

AMBASSADOR



AFLC

*missions
impact*



Walking in newness of life

BY PASTOR KEN MOLAND

It happened once that a man who normally attends church only on Christmas and Easter came on another “normal” Sunday. As he greeted me at the door, he said, “Pastor, it was a nice service, but where are all the people?” I resisted the temptation to turn the question back to him, but perhaps I should have done so.

I suppose that every pastor has had that imaginative moment following a festive service when he briefly thought, “This was such a great service, maybe they will all come back next Sunday.” But in the real world, that is not the case; and if the truth be told, even devout followers of Christ often fail to live in the expected power of the resurrection. Perhaps that may be part of the reason why others don’t see the relevance of the resurrection beyond Easter Sunday.

In these first weeks following the joyous celebration of the resurrection, what is it that will make Easter a launching pad rather than a terminal point? Is there “life after Easter” in our personal lives and in our congregational life?

The Apostle Paul was so moved by the resurrection of Christ that it dramatically affected his daily life. It does not appear to be an emotional response, but it was visceral in that it touched the very core of his spiritual being. As he wrote about this spiritual reality to the church in Rome, he invited them and us to apply the power of the resurrection of Christ to our daily walk. Just think about the privilege of living in such amazing power.

Paul describes this privilege as walking in the newness of life in Romans 6:4: “Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the



dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in the newness of life.” With Paul’s careful application to our lives, the resurrection now becomes not just a regular celebration on the first day of the week, but also a daily spiritual transformation with real-time power infused by the Holy Spirit. Even though this transformation is primarily internal, Paul writes that it eventually expresses itself in transformed living, as well. Here is one of the evidences of the resurrection that the world needs to see—lives transformed by the power of the resurrection of Christ.

Here is one way that this truth might become more evident in our lives. Let the power of the resurrection enable us to walk in the newness of life as that relates to a specific area of weakness or a troubling sin. We confess that in general terms we must be brought from death to life in order to serve our Savior, but perhaps there are more specific applications to be made. Would we dare to believe that the power of the resurrection could be applied to overpower our impotence in Christian living? What would happen if our neighbors could see the difference?

It is here that the message of Easter lives beyond a day of celebration. In addition to our justification being sealed, our sanctification is connected to the greatest power imaginable. Walking in the newness of life as a way of life, as Paul writes in Romans 12:2, demonstrates what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. That is a powerful witness to a watching world.

Moland serves Our Redeemer Lutheran, Kirkland, Wash.

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I have but one passion—it is He, it is He alone. The world is the field and the field is the world; and henceforth that country shall be my home where I can be most used in winning souls for Christ.

—Count Ludvig von Zinzendorf

Mission starts with a gift. That gift is Jesus Christ. It is not forgiveness or reconciliation or any other fruit of Christ's work. It is Christ himself. This is essential because it means that all of the efforts to convince people to do something missional, whether service or invitation or whatever other actions are desired, can never be the basis of the work of the church. Such an approach relies on duty, perhaps even guilt. It does not represent the gospel and it does not result in Christianity.

—Dave Daubert

A tiny group of believers who have the gospel keep mumbling it over and over to themselves. Meanwhile, millions who have never heard it once fall into the flames of eternal hell without ever hearing the salvation story.

—K.P. Yohannan

I wasn't God's first choice for what I've done for China ... I don't know who it was ... It must have been a man ... a well-educated man. I don't know what happened. Perhaps he died. Perhaps he wasn't willing ... and God looked down ... and saw Gladys Aylward ... And God said—"Well, she's willing."

—Gladys Aylward



Training in the Word

If you've ever stopped by the Home Missions office to see Pastor Paul Nash, you've no doubt seen his large marker board drawing hanging on the wall.

Resembling a child's treasure map, the drawing includes stick figures, footprints, arrows, a cross, and a few words scrawled in red, blue, and black marker.

At the lower right side of the map is a person. Small footprints lead to a cross in the center of the map. Beside the path are the words, "love, compassion, and kindness." This part of the diagram is meant to portray meeting people at their most basic points of need so we can lead them to the cross of Jesus. The open Bible represents leading and training disciples in the Word of God. We never stop learning about God, hence the picture of heaven at the top left. But notice how the cycle repeats itself, as those who have had their lives touched by Jesus, are launched out to walk with others, meeting people where they are at.

I remember being introduced to the map when I first joined the office staff in 2009. Pastor Nash says he leaves it up to remind him of the purpose of Home Missions: to love, lead, and launch. It's simple and it's profound; and during the past few years I've

had a front row seat watching it put into action.

LOVE

Love is the essence of meeting people where they are at—like Jesus. Jesus made time to eat with Zacchaeus, to sit at the well with the Samaritan woman, to touch the feverish forehead of Peter's mother-in-law, to have His feet washed by a weeping woman, and even to hold diaper-clad infants in His arms. In each circumstance, Jesus met people just where they were at, whatever level their faith was, without making them feel small. His words and actions were wrapped in love, kindness, and compassion in a way that was magnetic. His love made each person feel valued.

Sometimes love in action looks like addiction recovery meetings or performing a difficult funeral service for an un-churched family. It's also filling boxes at a food bank, hosting a girl's Bible study, doing premarital counseling for a young couple, or organizing weekly date nights to help strengthen marriages. Love is creative in its expression and persistent in its pursuit. I've been often reminded, "People need the most love when they are the most unlovely."



Jesus

AUTHOR INFO

Friestad, a member of Grace Free Lutheran, Maple Grove, worked full-time in the AFLC Home Missions office for three years. She now works on an as-needed basis.

love. lead. launch.

BY CHRISTIE FRIESTAD

LEAD

When people come to the cross of Jesus in repentance for salvation, they have a sincere hunger for the milk and meat of God's Word. "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (II Timothy 3:16-17, ESV).

I think of my little boy, Eben, 6 months old, just learning to eat solid food. He furrows his brow in concentration, observing my husband and I eat our food. He picks up his piece of cucumber or apple, and tries for himself. We're loving the process as he follows our lead.

Leading may look different depending on where you are at. A family living room in Hagerstown, Md., makes a great spot for a church leadership training session. Sometimes it's visits from Pastor Nash for a weekend Bible seminar. Other times, it's one-on-one, when a Home Mission pastor takes a parish builder on visitations with him. It's Pastor Ollie Olson, with 50 years of ministry experience, flying in from California to spend a day mentoring Home Mission pastors. It's hosting a week

of intense Parish Builder training, with lots of time for questions and answers with seasoned ministry workers. It's a church plant in Jamestown, N.D., gathered around a projector screen to watch an online spiritual warfare class.

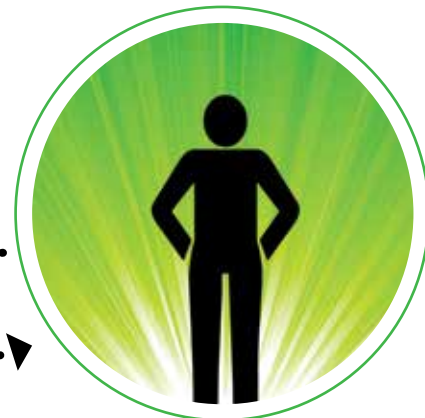
LAUNCH

Nothing says launch like an established church taking steps to nurture another church plant. The blessing is reciprocal for both the mother and daughter church. This sort of support is giving gatherings in Mesa, Ariz., and Buffalo, Minn., a strong start.

Parish Builder and Bible school summer team training produces energetic disciple-makers. When the last class ends, students launch as teams into communities across the country to love kids, teach the Word of God, knock on doors, play ball, visit hospital rooms, and share their own story. I was one of those children—loved and taught by a summer team—whose life was forever impacted.

"Love, lead, launch" is more than a catchy phrase or formula. It's a way of life that builds a multi-generational legacy for Christ. What about you? Are you somewhere on that map?

Love, compassion, kindness



a life changed



BY PASTOR KEVIN OLSON

Tracy was born into in a wealthy Muslim home in Jinja, Uganda. Her father was well known in all of Uganda because of the mosques that he had built and the support that he had given the Muslim faith. In their home they followed Islam strictly, praying and reading the Quran all the time. Her father, who had several wives, died when Tracy was young. Her mother left her to be raised by her step-mothers. So Tracy grew up without a father and always looked for the love of a mother. Life was hard in those early years.

Tracy's half-brothers and sisters also mistreated her, but she didn't have anyone to stand up in her defense. When it came to paying school fees, Tracy was the last to receive money from her step-mothers for tuition, so she didn't learn how to read. In sixth grade, at age 12, she was raped by her step-brother and became pregnant. She delivered a boy, Zion, when she was just 13. Life had been hard living under her step-mothers, but it became even more difficult as a single mother with no income, food, or home of her own to provide and care for a baby.

A Catholic priest offered to pay for her tuition at a food production course that required at least a tenth grade education. By the grace of God, she was accepted into the course. Following her training, she was hired by a Christian missionary family to help with the cooking and work around home. The family promised to pay for her college education, but after many years they told her that they had lied.

At that moment it seemed like it would be better for her to go back to her Islamic faith. But the Holy Spirit kept encouraging her and assuring her that she had a greater destiny. Soon after that, she met Nate and Rhoda Jore, AFLC missionaries to Jinja. She became friends with them and helped them in their ministry. That was the first time that Tracy saw what real Christian faith looked like.

Tracy always had a desire to know God and had attended church. But she didn't really have any knowledge of the Bible. Though she read the Bible, she did not understand its meaning. When the new Ambassador Institute class was started in Jinja, she was quick to join and faithful to attend. In the classes, the Bible started to make sense and have meaning like it never had before. The stories of the Bible were coming alive to her and she

was learning how the prophecies of the Old Testament were fulfilled in the New Testament. She learned that the prophecy of God to the serpent in Genesis 3 was fulfilled on the cross, and although Jesus was crucified, Satan was defeated.

"Now I understand the Word of God," said Tracy. "I understand what it means to me. I understand how much God loves and cares for us. I understand the love of Christ ... Now I can explain the Bible to people."

She had previously heard pastors bring in secret or twisted meaning into the Bible rather than studying it for what it says.

Tracy compares her life to that of Joseph in Genesis, saying that her life has not been easy. She was nothing, but now she knows that she is a daughter of the King. Even after getting married, her husband also mistreated her. But through faith she shares the stories of the Bible at home and is watching God change him. Recently, her husband, Jacob, began leading a Bible study in their home. They have joy and peace that they have not had in the past. Communication, forgiveness and love have begun to grow in their home. She has been able to leave the burdens of life with the Lord rather than trying to carry them on her own.

"It begins by giving God the first place in our hearts, in our homes and in our relationships," she said.

This past January, Tracy completed the two-year Ambassador Institute training. This was a big event for Tracy because it was the first graduation that she had ever been a part of and her Muslim family could not believe how far she had come. Along with the other 71 students, she has learned 84 stories and memorized 2,200 verses of the Bible.

Tracy started a women's training class last year and she also initiated a training class out on the islands in Lake Victoria last fall. Every Saturday, Tracy and a fellow student pay their own transportation fees to travel out to the island and teach 10 pastors from the area. This is the first training in the Word of God that these men have ever had. Who would have ever guessed that it would have come from a once illiterate, single, teenage mom who grew up in a strict Muslim home? Yes, indeed, God does change lives.

AUTHOR INFO

Olson, a member of Emmaus Lutheran Church, Bloomington, Minn., is the director of the Ambassador Institute.

Is there anything you need from the States?"

This kind of question is common to hear from a supporter willing to send something our way. It is funny though, because we're still a part of the United States. However, it's not surprising to hear; I think the same thing at times.

When you hear the word "Alaska," immediately words like cabins, blizzards, darkness, cold, no roads, or man-eating bears come to mind. Or maybe you're more like a tourist and your mind thinks of wildlife, an Alaskan cruise, Sarah Palin, snow-covered mountains, waterfalls, and salmon. Several of these things are true, but the life we live in southwest Alaska is much more than that.

Since August 2010, my husband, Jeremy, and I have been a part of the Home Missions team at the Alaska Mission in Naknek, along with Pastor Jeff and Jane Swanson and Pastor Bob and Margaret Lee and their families. I am always amazed how *huge* our state is (sorry Texans). The crazy thing is that the population for the entire state is only approximately 731,000 people, 300,000 of whom live in the city of Anchorage. By comparison, Seattle proper has a population of 621,000. So you can imagine how small an Alaskan village can seem. Western Alaska is isolated with no roads leading in or out. The only way to go somewhere is by boat (for only a couple months out of the year) and by plane.

And that is why the Lord has brought us here.

It is exciting to see the way the Alaska Mission has impacted the lives of people in the Bristol Bay area, both in Naknek and in many villages in the area. Jeremy and Pastor Jeff have been able to fly to several places to do visitation and occasionally hold church services. A small chapel building in Ekwok is a blessing to the village residents who attend church services whenever Jeremy or Jeff fly there.

We are thankful to the several WMF groups who have sent boxes and boxes of quilts. We were able to distribute some quilts at church before Christmas to those who needed one or knew someone who needed one. Whenever Jeremy or Jeff fly into another village, they always load the airplanes with a couple boxes of quilts to give away. We're thankful for opportunities like this to make relationships that are non-threatening.

Reaching out to the people in Bristol Bay is slightly different than your average mission field, mainly because we are still part of the United States. People don't necessarily want to be "missionary-itized." But our common connections are a blessing as we are able to get out to community events and just visit and become friends.



We are excited for the outreach opportunities that we have had, particularly in the summertime. As Bristol Bay is home to the world's largest red salmon runs, we have thousands of people from all over the world coming here to fish and work in the canneries. The fishermen have to listen to our Christian radio station, KAKN, to hear the daily government releases regarding fishing regulations. Because these seasonal workers are here during such a short period of time, they don't own a car, which means that there are people walking along the roads all the time. Several people have come to church after seeing our sign by the road.

We are excited about some new ministry opportunities that we believe God is providing for this summer. We have rented a building (we thank God for supplying it at an amazing price) for the summer and will host a community rest stop. We hope this facility will be used as a place where people can stop, visit, read a book, and have a cup of coffee and some cookies. It's still a work in progress, but we are excited to see how the Lord will use this opportunity.

We are also hoping to send out several vacation Bible school teams to the villages where such ministries have not happened for years—or have never happened. Please pray for this outreach opportunity. David, Gretchen and Leah Mattson have committed to working with us from May to September this year. David is a licensed pilot, and they will be assisting with VBS and the aviation ministry, helping at the radio station, and working with new ministry opportunities.

We also have two work teams planning to help finish the garage and some remodeling work. Another couple from Camarillo, Calif., Mike and Amy Drews and their children, will be volunteering for a couple of weeks at our community rest stop.

We are thankful to those who have sent care packages to our team. We feel so blessed by the love you have shown us. It is thrilling to open up a box and see goodies and necessities inside. Several things have also been used for Kid's Club on Wednesday nights and VBS.

As summer approaches, we will have needs for these new ministries—coffee, cookie mixes, VBS supplies, etc. Keep your ears open. The registry that the Home Missions department has put on the internet for the Alaska Mission has blessed us in many ways (myregistry.com can be found at www.aflochomemissions.org under "Alaska").

But most importantly, we thank you so much for your prayers for us and the people of southwest Alaska. Praise the Lord for the wonderful things that He has done.

impacting lives



"MANY, LORD MY GOD, ARE THE WONDERS YOU HAVE DONE, THE THINGS YOU PLANNED FOR US. NONE CAN COMPARE WITH YOU; WERE I TO SPEAK AND TELL OF YOUR DEEDS, THEY WOULD BE TOO MANY TO DECLARE."

PSALM 40:5

AUTHOR INFO

Crowell and her husband, Pastor Jeremy Crowell, work for the Alaska Mission in Naknek, a ministry of AFLC Home Missions.

..... AMBASSADORS OF THE

GOOD NEWS

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Mexico, a country with 32 states and one federal district, with more than 112

million people, has the second largest population of Catholics in the world.

Nearly 85 million people in Mexico identify themselves as Catholic. The most fanatic zone in the North American continent, called “*El Cinturón del Rosario*” (“The Belt of the Rosary”) is located in the middle of Mexico, from the western state of Michoacán through Jalisco, Guanajuato, Queretaro, and Hidalgo to the eastern state of Veracruz. In this area, no more than 5 percent of the population is Evangelical, and just a tiny percentage of the Evangelicals are Lutherans.

In that little percentage of Christians, Lutherans from the Missouri Synod and the ELCA no longer operate churches in my country at the present time. But the AFLC has churches in León, Celaya (Guanajuato), Jerez (Zacatecas), and a home church in the city of Queretaro (Queretaro) where a couple of families have opened the doors of their homes to Jesus Christ.

God has used the AFLC to bless my life, my

family, and my home church, Gethsemane Free Lutheran Church, in Celaya, where my dad, Pastor Milton Flores, is the pastor.

Because of the AFLC’s position on sound doctrine, as members of the congregation we have known God’s

Word. My dad was also impacted by the

AFLC, having studied in the Free Lutheran Seminary 25 years ago. Since then he has been the pastor in Celaya, where my aunt, Leticia Flores, served several years, especially in kid’s ministry, before she died.

Several men have had a big impact on the Mexican church. At the end of the 1970s, Pastor Eugene Enderlein worked very closely with the church in León, where a new building was dedicated earlier this year. He also worked with the churches in Celaya, Irapuato and Aguascalientes.

We also remember Pastor Daniel Giles, who came to Mexico at our request to the World Mission Committee. He worked in Jerez, a mission that is now served by Pastor Todd Schierkolk.

The Lord has blessed those churches in such amazing ways considering the high percentage of Catholics in Mexico and the rejection that the Christian Church faces day to day from people and

BY MILTON S. FLORES



even the authorities in Mexico. God always has shown his hand, preserving and keeping the church in Mexico.

The congregation in Celaya is in the process of applying for a building permit with the government to build a chapel—please pray for that. Meanwhile, the church is growing up by God’s grace. The mission in Queretaro is continuing as it has for the last 10 years; our prayer is that God will provide a pastor to start a church in this state in the future.

The power of God is manifested day by day in the lives of the Church in Mexico, preserving and keeping its members safe, not only from those who are against the gospel, but also from the insecurity that Mexico has faced for the last 10 years as drug cartels have become more violent.

I’ve been blessed by God also, having been born in a Christian family and, more importantly, by having the most amazing experience of my life—attending AFLBS. During these last two years of my life God had been teaching me a lot of things. One thing I’ve learned is that even though I sin and I don’t deserve anything but death, the Creator of heaven and earth cares about me. Because of that He has given His only begotten Son to die on the cross for me, bringing forgiveness and redemption through

His Son to my life (Romans 8:1-2). I am also learning that I will be witness of the gospel to those who don’t know Jesus Christ back home in Mexico. I believe God is calling me to be a witness of Jesus in a country where a lot of people are lost and dying without assurance of salvation or eternal life. My prayer is that God will raise pastors to minister and start new congregations in Mexico and in the entire world, and that He would use people from our churches to be witnesses of Christ.

Before Christ was lifted up into the heaven, He gave His disciples a last command, what we call the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20): “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations ...” So now we, as believers, have the privilege to belong to God’s family because of the good news that the apostles shared in “Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria ...”

We are called to do the same thing as the body of Christ, not just to grow up in our relationship with Him, but also to share the good news of salvation with those who haven’t heard this marvelous plan that God has given us.

God has called His people to work not only in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, but also “to the end of the world.” God has used the AFLC in Mexico to bring people to Him.

AUTHOR INFO

Flores, now in his second year at the Association Free Lutheran Bible School, is from Celaya, Mexico.

It was in the early 1970s that I first met a foreigner. I was visiting my uncle who worked in a real estate office in Campo Mourão. A talkative North American, a very nice man with a friendly smile, was chatting with him about subjects I didn't understand: land sales, book-keeping, signature authentication, etc. Since I didn't understand what they were talking about, I entertained myself by playing with my cousin. Suddenly I started paying attention to the conversation when I heard him tell a story about three men—Peter, James and John. This man who spoke with an accent was speaking about something that was completely foreign to me. It was the first time I heard the Word of God.

When I was a child I also enjoyed visiting another uncle who was a mechanic. One day when I was visiting his shop I once again met the American, Pastor John Abel. He had brought his jeep in to be fixed. What impressed me was that he didn't only talk about cars, he also spoke about Jesus.

My family moved often, not only from house to house but also from city to city. Because of this I didn't see Pastor Abel after that. He continued his ministry in Campo Mourão with his wife and family, working, visiting, preaching the gospel, starting churches, discipling new Christians, developing leaders, and establishing a Bible school and seminary.

In 1979 our family moved back to Campo Mourão and I met the Abel family again. They invited me to participate in a youth meeting at a Bible camp. God was preparing my heart through these brief encounters and using the Abel family to bless my life.

In 1983 my younger sister, Yara, was invited to a children's camp after participating in a vacation Bible school program at the Free Lutheran church in Campo Mourão. There she received Jesus Christ as Lord of her life. She was obviously transformed. Through her faithful testimony, my older sister, Irani, and my mother, who is now living with Jesus in heaven, gave their hearts to the Lord.

Years passed and I had moved to Curitiba, living far from God and His ways. I had created my own set of rules, and my life was going from bad to worse. My marriage, begun in rebellion without Christ, was doomed to failure. During this time my sister Yara had also moved to Curitiba to work and study after having spent a year at the Free Lutheran Bible School in Campo Mourão. She was living with Pastor John Abel's son, Paul, and family.

The Free Lutheran Church was growing in Curitiba. The Abels' ministry was marked by dedication and perseverance. Yara was part of the ministry team of this special family. Even

though she had many ministry responsibilities with other people, she never gave up on me and my family.

In Curitiba the work of evangelism and church-planting continued. One of the great strategies of the Free Lutheran Church is to plan events to reach out to others. I was invited to one such event organized by the women of the Mighty Fortress Lutheran church in São Braz. I accepted the invitation and went to a special dinner accompanied by my three small children. The year was 1991. During the praise and worship time I felt the presence of the Holy Spirit in a very special way convincing me of my sin and sad situation. Lovingly He called me. As tears filled my eyes, I responded "yes" to Jesus Christ, without uttering a word.

Today I can joyfully declare, "As for me and my house, we serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15). My life and the lives of my children and their spouses and even my precious little granddaughter, Luisa, are part of the family of God. My sisters and their husbands are serving the Lord. My mother died in Christ. And my hope is that soon my father will bow before the throne of grace and receive new life in Jesus. Praise be the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

This is not only true of my family, but many families have come to faith in Jesus and today serve the living God because of John Abel's response to God's call on his life: "Here am I, Lord, send me" (Isaiah 6:8).

I praise God because today I, too, am a missionary, a fruit of this blessed ministry. I thank God for giving me the gift of teaching. Besides being a Sunday school teacher, I lead a women's group and a group of adolescents at my local church in Vila Camargo. I love helping with Bible camps at the ARCA (Bible camp in Curitiba). I am a public school teacher and try to share Christ through my example and witness to the students and teachers with whom I work. I have had the privilege of teaching Crown Financial courses to groups at school and church. About five years ago I participated in a prayer group at the home of a woman named Gessy. Today that group has grown into a church, the Free Lutheran Church of Borda do Campo, where I have had the privilege to help by teaching Sunday school and discipling new Christians.

I believe that God called me to serve Him and I have responded time and again, "Here am I, Lord, use me."

May the Lord Jesus reward Pastor John Abel and his family with grace and favor. May the Lord Jesus bless and keep his descendents as He has blessed mine. May the Lord continue His wonderful work through the Free Lutheran Church.

AUTHOR INFO

Ferreira de Oliveira, from Curitiba, Brazil, is a member of Free Lutheran Church of Borda do Campo, which originally started as a prayer group.

fruit of ministry



BRAZIL

* Article translated by Becky Abel, AFLC missionary to Curitiba, Brazil.



making an impact

BY KENN GRAHAM

In 2003 I was elected to serve on the Home Missions Committee that establishes policy and oversees the work of the AFLC Home Missions department. My term expires in June of 2013. What a ride. There is nothing more exciting and humbling than being under the Lord's command when facing challenging dilemmas, new opportunities, and needs.

Working with the seven or eight godly, praying men has been a wonderful, spirit-filled growing experience. To be a part of a group of men who do not hesitate to pause and pray many times during a meeting and whenever the need is evident is akin to drawing closer to God and recognizing that only He can solve the large and small challenges that we face.

Paul writes in I Thessalonians 5:16-18, "Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

Many times we needed a pastor or parish builder to serve a new Bible study group or a new congregation. As we prayed, God supplied people whose hearts were drawn to the work of building new free and living congregations in the United States. Parish builders, AFLTS seminary students, and experienced pastors serving in established congregations have assisted us in providing training, leading Bible studies, canvassing neighborhoods, preaching on Sundays, and setting up AFLC informational events.

Parish builders have grabbed my heart the most. These dedicated young men and women (usually between 20 and 25 years old) pledge to give a certain period of their lives in service to the Lord. They put their own ambitions on hold for sometimes two to three years while they perform hard labor for no pay, and are only reimbursed with room and board. They have touched many lives as they share their unabashed love of Jesus with others and with their service to the Lord. Sometimes that means hauling 200 pumpkins to a pumpkin smash, sharing their testimonies with a congregation, driving a truck 200 miles a day to pick up food and deliver it to a food pantry, teaching Sunday school, or counseling a questioning teenager. God must have a special reward in mind for these faithful men and women.

One passage of Scripture comes to mind when I think of these laborers for the Lord. "You are the light of the world. A

town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:14-16).

I look back over these past ten years and marvel at the faithfulness and provision of God. The old adage, "We not only believe in miracles, we depend upon them," aptly describes the fluctuating financial needs of the Home Missions department. We are often asked to come alongside a brand new group needing assistance without knowing for sure that the income budgeted for the year will cover this new need. Sometimes the Lord has called upon Home Missions to assist with up to 30 small congregations at one time in various stages of maturity. The subsidies are paid on an as-provided basis. That means that as the Lord provides funds to Home Missions, the subsidies will be paid to the congregations.

The Home Missions subsidy is a 5-year plan that helps congregations get on their feet. The subsidy is reduced annually throughout the five years, with the goal of being financially independent in the sixth year. In the ten years I have served in Home Missions, the subsidies were delayed only once due to a shortage of funds. We praise the Lord for His faithful provision. Would you pray with us for our subsidy needs for 2013-2014? We have several new works in this budget and the need is great.

My wife, Geri, has been able to travel with me and has so enjoyed the fellowship and friendships we have made. It was most refreshing and humbling to see the wives of the Home Missions Committee members voluntarily join in serving, praying and helping with numerous Home Missions events. The Committee members and wives have been such a blessing and encouragement especially during Geri's recent battle with cancer. Last summer when we were unable to come to the AFLC annual conference, they called Geri and sang and prayed with her. They have become family to us.

Thank you for the privilege of serving so I could look around me several times a year and see what real servants of Christ are like.

AUTHOR INFO

Graham, who is a member of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Camarillo, Calif., has served on the Home Missions Committee for 10 years.

51st annual conference REGISTRATION

June 11-14, 2013, at the Association Retreat Center, near Osceola, Wis.

For a downloadable form, and for more information, go to www.aflc.org and click on "conferences"

First name: _____ Spouse (if attending): _____

Last name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

AFLC Congregation: _____

Other Congregation: _____

Membership (Check one)

You: _____ Rostered AFLC Pastor or serving AFLC church _____ Visiting Pastor _____ Lay Member _____ Lay Visitor

Spouse: _____ Rostered AFLC Pastor or serving AFLC church _____ Visiting Pastor _____ Lay Member _____ Lay Visitor

Meal	Adult	#	Child	#	Total
Tuesday breakfast (for committees)	\$7		\$4		
Tuesday lunch (for committees)	\$8		\$5		\$
Tuesday dinner	\$9		\$6		\$
Wednesday Conference breakfast	\$7		\$4		\$
Wednesday Conference lunch (children and adults)	\$8		\$5		\$
Wednesday Chaplains lunch	\$10		n/a		\$
Wednesday Home Missions lunch	\$10		n/a		\$
Wednesday AFLBS Alumni lunch	\$10		n/a		\$
Wednesday Conference dinner	\$9		\$6		\$
Wednesday Schools Corporation dinner	\$12		n/a		\$
Thursday Conference breakfast	\$7		\$4		\$
Thursday Missions Corporation breakfast	\$9		n/a		\$
Thursday Conference lunch	\$8		\$5		\$
Thursday ARC Corporation lunch	\$10		n/a		\$
Thursday Pastors' banquet	\$18		n/a		\$
Thursday Laymen's picnic banquet	\$12		\$7		\$
Friday Conference breakfast	\$7		\$4		\$
Friday FLAPS breakfast	\$9		n/a		\$
Friday Conference lunch	\$8		\$5		\$
Friday Foundation lunch	\$10		n/a		\$
Friday Conference dinner	\$9		\$6		\$
Total meals					\$
*Conference registration fee (\$35 single/\$50 couple)					\$
Total registration and meals					\$

*The registration fee is required for all attending the AFLC Conference. **Make checks payable to "AFLC" and mail to: AFLC, c/o Conference Registrations, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441. Registrations must be received by May 31.**

NEWS & NOTES

APRIL 12

WATERS IN THE WILDERNESS

“We are ambassadors on behalf of Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God” (II Corinthians 5:20).

An ambassador is an accredited representative of a sovereign state at the court of another. Our Scripture states that you and I as God’s children are ambassadors for Christ and His Kingdom here on earth. We are His personal representatives. He has entrusted us with the great responsibility of delivering His message of reconciliation to a lost and dying world.

Very few are called to be pastors and teachers in full employment of the Church. The greatest percentage of Christ’s ambassadors are from the rank and file of every walk of life; the farmer, the office worker, the housewife, the laborer and the factory worker are His representatives. Those who rub shoulders with their fellow

men in work can often be more effective witnesses for Christ than the professional churchman. They have the opportunity of meeting their neighbors on common ground.

The only Bible most men and women read are the lives of Christian men and women with whom they have come in contact. A great responsibility is placed upon us. Christ has no one else than those who are His to carry the message further. Sinners they are, but sinners saved by grace. It behooves us to conduct ourselves in such a way as to be worthy of the gospel of Christ.

Raymond Jacobson, a prominent layman during the founding of the AFLC, served on the AFLC Schools Board of Trustees. He was active with his wife, Olive, in the formation of AFLBS.

Waters in the Wilderness is a daily devotional published by the AFLC Board of Parish Education in 1971 with Dr. Iver Olson, editor. All 365 meditations were contributed by AFLC members from many walks of life. “Here, they offer each a glass of cool and refreshing water each day to thirsting souls,” wrote Olson in the preface. Reprinted by permission. The volume is out of print.

North Central district plans youth camps

The AFLC's North Central Minnesota district has planned two summer youth Bible camps at Bethany Bible Camp, located at Grace Lake, Bemidji, Minn.

Junior Bible camp will be held June 18-22 under the theme, "Say What? Trusting God When It Doesn't Make Sense." Pastor Kent Sperry, Northwood, N.D., is the special speaker for the week. The camp is open to any student who has completed third grade through sixth grade. The cost is \$100/student. For more information about the camp, contact Gary Stegman, camp dean, at 218-281-7747.

Senior Bible camp will be held June 22-27. Pastor Jason Gudim, Minneapolis, is the special speaker for the week. The camp is open to any student who has completed seventh grade through twelfth grade. The cost is \$115/student. For more information about this camp, contact Pastor Karl Anderson, camp dean, at 218-657-2790.

Congregation dedicates new sanctuary

Members of Timberland Ringebo Free Lutheran, Barronett Wis., recently dedicated a new sanctuary, which added approximately 30 percent seating capacity to the former sanctuary space.

"The Lord has blessed this congregation in many ways, for many generations, and this is our way of responding to His work in our midst," said Pastor Al Bedard. "Our thanks goes out to all who have prayed for us and assisted us in this work. Timberland represents a solid foundation in the Word, a faithful congregation, and a heritage of faith and trust in the Lord."

The church is located 12 miles north of Cumberland, Wis., on County Road H.



Members of Timberland Free Lutheran, Barronett, Wis., dedicated a new sanctuary space.

Alumni, friends day

The Association Free Lutheran Bible School is planning an Alumni and Friends Day of events. Scheduled for July 27, the day of events includes both the annual AFLBS Golf Scramble and a family barbecue for alumni and friends.

The Golf Scramble, an annual fund-raising event for AFLBS scholarships, will be held at Baker National Golf Course, Medina, Minn., with a 1 p.m. shotgun start. The cost is \$100 per individual registration, which covers green fees, cart, a practice area and the barbecue dinner.

For those who are not golfing during the afternoon, nearby Baker Park Reserve on Lake Independence offers options for family activities including camping, picnicking, swimming, biking and fishing. More information is available at threeeriversparks.org.

The barbecue for alumni and friends will be held from 5 to 8 p.m. at Heritage Hall on the AFLBS campus in Plymouth. Donations of any amount will be accepted for the event, which will also include a silent auction.

Reservations are required by July 15. For more information and to register, visit aflbs.org/bbq.

Conference housing info

Housing information is now available for the Annual Conference, which is scheduled for June 11-14 at the Association Retreat Center located near Osceola, Wis. The ARC has many housing options available on site, including dormitory, lodge, and motel-style housing options. Camping sites are also available on site.

Housing registration for the ARC is available on its Web site at www.arc-aflc.com. More information is also available by contacting the ARC by phone at 715-294-2877 or e-mailing info@arc-aflc.org.

Rooms have also been blocked off for the conference at nearby hotels. They include:

- Holiday Inn Express, St. Croix Falls, Wis. (16-mile drive)
Phone: (800) 315-2621
Web site: hiexpress.com
- River Valley Inn and Suites, Osceola, Wis. (8-mile drive)
Phone: (888) 791-0022
Web: osceolarivervalleyinn.com
- Super 8, New Richmond, Wis. (16-mile drive)
Phone: 715-246-7829
Web site: super8.com
- AmericInn, New Richmond, Wis. (16-mile drive)
Phone: (800) 634-3444
Web site: americinn.com

Winter work in Alaska

BY CHRIS SNOW

It was winter, yet God's call to service wouldn't be silenced. My husband and I were blessed with a trip to Alaska last fall to help with the AFLC Christian radio station KAKN in Naknek. How it came about is rather amazing. We had been attending a family camp mini retreat in Glen Rose, Texas, in early October when I greeted Pastor Paul Nash, director of Home Missions with the customary hug and chat. Part of the conversation went something like this:

"Stanley and I still want to go to Alaska and help someday," I said.

"How about tomorrow?" He replied.

I laughed and said, "But it's winter in Alaska!"

Well that was how it all started. After many prayers and God working out the arrangements, we arrived in Naknek one week later. There were several pressing needs that we were there to meet. Pastor Bob Lee was ill and someone was needed to run the radio station in his stead. Normally, Pastor Jeremy Crowell and his wife, Lacey, could fill in, but they were planning a family trip with Lacey's parents to Florida. My job would be working at KAKN.

God had answered prayers and Pastor Lee had a miraculous health recovery. He arrived back at their home before we even got there. Yet he was still very ill. His wife, Margaret, is a first grade teacher at the Bristol Bay Borough School. My husband and I are both retired educators and our hearts went out to her instantly as she dealt with the stress of being away from her classroom. Jeremy and Lacey were delighted they were still going to be going to Florida. We were greeted with open arms and several items on a to-do list for my husband the carpenter.

I think it is very common for the workers to be the ones to receive a blessing from the work. Not only were we welcomed by the Lees and the Crowells, but Pastor Jeff Swanson and his wife, Jane, made us feel like we had been part of the church family forever. Sunday, Oct. 28, 2012, was our 45th wedding anniversary. The congregation at Hilltop Christian Fellowship honored us with cake and coffee after evening worship. That was only the beginning of the true Christian fellowship they offered us.

Yes, I ran the radio station, and yes, the dead air alarm sounded several times during my watch; but God is so much greater than we are. There is true spiritual love in the communities that the AFLC serves in that small part of Alaska. I was welcomed into a weekly community Bible study and I attended weekly craft sessions at the local Naknek Native Council House. Stanley had the opportunity to go with Pastor Jeff to visit local men, and we both were welcomed into the homes of local families. We had a blessed time during the five weeks we were there. Working at the radio station was probably the best job I have ever had—where else can you go to work in your pajamas?

At the end of our stay, Pastor Lee was ready to take his job back and the Crowells had a great vacation. And we will be forever grateful for our opportunity to serve in Alaska in the winter.

Chris and her husband, Stanley, live in Durant, Oklahoma. They are members of Faith Lutheran Church.



TOP: A gathering at the church in Naknek, Alaska.
MIDDLE: A group of women meet for a weekly Bible study.
BOTTOM: Chris Snow works at the KAKN radio station, where she filled in for Pastor Bob Lee.

Tartu Academy, Estonia, celebrates 20-year anniversary



TOP LEFT: The home of the Tartu Academy of Theology in Estonia. ABOVE: The small delegation of Lutheran pastors from the United States who traveled to Estonia in 1992. BOTTOM LEFT: Pastor Eenok Haamer (right, president of TAT) and Siimon Haamer (VP of academic affairs).

It was in March 1992 that a small delegation of Lutheran pastors from the United States traveled to Estonia, only recently freed from decades of Russian communist rule. They had been recruited by Pastor Don Richman to connect with Estonian pastors who were expected to attend an educational conference sponsored by Campus Crusade for Christ.

A common theme during the conference was the perception that Estonia faced a moral and ethical crisis as a result of the Communist years. Pastor Eenok Haamer, one of the few clergy in attendance, told the American pastors that the public

schools were open to meet this crisis by offering religion classes, and he shared his vision for an academy to train the teachers. The pastors pledged to return to America and raise the seed money for this school to begin, and thus the Tartu Academy of Theology was born.

Dr. Francis Monseth, dean of the AFLC seminary, was the first guest professor when the academy opened. More recently, he traveled to Estonia in February to teach a ten-hour class on the Doctrine of the Word and to represent the AFLC at the ten-year anniversary celebration in Tartu.

The academy, which has grown to

include a growing variety of study programs, finalized a merger agreement in September 2012 with the seminary of the Estonian Lutheran Church, located in the capital city of Tallinn. The president of both schools will be Rev. Ove Sander, who studied at the AFLC seminary several years ago.

A special anniversary offering for the Tartu Academy was received by AFLC schools on Feb. 7 and presented by Dr. Monseth to our sister school. Continuing support for Estonia's only Christian college is provided through East European Mission Network (EEMN).

Adoration Worship Event planned for May 3

Adoration Worship Event: Generation Hymns, a multi-church celebration of worship, is planned for 7 p.m. May 3 at Emmaus Lutheran Church, Bloomington, Minn. The event will include bands, singers, and choirs leading a night of worship for all generations, focusing on the theme, "Multiple Churches. One King. One Voice."

Speaking at the worship service will be Pastor Peter Franz, AFLC vice president, who serves Grace Free Lutheran, Maple Grove, Minn.

For more information about this event, visit the organizers' Web site at www.adorationworship.com.



Growing up into missions

BY RUTHIE WAGNER

My journey to the mission field began as a missionary kid in Bangladesh for the first ten years of my life. The experience was incredible. Who wouldn't want to grow up seeing the world, speaking another language, eating rice and curry, and climbing trees? We returned to Los Angeles and reverse culture shock set in during high school. I chose to reject my upbringing, thinking my parents ruined my life. After a few low years, I came to treasure my experiences and my relationship with my parents. Shortly after, it was at Bible school that I felt a draw to missions—to love people.

If God was calling me to love people, then I would give them the most precious thing to me—His Word. I know what it's like not to understand the depth of God's love in a language that I used every day. In Bangladesh I spoke Santali, but didn't understand everything like I did in English, which is my heart language. I spoke Santali outside the home and English inside. My English Bible and teaching from my parents were essential for my knowing the Savior. As I wrestled with how I might give someone His Word, a friend asked, "Ruthie, have you ever thought of Bible translation?"

That was it. I was 18 and didn't know what on earth linguistics was, but I knew that's what I had to do in order to get the Word into heart languages of people. After Bible school, I attended SIL (Summer Institute of Linguistics) at the University of North Dakota for two summers (2005, 2007) and transferred to the Graduate Institute of Applied Linguistics in 2008. After a semester, I took a leave and packed my bags to join a project in Nigeria with Lutheran Bible Translators (LBT).

As I waited for my visa, I met a young man named Joshua Wagner at a meeting for those interested in Bible translation. He swept me off my feet, and we attended SIL-UND that summer (2009). It was a confirmation of the call he sensed toward Bible translation. We were married that November.

After two years and expecting our first child, we quit our full-time jobs in Minnesota and continued linguistics training full-time in Texas. We joined both AFLC World Missions and LBT. Because of our training, we have been asked to serve as advisors in Scripture engagement (Josh) and translation (me). We've committed to serve the Themne people in Sierra Leone for 8-10 years, Lord willing.

Our call to ministry is nicely summarized by the mission of LBT—"Helping bring people to faith in Jesus Christ by making the Word of God available to those who do not yet have it in the language of their hearts."

We praise God for AFLC World Missions' partnership with LBT in sending us. Also, we feel blessed to be supported and encouraged by the WMF, our home congregation Hope Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, and so many others sending us on our way.

Wagner is the daughter of Pastor Bob and Margaret Lee, serving in Naknek, Alaska. Along with her husband, Josh, they are missionaries with AFLC World Mission, seconded to LBT. They are currently training in Ghana for their first term overseas. They will be working with Bible translation and Scripture engagement among the Themne people in Northern Sierra Leone. Their firstborn, Elijah, is now eight months and desperately trying to walk.



AFLC memorials: January

AFLBS

Ruth Claus
 Donald Hansen (2)
 Teddy Thompson
 April Deeter
 Pastor Roger Carlson
 Eileen Iverson
 Donald Pederson
 Jim Hopkins

Eileen Iverson (2)
 April Deeter
 Donald Pederson

Evangelism

Eileen Iverson
 Donald Hansen
 Donald Pederson
 Phyllis Sletten

AFLTS

Ray Oines
 Cece Holter
 Hildur Ulvestad
 Pastor Orville Olson
 Donald Hansen (2)
 Curt Weinreis
 Bruce Hunter
 Elise Madson
 Bonnie Frisinger

General Fund
 Donald Hansen

Home Missions

Barb Brand
 Donald Hansen

World Missions

Donald Pederson
 Marilyn Juhl
 Donald Pederson
 Phyllis Sletten

People and Places

Pastor James Molstre, Bethel Park, Pa., has accepted a call to serve as pastor of Helmar Lutheran Church, Newark, Ill., beginning in June. Molstre has been the pastor of Ruthfred Lutheran Church, Bethel Park, since 1996.

Pastor Marc Rakow has resigned as minister of discipleship for the Valley City, N.D., parish (Grace Free Lutheran and Zion Lutheran).

Pastor David W. Johnson is serving as interim pastor of Newark Lutheran Church, Newark, Ill.

Pastor David Kieppela has announced plans to retire in June. He has served as pastor of Sunnyside Free Lutheran, Stacy, Minn., since 1995.

Seminary internship assignments have been given for the 2013-2014 school year:

- **Ben Jore** has been assigned to Our Savior's Free Lutheran, Stanley, N.D., and First English Lutheran, Lostwood, with Pastor Rodney Johnson as supervisor.
- **Jesse Kneeland** has been assigned to Prince of Peace Lutheran, Beulah, N.D., and the three-point parish of Immanuel Lutheran (Zap, N.D.), St. Paul Lutheran (Dodge, N.D.) and Golgatha Lutheran (Golden Valley, N.D.). Pastor Kris Nyman will be his supervising pastor.
- **Joshua Skogerboe** has been assigned to Ruthfred Lutheran, Bethel Park, Pa., with Pastor Steve Carlson as supervisor.

The **AFLC Schools** staff has submitted the initial application to TRACS (Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools) for applicant status, a significant step in the accreditation process.



David, Gretchen and Leah Mattson, Sioux Falls, S.D., will join the Alaska Mission in May. David is a licensed pilot and Gretchen is a nurse.

Mattsons join Alaska Mission

Couple will spend summer as Home Missions Parish Builders

AFLC Home Missions is honored to announce their newest Parish Builders: David, Gretchen, and Leah Mattson. The Mattsons currently live in Sioux Falls, S.D., where David is a pilot and Gretchen is an RN. As members of Abiding Savior, Sioux Falls, they believe God is calling them to ministry. They will be taking leaves of absence from their jobs to serve with Home Missions. Dave helped in the Home Missions office in March taking care of some aviation needs. They will be heading to Alaska to serve with the ministry team from May 15 - September 15, including assisting with VBS, flying, helping at the radio station, and working with new ministry opportunities.

They will be raising their support and are available to come share in your church until they leave in May. Please be in prayer for Dave and Gretchen as they prepare for this new adventure in ministry.

AFLC BENEVOLENCES Jan. 1-Feb. 28, 2013

FUND	REC'D IN FEBRUARY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$26,353	\$60,974	\$48,545
Evangelism	13,845	26,084	27,032
Youth Ministries	9,921	25,704	14,846
Parish Education	9,827	19,667	17,418
Seminary	14,252	39,658	38,304
Bible School	20,038	66,174	49,027
Home Missions	28,823	77,653	107,389
World Missions	37,395	81,432	69,516
Personal Support	36,393	78,775	94,474
TOTALS	\$196,846	\$476,122	\$466,549

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

The call to servolution

It's not a real word, of course, but it is the title of a book: *Servolution: Starting a Church Revolution through Serving*. Author Dino Rizzo tells the story of how his congregation follows the example of Jesus in serving others and using these connections to proclaim the good news of a loving Savior to hurting people. He calls this union of evangelism and acts of mercy a *servolution*.

This is nothing new. It was a "callous, compassionless culture that the Christian entered," writes Alvin Schmidt in *How Christianity Changed the World*. "Unlike

the pagans, they showed compassion in caring for the weak, the sick, the downtrodden, and the dying, often risking their own lives in the process." People were moved by these acts of



Pastor Robert Lee

mercy, extended even to those who were not Christians, and the result was a growing Church in spite of persecution.

A heart for the unfortunate was not only a mark of the early Christians, for it continued in the following centuries. Numerous hospices were established to care for orphaned and abandoned children, the sick and dying; congregations also operated homes for the aged, the blind, and those who were mentally disturbed.

The spirit of compassion flowed from the words of Christ, who told the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30ff), and from the example of Christ, who "had compassion on them and healed their sick" (Matthew 14:14), and who called "blessed of My Father" the ones who fed the hungry, clothed the naked, visited the sick and those in prison, and welcomed the stranger (Matthew 25:34ff). "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly

loved, clothe yourselves with compassion ..." (Colossians 3:12).

What about the people of God in 21st century America? Can it be said of us that we are known for a spirit of compassion?

One might lament the fact that ministries of mercy born in Christian love have evolved into social agencies of the government or that everything needful is already being done, and so wrongly conclude that we are somehow excused. Perhaps the words of Jesus may be applied to this situation: "Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest" (John 4:35b).

Our world is full of needs. Each congregation has an opportunity to help some who are a part of our fellowship. This is love in action, extended first of all to those in the household of faith (Galatians 6:10), a powerful witness to a watching world that we are truly disciples of Christ (John 13:34-35).

"So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men ..." (Galatians 6:10). Remember, it was the fact that the early Christians cared in concrete ways for those who were not Christians that touched hearts and changed lives. We can't do everything for everyone, but there is surely something that we can do. Lift up our eyes and look around us, in our neighborhoods, in our communities. The opportunities are there.

One congregation sponsors a food pantry; others band together in an area association called "Love INC" (Love in the Name of Christ) to provide for needy people. Western North Dakota congregations

are seeking more ways to show the love of Christ to the thousands who are working in the oil fields. Another gives away bottles of water to thirsty people at a community event. The opportunities are limitless.

Some rightly warn of a social gospel that redefines salvation by removing the cross of Christ and replacing it with our good deeds. There is also the danger of

Lift up our eyes and look around us, in our neighborhoods, in our communities. The opportunities are there.

legalism, doing more and more (but never enough) to earn the gift that is received by grace alone. Neither error, however, should restrain us from responding to the cry of a needy world. A genuine heart of compassion is gospel-born in overflowing gratitude to a gracious God who loves us with an everlasting love, who gave His only Son to purchase our pardon on Calvary's cross, who forgives our sins and cleanses us from all unrighteousness, who looks upon us in Christ just as if we had never sinned. Blessed be His name forever!

It is the love of Christ that constrains us to serve others in acts of loving kindness so that they might come to know Him, too. May a real Spirit-wrought *servolution* ignite our lives and our congregations to the glory of God.

association retreat center

BY PASTOR KARL ANDERSON

Our part in God's mission

"Good morning Mr. Phelps. Your mission, should you decide to accept it is to ..."

Forty-five years ago those words opened up every episode of the TV program *Mission Impossible*. As a small child I didn't really understand the missions assigned to the Impossible Mission Force (IMF). But I loved the high tech gadgetry, the disguises, and the intrigue of crawling through ventilator shafts to stop the bad guys.

Christians have been given a mission. To us it may seem as impossible as those given to the IMF. Jesus gave us our marching orders in Matthew 28:19-20: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

We are to make disciples.

In the AFLC we have put together many tools to accomplish this task. In our local congregations we preach the Word during worship services, conduct Bible studies, train children through Sunday school and confirmation classes, and organize special evangelistic meetings. As an association of congregations we organize and support many ministries.

Among these great tools is the Association Retreat Center. The ARC is a unique tool in our mission of making disciples. Its staff and volunteers work hard to maintain the grounds and buildings, cook meals, and clean rooms so that believers might *come away and rest awhile* (the ARC mission). The ARC staff serves the Great Commission through much more than the AFLC camps and retreats they host. Many other denominations and ministries take

advantage of the ARC's accommodations and meeting space to get away from the hustle and bustle of daily life and to make disciples by spending time in God's Word. Throughout the year the ARC hosts groups, small and large, representing people groups and cultures from around the world. The ARC gives us the opportunity to minister to many mission fields.

One of the dangers the IMF faced was getting caught up in all the gadgetry and losing sight of the mission they had been given. We Christians face the same temptation. It's easy to get distracted from the mission by the many needs of the ministries we use to carry out the mission. We may feel overwhelmed and discouraged. To stay focused we need to remember that all of the activities we undertake as congregations and as an association have at their core the goal of making disciples. That may seem like an impossible task. Supporting and maintaining all the ministries that carry out our mission to make disciples is more than any individual, congregation, or even an association can do. When we feel that our mission is impossible, we need to remember that we are not on our own. Jesus not only gave us a mission in Matthew 28, He also gave us a promise, "Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

The word "behold" is a command to stop and look. Look to Jesus. As you read this edition of *The Lutheran Ambassador*, look for the presence of Jesus in our AFLC ministries. Seek Him for guidance in what role you should play. Remember His words, "What is impossible with man is possible with God" (Luke 18:27). You can't do it all, but together with Jesus we all have a part in our mission to make disciples.

Anderson, who serves Alida and Rice Lutheran churches near Bagley, Minn., is an ARC Corporation member.