord, and we are but stewards of His resources. We support our partners in joyfully giving to ministries that reflect God's calling with an eternal impact for His kingdom.

I am very pleased to announce that Nikki Hanson joined the Development Department as our new administrative assistant, taking over for Angel Luttmann who resigned last fall. We thank Angel for the work she did for the AFLC. Nikki has more than 20 years of experience in administrative work. She was employed by Williston Trinity Christian School and Heritage Christian Academy in Maple Grove, Minn. Nikki earned her B.A. in English from the University of Jamestown. She is married to Pastor Troy Hanson, who serves Skrefsrud Lutheran and Immanuel Free Lutheran churches. The Hansons reside in Beresford, SD.

~Mark Sivertson



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# Discovering GOD'S PURPOSE



**J**ust five years ago, if someone had asked me if I would ever consider becoming a missionary, my response would have been a definite “No.” I had goals of becoming a heavy equipment operator, and I have always been known to follow the path that leads to the most money in my pocket. But then my wife, Katy (my girlfriend at the time), went to serve on a vacation Bible school team in Naknek, Alaska. She came back from that summer, told me all about what she had experienced, and asked if someday I would be on the Alaska VBS team with her so I could experience it myself. The following summer, we got married and just two weeks later were on an airplane heading to Naknek.

After serving on the team that summer, my eyes were opened to the needs in Alaska. Villages are miles from any roads, and the only way people can obtain many basic needs is by boat or airplane. I witnessed the FLAPS airplanes bringing them what they needed most of all, the gospel. I sat with hurting children who had never heard of what Jesus had done for them, and I knew there were many more who need to know the gospel. It was while I was in these villages that I knew God wanted me to do more.

I had previously thought of mission work as simply being a pastor or Bible teacher in a remote place, but I had never thought of who helped get the pastors and teachers to those remote places. I witnessed with my own eyes the FLAPS pilots carrying the hope of Jesus to lost and hurting children. Maybe God could use me for that, too. After one of our weeks leading VBS in a village, I shared with my wife the thoughts I had been having and said that I wanted to become a missionary pilot. My wife had always felt the Lord was leading her toward missions and had been praying for years that I would feel the same. She calmly responded, “Okay. Let’s pray about it.” Honestly, that wasn’t the response I was expecting, but I knew right then that this was the path God wanted me on.

For the last three years, I have been training to be a missionary pilot at Mission Aviation Training Academy (MATA). Through this training, I have had the opportunity to go back to Naknek with teams to assist in maintenance work on the FLAPS aircraft, the very planes that God used in pushing me to surrender my life plans to Him. The Lord has greatly blessed my wife and me, along with our two children, in this journey to the mission field, and we are excited to see what He has in store for us. I am so thankful for FLAPS and all of those who pray for and support the ministry in Alaska. It was through this ministry that I discovered how God can use a pilot and an airplane for His glory.

~Zach Kupser

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# Our PRICELESS MISSION *continues*

**F**or more than 60 years now, the Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary has been establishing students in the Word of God for faith in Jesus Christ and faithful service in His kingdom.

That is not a slogan, but a promise that has been made in various forms through the years. It is a promise that many readers have benefited from—including this current author!

But our mission is easier to evaluate over the long haul than in real time. What motivates me is looking to the future for our graduates. What will the world look like because of their time at FLBCS? Through steadfast, Christ-centered ministry of the Word, in the years ahead we will see:



**Wade Mobley**  
FLBCS President

- Thriving AFLC congregations led by servant-hearted pastors and lay leaders shaped at FLBCS.
- Christ-honoring marriages and homes where children and grandchildren rise up and call Jesus Lord because their parents were transformed here.
- Communities marked by compassion, integrity, and hope because our graduates live with Scripture as their compass.
- Generation after generation returning to this campus, hungry for the same life-giving truth.
- And everywhere we look—God’s Word, sent out from this place, still accomplishing what He desires, never returning empty.

Your investment in FLBCS makes all this possible. Thank you!



FLBCS possesses a distinctive philosophy of education, that is, the “why” behind the way we teach, train, and mentor our students. You can read more about it by scanning the QR code or visiting our website: [flbc.edu/the-value-of-a-priceless-mission/](http://flbc.edu/the-value-of-a-priceless-mission/)



## UPCOMING EVENTS

- Aug. 3–7: Summer Institute of Theology
- Aug. 10: Golf Scramble at The Refuge
- Oct. 15–16: UpClose campus preview
- Dec. 4–6: Christmas at FLBCS

Info and event registration at  
[flbc.edu/events](http://flbc.edu/events)

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# Investing in future generations



**W**hen I was asked to write about investing in the Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary through my time on the board of trustees, I was a little stumped as to what I might say. First, I thought I'd explain how much fun we have in our meetings listening to reports all day long from the administrators in a stuffy conference room—this is where you are supposed to laugh heartily!

It dawned on me, though, that I am willing to make the investment of serving on the Board of Trustees because of the investment FLBCS made in me more than 40 years ago. You don't serve on a board for the glamor. You serve because you have a passion for the institution and its mission.

For years, I have benefited from the foundation that was laid for me studying God's Word at the Bible College. I entered with a good Christian background, but I didn't know how to study God's Word on my own. I learned there was so much depth in the Word, and the more you dive in the more you want to go deeper. I want that for everyone and anyone who is willing to go to the Bible College.

My wife, Robin, and I were both blessed to graduate from the Bible College back in 1983. We have been blessed to watch all four of our children attend, too. With ten grandchildren so far, we are hoping all of them will attend as well.

I'm finishing up my ninth year on the board and still feel that the investment of my time is worthwhile. The mission of establishing students in God's Word is still the same goal it has been since the school's beginning, and it is priceless.

Our meetings are quite encouraging. The highlight is often our interviews with seminary students. We interview them to approve them for enrollment, going out on internship, and ultimately for graduation and to recommend they be eligible for a call. It's fun to watch their progress over that four-year span. They come in guessing what it means to be a Free Lutheran, and they leave speaking very articulately about what it means. Especially encouraging is when they speak of their love for the people they ministered to while out on their internship in a congregation. What could be better than that?

~ Phil Johnson, Board of Trustees





# REACHING OUR GOALS



## Funding the Mission

Students at the Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary receive great value from a priceless mission. That mission is not free, however, and generous individuals and congregations make it possible for students to complete their studies with no student debt or financial involvement from state or federal sources.

A successful Annual Fund is essential to the financial health of FLBCS, as it covers about one-third of all student costs. Friends of FLBCS have been most generous in the past:

- 2024–25 yielded 109% of a \$1.3M goal
- 2025–26 has yielded 94% of a \$1.5M goal (as of this writing with three months to go)

At the time of this writing, the FLBCS Board of Trustees is also exploring the feasibility of a capital campaign. If or when this develops, friends of FLBCS will hear a lot more. This campaign would be outside of the Annual Fund and would advance the mission of establishing students in the Word of God for life in Jesus Christ by covering:

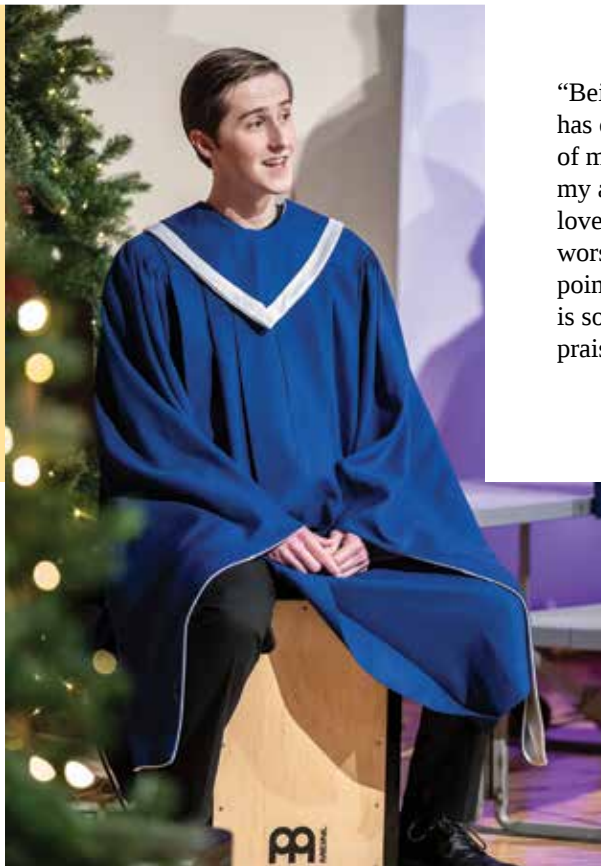
- potential facility improvements
- principal reduction in advance of refinancing long-term debt
- More info about other items coming soon

To give, visit [flbc.edu/give](http://flbc.edu/give)

“The community that we have here has been such a blessing. Being surrounded by fellow believers who are all striving to learn more about the Word of God is super encouraging. This is definitely something that I have enjoyed about FLBC and these friendships will last forever.”



**Owen Edwards**  
FLBC Freshman

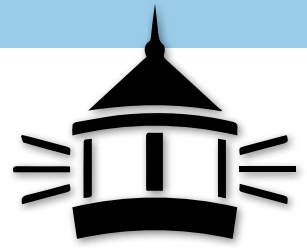


“Being on a gospel team has challenged me to think of myself less and to focus my attention on the Lord. I love having the chance to worship the Lord while also pointing others to Him. He is so worthy of all of our praise!”

~Alex Greene  
FLBC Freshman

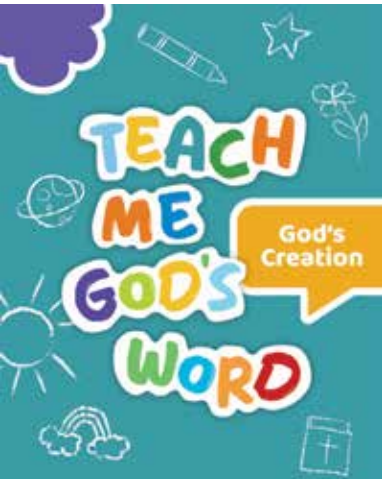


Scan the QR code to see the most recent FLBCS viewbook.



# A YEAR IN REVIEW

## *Encouraging faithful teaching of the Word*



**T**he 2026 Annual Conference theme is “Sure Hope” based on Philippians 1:6. When the Apostle Paul affectionately wrote to his brothers and sisters in Christ, “the saints” in Philippi, he encouraged the congregation by expressing confidence that “He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.” God is the one who begins His good work through the Word and Spirit in baptism. He initiates, and He will complete His gracious work of salvation and sanctification. Great is His faithfulness! In Christian education, this confident hope enables and frees us to do the work of teaching and let the results rest with God.

AFLC Parish Education produces biblical Lutheran educational and devotional resources to encourage faithful teaching of the Word of God. Here are some of the resources we’ve been working on during the past year.

**Alive in Christ: 31 Days in the Word:** We produced a devotional booklet for teens in collaboration with AFLC Youth Ministries. The gospel-centered readings point to the unchanging Word of God as the foundation for faith and life and can help instill the value of a daily devotional time—reading God’s Word, praying, and memorizing Scripture—giving youth a practical tool to make devotions a daily habit.

**Teach Me God’s Word:** Centered on the gospel, the Ambassador Sunday School Series can be life transforming. We are continually updating various facets of the Ambassador curriculum. Redesigned Level 1 student materials are scheduled for summer 2026 printing. The take-home leaflets help parents review the lesson at home to reinforce biblical truths. In homes where parents may not be Christian, the leaflet can serve as an evangelism tool.

**10 Commandments Board Book:** The 500th anniversary of *Luther’s Small Catechism* is coming in 2029, and we are planning several related projects. The first is a board book for young children on *The 10 Commandments* coming in 2026. Plans are to publish other board books on the Lord’s Prayer, the Apostles’ Creed, and the Sacraments to strengthen catechetical teaching with young children.

**Visual Mission Story:** We are adapting short stories from our *Missionary Chronicles* book for classroom use. We have secured an artist to create eight visual flashcards for our first story, “Freedom from Bondage” by Pastor Paul and Becky Abel, and hope to publish it in 2026.

**From Freedom to Life Audiobook:** We have almost completed recording Pastor Robert L. Lee reading his recent AFLC Heritage Series book, *From Freedom to Life: A History of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations*. Pending editing, the audiobook may be ready this summer.

**Updated Website and Online Bookstore:** Explore our new blog with book reviews, articles, newsletters, and education spotlights that focus on creative educational ministries in congregations. We are redeveloping our online bookstore. The upgrade will provide key infrastructure improvements and be implemented in three phases. The first phase nearing completion will provide much improved navigation and functionality for customers. Visit our new online bookstore at [store.ambassadorpublications.org](http://store.ambassadorpublications.org).

~Marian Christopherson

9  
Thou shalt not covet thy  
neighbor’s house.

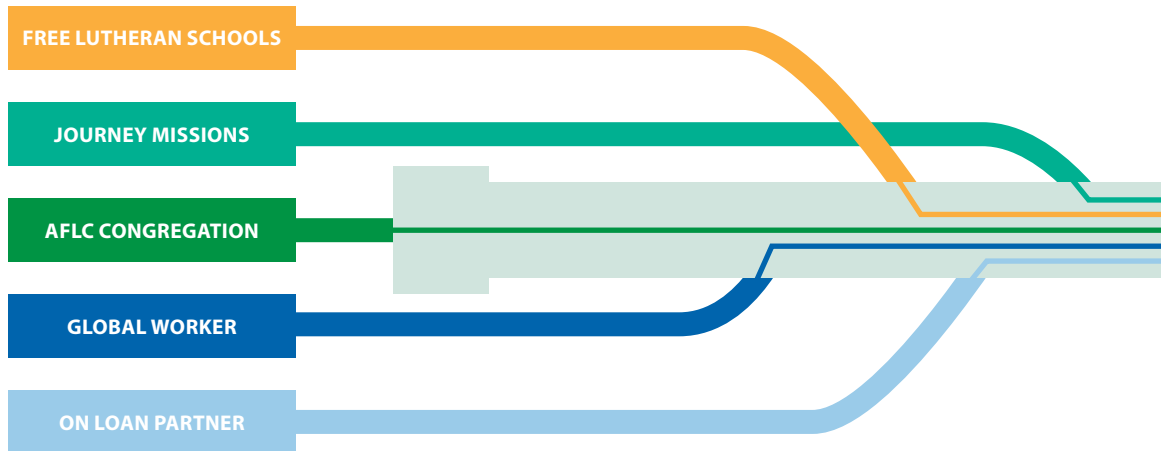


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# FROM CALL TO COMPLETION

## *A pipeline to the mission field*

**L**ast year, we introduced the term “mission pipeline”—not because the idea itself is new, but because sometimes the work of missions can feel unseen. It’s easy to wonder what’s happening or where God is moving. But the truth is, He is always at work—even in the ordinary, steady moments we might overlook.

The mission pipeline is simply a way of making that story visible. It traces the journey of mission work—from the first stirring of a call to the faithful support that sustains it—inviting you to be part of it wherever you are.

This past year, that story included stepping into new fields, commissioning new missionaries, and so much more. And our hope is that as you see each step, you’ll not only stay informed, but feel invited to pray, to engage, and to follow along as God continues to work.

The pipeline does not just end when you become a

missionary. That is where your adventure begins. The process of God’s call you just experienced has now come to fruition in the vocation of international missionary, with the goal of serving Him for years to come.

Each step of the pipeline is part of a larger story toward the day when a local, national church is established and the mission, in that place, has come full circle.

What is next? Through the faithful actions of past and current missionaries, we have national churches that are growing and thriving in Brazil, Chile, Mexico, India, Switzerland, and Uganda. We have passed the baton onto the national leaders in those countries, to continue to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19–20).

What do national churches look like today? Read on to see!



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# Passing the baton to national workers

After the years of effort from those who were obedient to God's call, there are AFLC churches being nationally led around the world. World Missions has ministries in eight countries and missionaries in four countries: Brazil, Mexico (Zacatecas), Paraguay, and Uganda (seasonally). We receive regular news from fields with a missionary presence, but we have four other countries where missionaries are no longer serving, are not allowed by the government, or where we have no workers to send: Mexico (Guanajuato), India, Switzerland, and Chile. Here is what God is doing in these countries through the partnership with AFLC World Missions and you!

## Mexico

Todd and Barb Schierkolk have been in Mexico for 30 years, currently serving in Zacatecas and previously in the state of Aguascalientes. However, another contact with Mexico came in 1979 from Pastor Samuel Flores in the Guanajuato. The work in Guanajuato continues through the Central Mexican Lutheran Church (CMLC) with Pastor Samuel's son (Pastor Milton Flores), his grandson (Pastor Israel Flores), and other family members serving in various ministries. Please pray for our AFLC family in the CMLC as they press on in the ministry despite the difficulties caused by cartel-related activity. Your gifts to Mexico ministry help the outreach to other communities in Guanajuato.

## India

India, home to the largest population in the world (1.4 billion), has been an AFLC World Mission field since 1980. AFLC-India President Luther Sastry guides the 56 congregations in the state of Andhra Pradesh. There are 27 pastors and 10 Bible women who faithfully minister to the congregations. During the Advent season, many of the congregations hold nightly worship services, and during the Lenten season, there are worship services every day of the week for 40 days. The Horeb Children's ministry supplies physical and educational needs to children. The tutorial centers reach around 800 children each day, gospel meetings are held in the villages, and the theological training includes the Bible school with 11 students! The AFLC-India VBS teams minister to hundreds of children each week during summer break—even reaching to other states and a nearby country last year. Your gifts to AFLC World Missions India enable all these ministries to continue and expand in India through the Bibles and literature distribution, medical, food, and relief ministries.

## Switzerland

Since 2018, our work in Switzerland has been a working agreement between AFLC World Missions, the Brazil AFLC (AILLB), and the El Shaddai congregation of Geneva, Switzerland. The congregation rents worship space in the historic Geneva district. The building is well-suited for worship, but it is not available for all congregational activities. Augusto Fiuri, a full-time truck driver, continues to serve the congregation in Geneva on a volunteer basis. Pastor Augusto longs for someone to assist him in ministry to the congregation. The congregation is seeking a partner congregation in the United States to help sponsor Pastor Augusto so that he would be able to devote more time to the congregation and less time to his truck

driving job. Please continue to pray for this need and for more workers for Switzerland to help Pastor Augusto.

## Chile

Since 2025, the work in Chile has been a labor of love by one family: Pastor Patricio and Isabella. Pastor Patricio, a full-time engineer, had his heart set on gathering a group of believers together under the umbrella of a pietistic, Lutheran fellowship. He reached out to AFLC missionary Pastor Matthew Abel in Paraguay and was eventually introduced to, and vetted by, our AFLC national leadership in Brazil. Pastor Patricio, now on the AFLC Brazil clergy roster, is seeking other like-minded pastors in Chile to join him in fellowship. His efforts to keep a regular worship schedule in Santiago have been challenging. Please pray for his family, extended family from Venezuela, and his neighbors whom he so desperately desires to reach with the gospel. AFLC World Missions looks forward to finding ways to encourage and support the church planting ministry in Chile.

## The next field

Where next? AFLC World Missions dreams of the AFLC being established in more nations around the world—but not without the Lord's leading. We believe that God will supply the funds as people answer His call to go into all the world and make disciples. We need not fear the lack of funding; rather, we must pray as Jesus teaches us in Matthew 9:38, "pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

As we look across these fields, where national leaders now shepherd their own congregations, we are witnessing the passing of the baton. Because of obedient missionaries, the work that God began will "bring it to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6). This is not the end of the mission, rather, the fulfillment of the gospel being established and shared to all people of all nations! And so, we continue to go, proclaim, plant and equip, trusting that God is not only raising up the next fields, but also the next hands to faithfully carry the baton forward.

~Dr. Earl Korhonen

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## ASSOCIATION RETREAT CENTER

# A FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

*Investing in the new generations to come*



**W**ith gratitude for God's faithfulness and confidence in His continued provision, the Association Retreat Center focuses on the 2026 theme of "Abundant Growth" (II Peter 3:17–18). This theme calls us not only to spiritual maturity, but to intentional stewardship, preparing today so that the ARC remains a place where Christ is proclaimed, disciples are strengthened, and lives are transformed for generations to come. With this in mind, the ARC is prayerfully pursuing several long-term ministry investments designed to secure lasting gospel impact.

One important priority is establishing an Executive Director Endowment. By endowing this role, the ARC strengthens leadership stability and protects the ministry from financial volatility. This investment ensures consistent, Christ-centered leadership and allows the ARC to remain focused on its mission for decades to come.

We are also pursuing a Youth Programming Endowment fund. For many young people, time

spent at the ARC becomes a defining moment in their walk with Christ. An endowment would help sustain youth ministry and expand camp opportunities, ensuring that financial barriers never prevent a young person from attending.

Finally, a new meeting space building would increase programming capacity and allow the ARC to host simultaneous retreats, expanding our ability to serve churches and ministries. Greater capacity directly supports greater gospel reach.

These initiatives will be pursued through collaborative leadership between the ARC Board and executive director, ensuring strategic alignment, financial stewardship, and faithful execution as the Lord provides.

We invite you to continue partnering with us in prayer and generosity as the ARC prepares for the next generation of ministry.

"To Him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen." 2 Peter 3:18

~Kirk Rautio, Executive Director



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