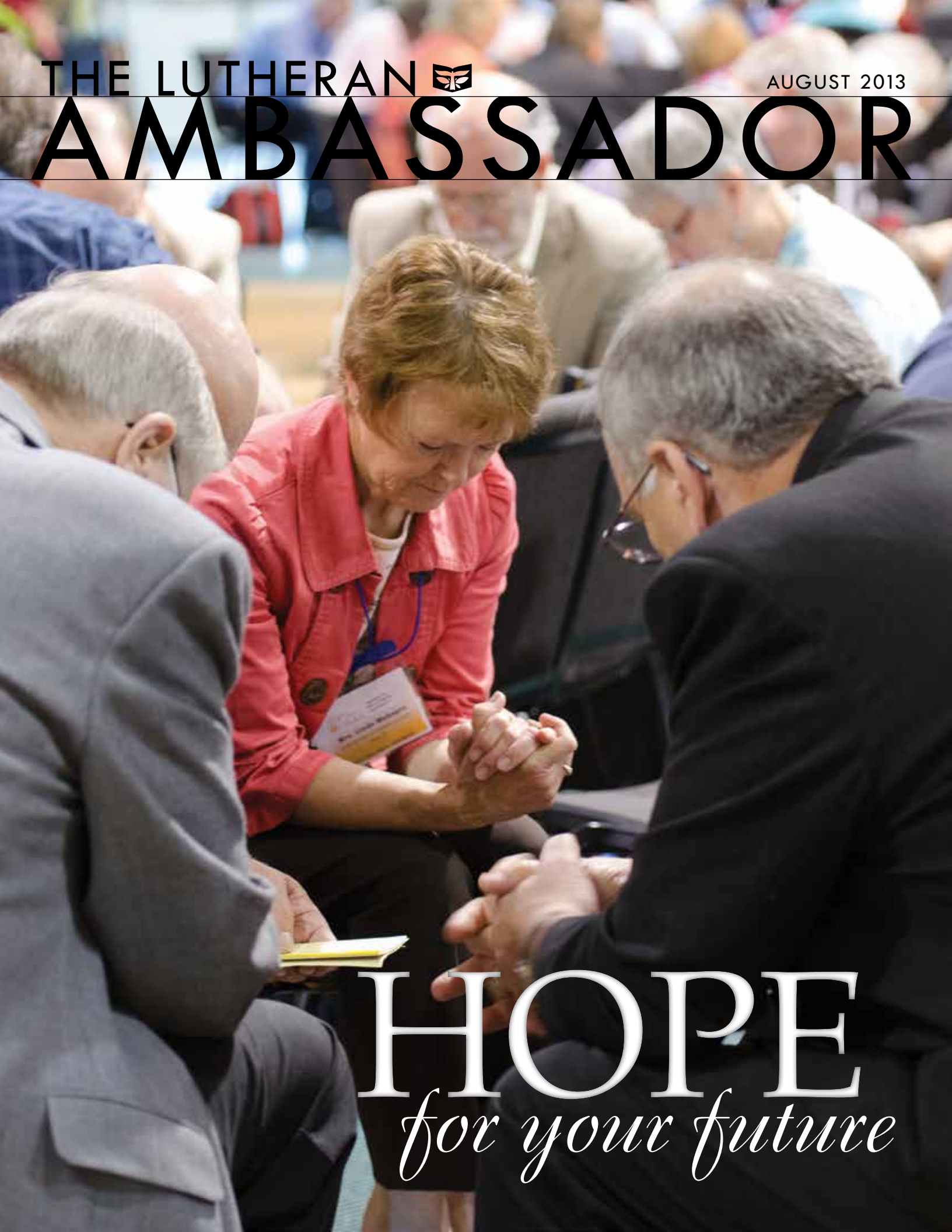


THE LUTHERAN 

AUGUST 2013

AMBASSADOR



HOPE
for your future

China's Awakening

BY JONATHAN ANDERSON

The Spirit uses the Word." That was the phrase God impressed upon Lutheran missionary Marie Monsen as she prayed for a revival in China like that in Korea in 1907. For 20 years she prayed, grieving that so many Chinese church members were converts of the head but not the heart. Then in 1927 came the first drops of blessing.

During the Chinese Women's Bible Course that year, Monsen's class had to recess abruptly when 16 unbelieving students became acutely awakened to their sins. Filing into her office one by one, they poured out confessions and experienced Christ's forgiveness. Several nights later, five mission workers' wives approached Monsen to relate terrifying dreams. One had been buried alive; another had seen hell. God had shown them they had a name to live but were dead. All five were profoundly converted. Others, too, were saved during the Bible course.

Soon thereafter, Monsen hesitantly agreed to address a regional Bible conference because its keynote speaker had been delayed. God's Word cut deep, and local missionaries were kept busy helping the many awakened souls. Thus began ten years of mighty revival which spread across China through the Spirit-empowered work of Monsen, other missionaries, and especially Chinese evangelists.

Typical of those revival years was Paul Lindell's story. Paul, the son of a deceased Lutheran missionary-pastor, attended an American mission school in China where his mother still worked. Late in 1932, 17-year-old Paul visited his father's former mission church and was amazed to find it filled daily with people in agony of soul, searching the Word to find peace with God. Many had already been transformed.



Returning to school, Paul, too, came under conviction of sin so intense that he nearly despaired of life. Finally, he wrote all his sins on a sheet of paper and showed it to his principal, Rev. Palmer Anderson. With tears on his face, Anderson said, "You know, Paul, I'm a sinner, too. We all need forgiveness." Together they knelt by a chair as Anderson opened his Bible to I John 1:9. "Paul, God says, 'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' The first part of that verse is what you've done: confess your sins. The second part is what God will do then: cleanse and forgive you."

At Anderson's request, Paul read the second part of the verse over and over, but to no avail; he could see only his sins. "Dear God," prayed Anderson, "will You help Paul to hear what You're saying?" Paul read the verse again and it was as if light fell from heaven into his heart. He saw it! Yes, God had forgiven his sins for Jesus' sake. "They're gone!" he exclaimed.

Paul began testifying how God had lifted his burden. Soon, spiritual awakening swept the school and classes were cancelled while the staff helped 80 students find peace with God.

Several months later, Paul Lindell left the revival in China for college in southern Minnesota but was disappointed by the spiritual dryness there. Then, after hearing the impassioned preaching of Rev. Evald Conrad on his radio, he began visiting Conrad's Minneapolis church and found there the beginnings of another revival.

Anderson, Moorhead, Minn., worships at St. Paul's Free Lutheran, Fargo, N.D. (Sources: Marie Monsen, Awakening, 1962; Jonathan D. Anderson, Our Fathers Saw His Mighty Works, 2013. Scripture from NKJV.)

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Hope has become a slippery word in our culture. There is a significant contrast between the “hope” of this world and the genuine biblical hope found in Jesus Christ. It is the difference between the place of “maybe something will happen” and the place of firm confidence.

—Pastor Jason Holt

When our Lord had fully accomplished the gracious work the Father had sent Him to do, He gave the wonderful promise, “I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:3). This is the “blessed hope” (Titus 2:13) that sustains and comforts our spirits amidst the challenges we face as His believing people and which calls us to a life of daily repentance and faith as a people “zealous for good deeds” (Titus 2:14).

—Dr. Francis Monseth

In a society where hope seems to be waning, we are a church family that believes and upholds the Word of God as inerrant, infallible and inspired, and we cling to a hope that is promised in His Word.

—Pastor Elden Nelson

It doesn't take too long to feel encouraged from attending the conference.

—Peder Aadahl

And while we may disagree at times, there is a prevailing spirit of love for each other and those outside our fellowship.

—Pastor Wade Mobley



HOPE

for your future

BY PASTOR ROBERT LEE

The 51st Annual Conference of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations (AFLC) met at the Association Retreat Center near Osceola, Wis., and opened with a worship service on Tuesday, June 11. The message was preached by President Elden Nelson, based on the conference theme text: “‘There is hope for your future,’ says the LORD, ‘and your children will come again to their own land’” (Jeremiah 31:17). Special music was provided by the 2013 Ambassadors from our Bible school, and the service concluded with the Lord’s Supper. Pastor Richard Gunderson, assistant to the president, presided over a brief memorial service recognizing the deaths of Pastor Laurel Udden, Licensed Pastor Clifford Johnson, Pastor Chuck Herr, Dr. Francis Monseth, and pastors’ wives Eileen (Dean) Iverson, and Jan (Don) Norr.



Conference committees met during the day on Tuesday to formulate resolutions, and the Women's Missionary Federation (WMF) conducted their annual meeting, offering a Bible study plus several workshops, and electing two new national officers.

There was a strong prayerful spirit during the conference, and business sessions often were halted by "holy interruptions," especially prior to voting or when resolutions specifically called for prayer. The traditional morning prayer hours were led by Licensed Pastor Don Norr, Virginia, Minn.

A major change in the conference format was instituted this year. All ministry reports (excepting the president's report) printed in the conference booklet were to be presented in brief summary form on Wednesday, with the remainder of the sessions devoted to resolutions and elections.

The chief item of business was the selection of a new president. The ecclesiastical ballot procedure calls for the first ballot to be a nominating ballot, and 58 names received at least one vote. Five additional ballots were cast, and the conference elected Pastor Lyndon Korhonen to serve as the fifth president of the AFLC. Korhonen, 55, married to Linda (Moan) and father of two sons, has been the pastor of Good Shepherd Free Lutheran Church, Cokato, Minn., since 1990. He also was the pastor of the Culbertson/Brockton, Mont., parish after his graduation from the AFLC seminary and ordination in 1983. Currently a member of the Coordinating Committee, he previously served on the AFLC Schools Board of Trustees.

Pastor Peter Franz, 55, Maple Grove, Minn., incumbent vice-president, was re-elected on the second ballot to a one-year term. He continues to serve Grace Free Lutheran Church, Maple Grove.

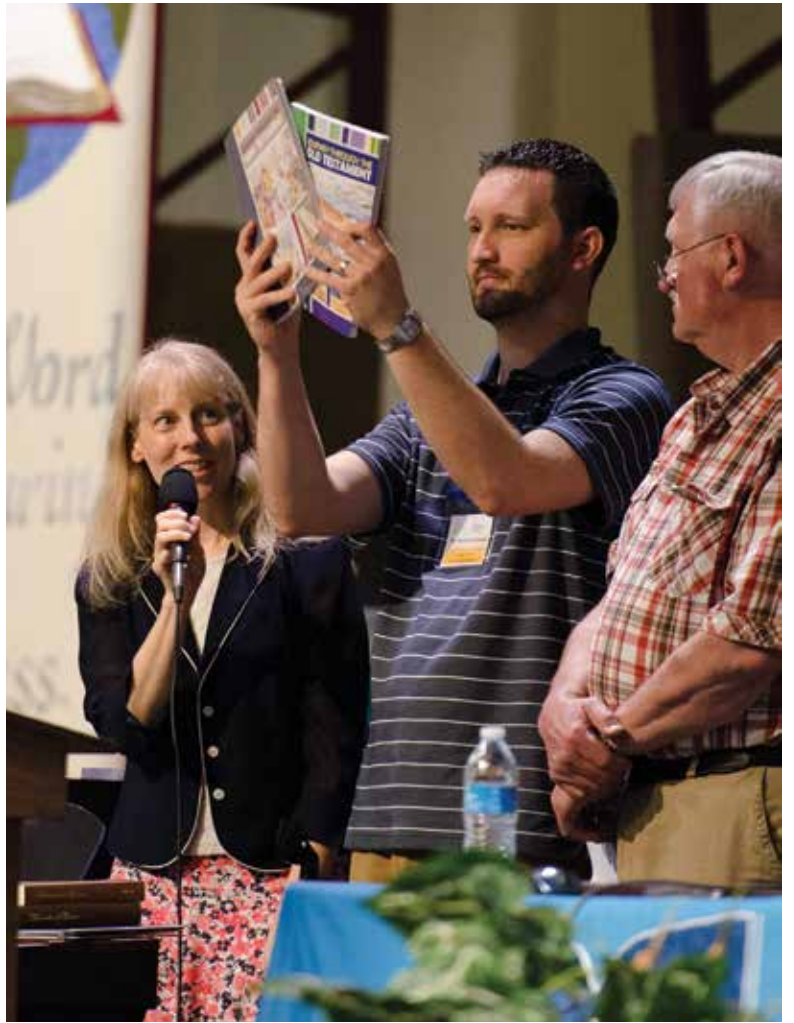
An interesting aspect of the election is that both Korhonen and Franz call St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Cloquet, Minn., their home congregation, and are married to sisters.

Re-elected by 95 percent of the votes on the nominating ballot to a one-year term as secretary was Pastor Brian Davidson, who serves Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, Dickinson, N.D.

A resolution sparking considerable discussion called for amending the Rules for Work to limit the president to two four-year terms (currently the president can serve an unlimited number of three-year terms, with a three-fourths majority vote). The vice-president would become a full-time assistant to the president and would also be limited to two four-year terms (currently the vice president can serve an unlimited number of one-year terms, with a three-fourths majority vote). If this amendment is approved at the conference next year, the current president's term would be extended to four years, and the vice-president would begin serving a four-year term in 2015.

ABOVE: Pastor Silvio Santos Paes, Brazil, brought the message at the Mission Festival Service.

OPPOSITE PAGE (clockwise, from top left): A conference attendee listens to a speaker. Pastor Sam Wellumson (center) holds up the newly published curriculum from Ambassador Publications as Marian Christopherson (left) speaks and Pastor John Mundfrom (right) looks on. Vince Larson, Buffalo, N.D., prays during devotions. Truman Kveen, Mark Gustafson, Pastor Leroy Flickinger, Leo Brackel and Pastor Jerry Peterson serve on Committee No. 5. Joel Nash works on Committee No. 2. Mary Aadahl and Bethel Erickson chat during coffee break.







ABOVE (from top): Seminarian Aaron Olson is introduced by Pastor Jason Holt as the speaker for the youth service. Pastor Ken Moland, Lay Pastor Paul Kneeland and Jarrod Hylden line up to speak. Conference attendees tour a camper that will be used for evangelism ministry in the North Dakota oil fields.

OPPOSITE PAGE (clockwise, from top left): Jim Lilly and Pastor Cal and Lori Willard join with other conference attendees to pray during the conference prayer time. Marilyn Johnson, Shakopee, Minn., listens during a discussion on a resolution. Dean Hobleman, Republic, Kan., a member of the Commission on Evangelism, explains how to use an EvangeCube to explain the gospel message.

The office of deaconess was the subject of another resolution that generated much discussion. The background was a decision by members of the Coordinating Committee to “endorse” Renata Hinrichs, Mankato, Minn., as an associate chaplain/deaconess for the Mayo Clinic Health System, to be reviewed on an annual basis. The approved resolution encouraged the Coordinating Committee, the WMF and our congregations “to consider areas to recognize and expand the office of deaconess within a biblical framework,” while at the same time affirming “the biblical understanding that the office of Pastor is for men whom God has chosen and called.”

Two resolutions offered from the floor also led to discussion and debate. The first, offered following the report from Committee No. 2 on Schools and approved with a slight amendment, called on Christian parents to make every effort to provide a Christian education for their children, encouraging alternatives such as parochial schools, private Christian schools, home schools, etc., while commending AFLC members who teach in public schools. The second, presented on Friday afternoon under General Resolutions, instructed the Coordinating Committee to review the constitutions of all current congregations to maintain “our unity of confession,” and to remove those congregations which do not subscribe to those teaching “in either doctrine or practice” from the congregational roster. This resolution was tabled indefinitely by a narrow vote.

The Schools Corporation annual meeting was held on Wednesday during the dinner hour. Members were informed that there will be a need to place a possible ten students on internship assignments next year, and that friends of the seminary have promised major gifting to a fund providing scholarships for interns in congregations unable to offer full support. It was reported that the accreditation process is proceeding according to schedule. The process of electing a new seminary dean was outlined by Board Chairman Martin Horn, who explained that recommendations will be received from congregations and individuals until October 1, allowing time for the board to interview potential candidates and to select the nominee to be presented to the conference next year. (See page 20 for a related notice by the Board of Trustees.)

The Mission Festival Service was held on Wednesday evening, with Pastor Silvio Santos Paes from Brazil as the speaker, translation provided by Pastor Paul Abel, AFLC missionary to Brazil. A highlight was the commissioning of Joshua and Ruth Wagner for service with the Lutheran Bible Translators in Sierra Leone, Africa.

A banquet for pastors and wives was held on Thursday, with Dr. James Lamb from Lutherans for Life as the speaker. Jerry Nelson, licensed pastor from Dassel, Minn., provided special music and recounted his life’s spiritual journey. The Youth Night service featured a musical group from the St. Michael-Maple Grove area called *Cephas*, and the speaker for the evening was seminarian Aaron Olson, Brooklyn Center, Minn. Following the service a reception was held in the Tabernacle in honor of the outgoing president and his assistant together with their wives, Pastor Elden and Faith Nelson, and Pastor Dick and Clara Gunderson.

The conference concluded on Friday evening with an ordination service for Luke Emerson, who has accepted a call to be the pastor of Newark Lutheran Church, Newark, Ill.; and Timothy Banks, serving as assistant pastor of Our Saviour’s Lutheran Church, Zumbrota, Minn.

Final registration was 502. The 2014 Annual Conference will be held in Valley City, N.D.

Lee, interim dean of AFLTS, is the editor of The Lutheran Ambassador.

Forever, O Lord

By Lynn Wellumson

The National WMF day was held June 11 at the Association Retreat Center located near Osceola, Wis. Two hundred and twenty-five women registered for the convention, with the theme taken from Psalm 119:89-90, “Forever O Lord ... Your settled Word, Your Enduring Faithfulness.” Emily Raan, an AFLC missionary candidate, led the group in devotions. The 2013 Ambassadors from the Association Free Lutheran Bible School led the praise and worship time, including the WMF convention theme song, “Ancient Words.”

Becky Abel, AFLC missionary to Brazil, shared a session about “Words,” basing her Bible study on the theme verse. She presented a short video on their mission work in Brazil and their family. Becky encouraged us to be memorizing Scripture and led us in memorizing our theme verse.

The morning offering of \$4,929 was divided between Christian education and the WMF general fund.

Sandra Weaver, Munich, N.D., the 2013 WMF Bible study author, led a workshop titled, “Christ in Genesis.” In the introduction to her presentation she said, “The Book of Genesis is far more than an authentic, historical account of the beginnings of the universe and of this earth. These are merely incidental and secondary to the one main plan and purpose of the entire book, as well as the rest of the Bible. Genesis is the progressive revelation of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Son of man, Redeemer, and Savior of men.”

Barbara Gustafson, Mesa, Ariz., led a workshop on “Building the Parish Builder.” Gustafson shared her personal testimony and gave tribute to individuals in her life who mentored her in areas of service.

During the memorial service led by Carole Dietsche, Osceola, pink carnations

were placed on a wooden cross adorned in greenery. Martha Hill, also of Osceola, read the names of those who had passed into glory during the previous year. Barbara Gustafson sang “We Shall Behold Him” during the service.

Paula Nyman, Beulah, N.D., was our final workshop leader. Nyman is the creator and maintainer of our WMF Facebook and blog sites. Her workshop started off with an IQ test of social media. Using a PowerPoint presentation, Nyman explained the usage of the WMF Facebook page and blog. Current writers include Joni Sliver, Brazilian missionary serving at the Miriam Infant Home; Velma Amundson, New Leipzig, N.D.; Sarah Langness, Beulah; and Sarah Nelson, Brookings, Ore.

The business meeting resulted in the election of Esther Hylden, Park River, N.D., as first vice president and JoyAnn Dahl, Plummer, Minn., as recording secretary. The resolutions, president’s report, and treasurer’s report can all be found on our Facebook page. Tonnes Pollestad, AFLC Director of Development, explained his responsibilities and his desire to connect with people looking for assistance in estate planning. A brief time of prayer was held after the business meeting for the elections and decisions to be made at the general conference, which began that evening.

The advisory committee (WMF district presidents or representatives) met with the national board briefly to discuss sharing rally news and securing more Facebook writers.

The WMF breakfast held the next morning was attended by approximately 90 women. Second Vice President Lori Willard, Everett, Wash., led in devotions and First Vice President Karen Pederson, Tioga, N.D., led in singing and presenting door prizes. Monica Coyle, AFLC missionary on loan to EEMN serving in the Ukraine,

gave a devotional entitled, “His Faithfulness to Us and Through Us.” Her introduction read, “From Genesis to Revelation, the ‘Red Thread’ of the gospel points to God’s faithfulness, which endures to all generations—even today! As believers clinging to this lifeline of grace, we walk through changing circumstances and seasons of life upheld by His unwavering faithfulness. His power made perfect in weakness refreshes our hearts with a hunger to pass His grace on to others. Through this chain reaction of grace, His faithfulness to us and through us reaches far beyond a single life.”

We ended the breakfast with a time of prayer for current WMF recording secretary Phyllis Peterson, Portland, N.D. (see her obituary on page 22). The Mission Festival Service held Wednesday evening was led by Pastor Andy Coyle, AFLC missionary currently on load to EEMN serving in the Ukraine. World Mission Director Del Palmer introduced a video with greetings from all AFLC missionaries. Pastor Silvio Santos Paes from Brazil was our speaker. He thanked the women for all the prayers, blankets, and care packages that had come to the mission field. He personally had been the recipient of many of these items, and he spoke of the care and love felt by those who received these gifts. His sermon was translated into English by AFLC missionary Pastor Paul Abel. Joshua and Ruth Wagner were commissioned at the service. The Wagners are AFLC missionaries on loan to Lutheran Bible Translators and will leave this fall for their first term in Sierra Leon. The Wagners and Pastor Connelly Dyrud were honored with a reception following the service.

Wellumson, Williston, N.D., is the president of the Women’s Missionary Federation. She is a member of Emmanuel Free Lutheran, Williston.



ELECTION RESULTS

OFFICERS

President

- (One pastor, three-year term)
Pastor Lyndon Korhonen, Cokato, Minn.

Vice President

- (One pastor, one-year term)
Pastor Peter Franz, Maple Grove, Minn.

Secretary

- (One-year term)
Pastor Brian Davidson, Dickinson, N.D.

2014 COMMITTEES

Committee No. 1

(Administration)

- Pastor Ray Ballmann, Kopperl, Texas
- Bill Fish, Everett, Wash.
- Pastor Dennis Gray, Newfolden, Minn.
- Roberta Overgaard, Santa Barbara, Calif.
- Todd Peterson, Fertile, Minn.

Committee No. 2

(Schools)

- Scott Carmichael, St. Francis, Kan.
- Jarrod Hylden, Plymouth, Minn.
- Jordan Langness, Beulah, N.D.
- Pastor Barry Nelson, Tripp, S.D.
- Roger Quanbeck, Hallock, Minn.

Committee No. 3

(Missions and Evangelism)

- Ernest Kronquist, Arlington, Wash.
- Ken Pederson, Fertile, Minn.
- Pastor Mark Richardson, Abercrombie, N.D.
- Pastor Craig Wentzel, Edmore, N.D.
- Lyle Westrom, Crookston, Minn.

Committee No. 4

(Publications and Parish Education)

- Joel Erickson, East Grand Forks, Minn.
- Pastor David Franz, Radcliffe, Iowa
- Ruth Rautio, Janesville, Wis.
- Gary Stegman, Crookston, Minn.
- Sue Westrom, Crookston, Minn.

Committee No. 5

(Stewardship and Pensions)

- Bill Buck, Sinai, S.D.
- Nathan Dalager, Argyle, Minn.
- Pastor Luke Emerson, Newark, Ill.
- Jack Parker, Durant, Okla.
- Pastor Wade Mobley, Sioux Falls, S.D.



BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

Coordinating Committee

- (One pastor, five-year term)
Pastor Tom Schierkolk, Eben Junction, Mich.

AFLC Schools Board of Trustees

- (One layman, five-year term)
John Talley, Newark, Ill.
- (One pastor, five-year term)
Pastor Todd Erickson, Roseau, Minn.

Benefits Board

- (One layman, five-year term)
David Bjornson, Valley City, N.D.

Youth Board

- (One layman, five-year term)
Andy Benson, Plymouth, Minn.

Commission on Evangelism

- (One pastor, five-year term)
Pastor Lee Hoops, Kindred, N.D.
- (One layman, three-year term)
Kevin Hoops, Byron, Neb.

Stewardship Board

- (One pastor, five-year term)
Pastor Richard Ramsbacher, Springfield, Mo.

Board of Publications & Parish Ed

- (One layman, five-year term)
Bonnie Handsaker, Radcliffe, Iowa

Bay Broadcasting

- (One pastor, three-year term)
Pastor Brian Davidson, Dickinson, N.D.

Home Missions Committee

- (One layman, five-year term)
Carl Busse, Humboldt, Tenn.
- (One layman, five-year term)
Robert Christian, Newark, Ill.

FLAPS Board of Managers

- (One layman, five-year term)
David Handsaker, Radcliffe, Iowa

ARC Board

- (One layman, five-year term)
Roger VanSomeren, Amery, Wis.

World Missions Committee

- (One pastor, five-year term)
Pastor Craig Johnson, Astoria, Ore.
- (One layman, five-year term)
Paul Handsaker, Radcliffe, Iowa

Budget Analysis

- (One pastor, three-year term)
Pastor Craig Benson, Armour, S.D.
- (One layman, three-year term)
Kevin P. Olson, Fargo, N.D.

CORPORATIONS

Schools Corporation

- (Ten terms of five years each)
Don Balmer, Thief River Falls, Minn.
Pastor Jon Benson, Janesville, Wis.
Arne Berge, Binford, N.D.
Bill Buck, Sinai, S.D.
Pastor Todd Erickson, Roseau, Minn.
Pastor Jason Gudim, Golden Valley, Minn.
Steve Jankord, Surprise, Ariz.
Lay Pastor Paul Kneeland, Tucson, Ariz.
Pastor Adam Osier, Wadena, Minn.
Pastor Lloyd Quanbeck, Moorhead, Minn.

ARC Corporation

- (Ten terms of five years each)
Pastor Karl Anderson, Bagley, Minn.
Dennis Holman, Minneapolis, Minn.
Pastor David Johnson, Boyertown, Pa.
Dr. Steve Johnson, Upsala, Minn.
Roger Klingman, Pipestone, Minn.
Jeremy Langness, New Hope, Minn.
Pastor Shane McLoughlin, Minot, N.D.
Pastor Brian Ricke, Arlington, S.D.
Chad Rieschle, Brooklyn Park, Minn.
Roger VanSomeren, Amery, Wis.

Missions Corporation

- (Twenty terms of five years each)
Pastor John Abel, Hitterdal, Minn.
Pastor Mark Antal, Park River, N.D.
Josh Berge, Hutchinson, Minn.
Pastor Brian Davidson, Dickinson, N.D.
Pastor Eugene Enderlein, Plymouth, Minn.
Tom Fugleberg, Roseau, Minn.
Pastor Gary Haug, Brooklyn Park, Minn.
Pastor Les Johnson, Wilson, Wis.
Willis Kettelhut, Deshler, Neb.
Pastor George Lautner, Deshler, Neb.
Dr. Kevin Lee, Beulah, N.D.
Jon Nelson, Plymouth, Minn.
Pastor Tom Olson, Newark, Ohio
Wayne Olson, Blue Earth, Minn.
Pastor LeRoy Petersen, Greenbush, Minn.
Lee Schierkolk, Valley City, N.D.
Cheryl Skordahl, Pipestone, Minn.
Pastor Kent Sperry, Northwood, N.D.
Kristin Tanner, Sioux Falls, S.D.
Pastor Tom Tuura, Stover, Mo.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Central Tri-State

Wendy Westlake, Zumbrota, Minn.

Eastern

Pastor Tom Olson, Newark, Ohio

Eastern North Dakota

LeRoy Schierkolk, Valley City, N.D.

Illinois

Mervin Mathison, DeKalb, Ill.

Lake Superior

Phillip Johnson, Esko, Minn.

Minneapolis

Cindy Schlenk, Brooklyn Park, Minn.

Nebraska/Kansas/Colorado

Dean Hobelmann, Republic, Kan.

North Central Minnesota

Pastor Dale Mellgren, McIntosh, Minn.

Northern Michigan

Erl Langness, Ishpeming, Mich.

Northwestern Minnesota

Emory Flaten, Newfolden, Minn.

Pacific Northwest

Pastor Cal Willard, Everett, Wash.

South Central

Scott Ducote, Durant, Okla.

South Dakota

Linda Buck, Sinai, S.D.

Southwest Central Minnesota

Harold Erickson, Wadena, Minn.

Southwestern:

Pastor Scott Stroud, Salinas, Calif.

Western ND/Eastern Montana

Wayne Deubner, Brockton, Mont.

COLLOQUY COMMITTEE

- (Five pastors, one-year terms)
Pastor James Molstre, Newark, Ill.
Pastor Tom Olson, Golden Valley, N.D.
Pastor Elden Nelson, Rockford, Minn.
Pastor Eric Swenson, Wheatland, Iowa
Pastor Kirk Thorson, Larimore, N.D.

annual conference



ABOVE: (from top) Pastor Robert Lee, interim AFLTS dean, presents the seminary report. Pastor Paul Nash, director of Home Missions, presents his department's report. Pastor Brian Ricke oversaw the sound board. Pastor Elden Nelson confers with Dr. John Eidsmoe, conference parliamentarian. TOP RIGHT: The conference breaks for prayer. RIGHT: Bev Buenning, Marilee Johnson and Deb Benson chat during a coffee break.



ABOVE: (from top) Vacation Bible school programming was offered for grade-school children, including craft time. Pastor Silvio Santos Paes, Brazil, used quilts and cards to illustrate a point. TOP LEFT: Junior high and high schoolers also had organized activities for the week. MIDDLE LEFT: The conference met in the ARC gymnasium. LEFT: Christie Friestad speaks to a resolution.

Peniel ministry at a crossroads

BY RUTH GUNDERSON

Just off of Interstate 94 near Wilson, Wis., down a two-lane highway that runs through rolling farmland, and off a dusty intersection, lies a few acres of land that have seen the likes of miscreants, trouble-makers, fighters, bullies, and misused and abused children. That small parcel of land has also witnessed many of these same lives transformed into honest, hardworking members of society.

It wasn't the land, beautiful as it is, which brought about the changes. It wasn't time, either, though only in eternity will we know what would have been.

This story, instead, starts in a jail—Dunn County Jail, Menominee, Wis. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, that jail was home to adults and children alike. With no other option in the government system at the time, unruly children who caused trouble at home, school, and in their communities were put in jail.

Visiting that jail each week was Ken Sortedahl, a student at the Free Lutheran Seminary who was serving a local AFLC church near Colfax, Wis. (Faith Lutheran Church of Running Valley). One week, Ken counted 26 boys and girls in the jail.

When he asked someone about what was being done with the children, a judge offered Ken a grant and public support to start a social welfare program to house and reform the children. But that would have meant playing by the rules of the government. Instead, Ken had a vision for a ministry that would meet the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of kids who had run out of options.

Through a series of events, and through the gifts of many, that parcel of land off Interstate 94 was purchased in 1971. And it had a name—Peniel, meaning “the face of God.” By the end of that first summer, through word-of-mouth, the brick house original to the property held 12 children.

“They just came,” said Melodee, Ken’s wife. “We came here and said, ‘We’re just going to trust You, and everything we have belongs to You.’ ... We just moved in and trusted the Lord.”

Melodee, a trained teacher, became the mother-figure to thousands of children throughout the years. She developed a program around education and faith because “there wasn’t a place to copy.” Instead, they used the Bible as their guide.

Over the years, buildings have been added to the property: one building houses a dormitory, cafeteria and schoolroom, other buildings house staff. Most everything you lay eyes on has been donated, even buildings, foundations, and vehicles.

“Hardly anyone knew about [the ministry], but the Lord sent



Ken and Melodee Sortedahl founded Peniel in 1971, and have worked with thousands of troubled children in need of a home and spiritual care.

in the checks,” said Ken.

And the children have come—needy, broken, hurting. Their parents, desperate for help, have had to commit their children to one year at Peniel. In that year, through loving discipline, schooling and by the example of Ken and Melodee, children’s lives were changed.

“We were always living our lives before them and trusted that God was going to show them a better way,” said Melodee.

Those years held lots of heartache, too. Kids who challenged authority. Kids who ran away. And one girl who beat Melodee viciously with a pipe in 2006. That was almost the last straw. After 35 years of ministry, Ken and Melodee were ready to hang up their gloves. Instead, they gave it six more years.

“It’s not a job, it’s a calling,” said Ken.

In 2012, the Sortedahls finally decided to take a break, deciding on a one-year sabbatical. Though Ken’s passion for the ministry is still strong, they are starting to realize that they just can’t physically handle the work anymore.

“It’s always been too much,” said Melodee.

With the end of that year fast-approaching, the Sortedahls have a decision to make: find new managers or sell. They have given all they have to the ministry: their lives, their passion, their finances. In return, they have seen the Lord work miracles in the lives of many children: “A ton of kids who are living for the Lord, a ton of kids who are Christians who would never have been,” is how Melodee describes them.

Would you pray with the Sortedahls as they look to the Lord for the future of Peniel, and their future, as well?

Gunderson is the managing editor of The Lutheran Ambassador.



Visions of hope & influence

BY CHAPLAIN KERWIN SLETTO

For 20 years, I served as a chaplain for people living in nursing homes. Every so often, someone would ask me, “Doesn’t that get depressing?” The answer is, “No.” People who live nursing homes have a sense of humor. They like to share thoughts and memories, and they love taking an interest in others. The goal in a nursing home is to help the residents have the highest quality of life possible. It is not a depressing situation; it is an opportunity for hope and life.

We are called to recognize what is stated in Psalm 139:16, “Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Your book were all written the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them” (NASB). While we age, God continues to have a very definite purpose for our lives. Sometimes that purpose changes, but God is still at work in and through us. I’m reminded of a time when we were at my mother-in-law’s house. Grandma was fixing lunch, and my wife told her that the girls wouldn’t eat a particular food. Grandma said, “Okay,” and proceeded to serve that food to her grandchildren. Of course, my children ate the food because, after all, Grandma made it. Grandma’s purpose in life has maybe changed, but what a wonderful influence she is upon the lives of her grandchildren.

As long as we live here on this earth, God has a purpose for each of us. What God looks for from us is a willing heart that is open to His leading, and He provides the purpose and plan for our lives. God is faithful.

During my years as a chaplain, I have had the opportunity to minister to thousands of people as they prepared to leave this earth. While the emotional stress of saying goodbye is heavy, it is also a time of celebration because our loved ones have completed their earthly race. Second Timothy 4:7-8 says, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me; but also to all who have loved His appearing.”

Sooner or later, if the Lord tarries, we will all arrive at the time when God calls us home to heaven. What a glorious day that will be! We will be set free from the burdens and limitations of this life, much like a butterfly is set free from the cocoon. We can look forward to the day when we will be reunited with loved ones who have gone to heaven before us. Yes, it is hard to say goodbye to the people who remain behind, but your influence will remain and you will, by faith in Jesus Christ, move forward with life. We are called to recognize that the separation from our loved ones is temporary, and one day we will be part of the great reunion that God has prepared for us. God has a specific purpose for your life, regardless of your age and/or limitations. Continue to walk with Him by faith and the blessings will flow.

Sletto is the director of AFLC Institutional Chaplaincy, and lives in Grand Forks, N.D.



AUGUST 4 WATERS IN THE WILDERNESS

“He that is greatest among you shall be your servant” (Matthew 23:11).

What a wonderful call the Lord gives us today in the midst of a world clamoring for its “rights.” What a contrast to the world’s idea of greatness. In the world intelligence, ability, money, personality, or position in life are considered the signs of greatness. Jesus says that he who is willing to be a servant is truly great.

A mother may become weary of her role as housekeeper. She should remember, however, that it is a great role in God’s sight; it offers untold opportunities of being a servant. A person cannot do anything greater than that.

If you are going off to a job today, you should remember

that God has placed us in this world to be His servants. Are you tempted to become bitter because someone else has been promoted before you? Do you feel that your salary is insufficient? Remember God’s idea of greatness. Even a pastor may feel twinges of jealousy because another pastor has a better parish. Remember that Jesus Himself said that “He came not to be ministered to, but to minister.”

Even in doing Christian work we are at times tempted to look for recognition rather than serving because we love our Savior. Let us ask God to fill us more with His Spirit so that we may be willing to be servants for Christ’s sake among our fellow human beings.

Joan Udden is a member of Grace Free Lutheran, Maple Grove, Minn. She married to Pastor Laurel Udden, now deceased.

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.

A truly happy birthday

BY PASTOR TODD SCHIERKOLK

Happy birthday” is usually something we say to congratulate a person on a special day that rolls around once every year. But for Jessica it probably would be more accurate to just leave out the “happy.” Yeah, that’s just about how she feels about it. Her birthday brings back a lot of sad and bad memories. She prefers to stay at home and not be around anyone ... no “happy” included.

Knowing this, a friend who cares about Jessica insisted that she come to our midweek Bible study in their neighborhood. Jessica had come to our study before, but since we celebrate everyone who has a birthday, her friend thought it would be important for her to come. And she emphasized to Jessica that if she didn’t show up she was personally going to go to her house and escort her to the study. That’s a good friend.

But Jessica came of her own accord. She sat through the study on the Gospel of Mark. She prayed with us. Afterward, we proceeded to sing the Mexican Happy Birthday song to Jessica and one other person who was celebrating a birthday. She blew out the candle on her cupcake. Then, as everyone else was chatting with their neighbors, Jessica’s birthday sadness began to manifest itself.

“What in the world am I here for? Why am I alive? What is the point?”

Turns out Jessica’s mom left her family when Jessica was 8 years old. From that point on she has felt the oppressive lack of a mother. We tried to encourage her with God’s plan and purpose, pointing out that she was a different mother to her children simply because she did not abandon them.

Jessica immediately responded, “But I’m not a good mom!”

Jessica did find her mother several years ago and has been in touch with her. Her mom has asked Jessica for forgiveness. But when Jessica tried to get an explanation as to why her mother left



Barb Schierkolk, center, is pictured with two students from the Kids Club, including Ayde, Jessica’s daughter, who is pictured on the left.

Jessica and her sister, her mom told her, “Someday when you’re older, you’ll understand.”

Sitting there with a cupcake in her hand and sadness in her heart, Jessica said, “I’m older now, and I still don’t understand. How could she do that to us?”

Jessica feels like her mom is justifying what she did instead of repenting of it, even though she asked for forgiveness.

Jessica and her husband have two children who are in our Tuesday Kids Club; we are so grateful to have this connection with their family. It has taken a long time to cultivate it, and we’re beginning to see the fruit of that time and effort. We look forward to the day when through the love of Jesus, our Father in heaven puts the “happy” back into Jessica’s birthday—and also into every day of her life.

Schierkolk, an AFLC missionary, serves with his wife, Barb and daughter, Kirstie, in Jerez, Mexico.

Emerson, Banks are ordained

Luke Emerson, a 2013 graduate of AFLTS, and Tim Banks, a 2008 graduate of Bethel Seminary, were ordained June 14 at the closing service of the Annual Conference. Emerson has accepted a call to serve Newark Lutheran, Newark, Ill. Banks has served as interim pastor at Our Saviour's Evangelical Lutheran, Cannon Falls, Minn. He currently serves as assistant pastor at Our Saviour's Lutheran, Zumbrota, Minn.



Pastor Luke Emerson and Pastor Tim Banks are ordained at the annual conference by Pastor Elden Nelson.

Eastern North Dakota district to host women's retreat

Come experience a fun-filled, two-day women's retreat September 13-14 at Ebenezer Free Lutheran Church in Northwood, N.D., where this year's theme is "A Wise Woman Builds," based upon Proverbs 14:1. We will laugh, cry, and learn about how we can be wise women who build their lives in Christ as friends, mothers, and wives.

Enjoy the musical talents of *Into Zion* and Amy Redding, local worship musicians who love to share the Word of God through their music.

We are fortunate to have with us two speakers this year: Susie Larson and Rita Morrow. Rita is a Christian comedian and speaker who has spent the past decade entertaining audiences across the country through her unique three-fold ministry. Susie is a radio host, author, national media voice for Moody Radio, and national speaker. Recently, Susie was named co-host for Focus on the Family's new daily live talk show, "Everyday Relationships with Dr. Greg Smalley." Each speaker will share a testimony during the weekend. Participants will be encouraged to live as wise women and will be taught practical ways in which a wise woman builds her life with Christ as the foundation.

On Friday night there will be a comedy show with the talents of Rita as Martha Marie, a spunky southern-belle who truly is a character in every sense of the word and prone to turn up just about anywhere. Whether at a conference, convention, or merely a local restaurant conversing with perfect strangers, you're apt to find Martha Marie there doing the thing Martha says she does best—helping and encouraging people. Saturday will be focused solely on the Word of God where Susie and Rita will take turns in presenting topics relevant to all women focused upon the theme.

All meals are included in the cost of the registration, which is \$10 for Friday night only and \$30 for the entire weekend. For groups of 10 or more there is a \$5 discount for each full weekend registration. The pre-registration deadline is August 30. Registration after the deadline and at the door is \$40. Registrations are non-refundable. There are limited overnight accommodations with host families available. Please register early to allow us to prepare adequately for all attendees. For a registration form or for more information contact Kimberly Miller at 701.330.3329 or 701.587.6105. For more information on some of the talent presenting at the retreat, visit their Web sites: Rita Morrow (meet-rita.com), Susie Larson (susielarson.com), Amy Redding (facebook.com/amyredding2).

School Board calls for names for new dean

Dear members of the AFLC,

As you know, the long-time dean of our seminary, Dr. Francis Monseth, was called home into the presence of His Savior on Good Friday, March 29. Members of the Board of Trustees are deeply grateful for his years of service and his dedication to our schools. We will miss his leadership, his deep faith, and his wise counsel.

With the office of dean vacant, members of the Board of Trustees appointed Pastor Robert Lee as interim dean, and we are grateful for his willingness to serve.

The process for calling a dean is stated in the by-laws of the Free Lutheran Theological Seminary Corporation: "Nominations ... shall be made to the [AFLC annual] conference by the faculty of the seminary and the Board of Trustees of the corporation, convening together. Before making such nomination, the Board of Trustees of the corporation shall, in writing, call for recommendations for such position or positions from the congregations or individual members of the AFLC, and any recommendations received by the Board from such congregations or individual members shall be presented to the Board of Trustees and the faculty at their nominating meeting."

This is a call to submit the names of individuals whom you believe would be suitable candidates for the position of dean of the seminary. We ask that you submit your recommendations in writing. Please include a brief summary of why you believe the individual should be considered. Submit your recommendation to the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Pastor Martin Horn, at 317 Third Street, Kenyon, MN 55946, or via e-mail at haugepastor@hotmail.com. The deadline for submitting recommendations to the nominating committee is October 1.

As you thoughtfully and prayerfully consider this request for recommendations, we ask that you continue to remember board members and the faculty in prayer as we seek God's guidance through this process. Thank you for your support of the AFLC schools.

Pastor Martin Horn, chairman of the AFLC Schools Board of Trustees.



AFLC, World Relief respond to flooding in Mozambique

BY ROGER SHANTZ

The Association of Free Lutheran Congregations has long been a body that responds to the needs of the vulnerable through a partnership with World Relief. World Relief, the relief and development arm of the National Association of Evangelicals, is a long-standing friend of the AFLC with mutual goals. Each organization cares for the refugee, orphan, widow, and oppressed worldwide.

In January of this year, devastating floods destroyed livelihoods and homes in the Gaza Province of Mozambique. This brought about the separation of families, the loss of possessions, and even death. During the ensuing weeks the AFLC stood with World Relief as together we prayed for those in Mozambique. You, along with our AFLC family, sent funds for those on the ground in Gaza and provided cleaning supplies as well as seeds for farmers so they could recover the crops that were lost.

In the last decade, we have watched as many disasters have hit communities already susceptible to natural disasters like earthquakes and tsunami. The dev-

astation becomes exponential for these vulnerable communities, as we witnessed in Indonesia, Haiti, and recently in Mozambique.

Together, the AFLC and World Relief respond to disasters and work to prevent the overwhelming impact many disasters can cause. By training church and community leaders, we create the potential of not only reducing the risk of loss but seeing these leaders become advocates and change agents in their communities.

We are grateful that World Relief and the AFLC together place value on integral mission as we work to empower the local church to serve the most vulnerable. Just as the AFLC does in the Ambassador Institute, World Relief trains local volunteers in their own country, who in turn reach out to their neighbors, bearing witness to the whole gospel, in word and deed. Using biblically-based curriculums, they teach village residents about Christ's love and how to take care of themselves in order to prevent malaria, child death, or HIV/AIDS.

I'm excited about what God is doing through the partnership the AFLC has



with World Relief. If you or your church has never given to World Relief through the AFLC, please consider doing so today. We have a strong partnership. I invite you to join me today and respond to the needs of the vulnerable as we stand with the church around the world.

Shantz, Burnsville, Minn., is the Midwest Church Engagement director for World Relief. Photos courtesy of World Relief.

AFLC memorials: May

AFLBS

Dr. Francis Monseth (2)
Ruth Claus
Norma Gene Engelson
Jim and Yvonne Swanson
Herbert Schrimpf

AFLTS

Dr. Francis Monseth (5)
Elda Watt
Ron Kasdorf

General Fund

Dr. Francis Monseth
Elda Watt

Home Missions

Emil Hass
Herman Hinseth
Dr. Francis Monseth

Miriam Infant Home

Mildred Boxrud

Parish Education

Rudy and Julia Barstad
Dr. Francis Monseth

World Missions

Charles Blomquist
Dr. Francis Monseth

AFLC church one of several to host public reading of New Testament

Faith Lutheran Church, Blackduck, Minn., recently joined with five area churches to publicly read through the New Testament in one weekend at an area park.

The event was held June 21-23, with 59 readers participating in three twelve-hour segments from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Pastor Tom Reagan of Faith Lutheran was one of the key initiators of the project.

“God clearly did some beautiful things,” said Reagan. He hopes to see the event duplicated throughout the AFLC and is working to put together a kit that can be used by anyone interested in starting their own event.

Peterson was recording secretary for WMF

Phyllis Peterson, 63, of Portland, N.D., died July 6 at Sanford Health Palliative Care Unit in Fargo, N.D., after a short battle with peritoneal cancer.

Phyllis was born Jan. 15, 1950, to Bernhard and Alvhild (Berg) Nelson, in Mayville, N.D. She graduated from Portland High School in 1968, and attended AFLBS in Plymouth, Minn., for one year. She married Ralph Peterson Dec. 20, 1969, at Valley Free Lutheran Church in Portland. Their first home together was in Germany, while Ralph was enlisted in the army. They lived for a short time in St. Michael, Minn., until returning to Portland, N.D., to raise their family. Among many other roles, Phyllis most recently served as the recording secretary for the Women’s Missionary Federation.

Phyllis is survived by her husband; four children, Brent (Kristin), Valley City, N.D.; Julie (Alan) Twedt, Portland, N.D.; Aaron, Omaha, Neb.; Andrew, Fargo, N.D.; 10 grandchildren; one sister, Berna (Merle) Hanson, Minnetonka, Minn.; three brothers, Levon (Sharon) Nelson, Mayville, N.D., Harold (Bev) Nelson, Breckenridge, Minn., and Alane (Brian) Jodock, Northwood, N.D.

The service was July 9 at Riverside Evangelical Free, Mayville, Burial was in Aurdal Cemetery, Portland, N.D.

People and Places

Pastor Jeremy Vance, Coon Rapids, Minn., is currently serving as interim pastor of Sunnyside, Stacy, Minn.

Michael Borg is the new worship director at Abiding Savior, Sioux Falls, S.D., a position that he previously held at Emmaus Lutheran, Bloomington, Minn.

Members of **Christ Lutheran**, Tulia, Texas, have voted to officially close the church.

Lutheran Church of the Cross, Laguna Woods, Calif., asked to be removed from the AFLC roster.

Pastor James Molstre was installed June 23 at Helmar Lutheran, Newark, Ill., and **Pastor Luke Emerson** was installed at Newark Lutheran, Newark, Ill., with Pastor Elden Nelson officiating.

Licensed Pastor Brad Putnam was installed July 21 at Redeemer Free Lutheran, Ontonagon, Mich.

Correction: A Scripture reference was incorrect in the “Waters in the Wilderness” column in the June issue. The correct reference is Luke 15:7.

Thank you from the ARC staff

It all happened so fast. It took a year’s worth of planning, fixing, organizing and preparing—and then it was all done. These are sentiments of members of the ARC staff as we reflect on the privilege of being the host site for the 2013 AFLC Annual Conference.

We are thankful for the many reports of a good annual conference. We are thankful for the new air conditioning which actually had some wearing sweaters and jackets for business and worship times. We are thankful for only minimal glitches that caused interruption or distraction in any of the technical, meeting space, kitchen, or catering services.

I am personally thankful for a wonderful members of the ARC staff and our host congregations who made the commitment to serve with excellence our brothers and sisters from our many AFLC congregations. I am also thankful for all of you who spontaneously stepped in wherever needed. That was a great encouragement. Mostly, I saw many blessings, not just for those being served, but equally for all of you who stepped up to serve. This blesses and encourages our staff, and to that we “always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus” (1 Corinthians 1:4). On behalf of the ARC staff, thank you all.

—Pat Flanders, ARC Director

AFLC BENEVOLENCES Jan. 1-June 30, 2013

FUND	REC'D IN JUNE	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$23,896	\$170,171	\$145,839
Evangelism	7,876	73,175	72,923
Youth Ministries	5,249	55,578	42,026
Parish Education	7,183	54,892	57,207
Seminary	15,047	142,647	113,168
Bible School	34,750	259,263	226,062
Home Missions	36,673	220,382	243,036
World Missions	20,045	207,646	209,097
Personal Support	25,430	214,440	241,338
TOTALS	\$176,149	\$1,398,194	\$1,350,697

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

Conference reflections revisited

Regular readers of *The Lutheran Ambassador* might find the following conference reflections to be somewhat familiar, since the general topics are the same as the ones addressed last year. But the concerns have not lessened, and so the discussion must continue.

The Nominating Committee

A quick survey of past issues suggests that it was about 20 years ago when the first report of the Nominating Committee listed not only the incumbents but also the names of those who had agreed to allow their names to be considered for possible election. The purpose of providing this information prior to the conference was primarily a call to prayer for the candidates, as well as to give opportunity for those who plan to attend the conference to better prepare for the voting. It might also be called a check-and-balance, since the committee may be unaware, for example, that the nominee is no longer a member of an AFLC congregation.



Pastor Robert Lee

One can only be dismayed at all of the blanks in this year's report as included in our May issue ... 22 more nominees, for example, needed for the Missions Corporation! Surely it must have been embarrassing for the committee chairman to announce to the conference that there were still so many names lacking to complete the ballots. This is especially problematic for those positions that require corporation membership, as it becomes very difficult to nominate people from the floor without knowing who has already been asked. Must it be assumed that no one in the corporation was willing to serve? Should not election to a corporation in most cases include willingness to serve on a board?

One problem continues to be the lack of response from our pastors to the members of the Nominating Committee representing their districts. They are the ones who are contacted, and their participation is vital. There is no doubt that there are enough qualified and available people to fill all of the committee and board positions, but the pastor is often "the missing link" in the process of prayerfully providing suggested names for these offices.

A second problem may be the fact that some members of the Nominating Committee simply do not function. Members of the committee are elected from the floor, and, if not present at the conference, do not have the opportunity to decline. There is time to withdraw, however, as soon as one is notified of the election, and this would be far better as it would give the Coordinating Committee a chance to appoint a replacement so that the district would be represented.

Brothers and sisters, we can do better.

Resolutions

Conference attendees seemed strongly supportive of the procedure change this year that required our ministries to briefly summarize their reports. This, of course, assumes that the written reports will be read in their entirety by everyone prior to the oral presentations. If this does not happen, then there is a strong possibility of confusion concerning the roots of some resolutions formulated by the conference committees.

This potential problem was evident during the conference when discussion arose regarding a resolution from Committee No. 1 on a proposed study of the deaconess ministry. The chairman of the Coordinating Committee encouraged the need for such a study in his report, noting that the committee had endorsed a woman for chaplaincy service. The lengthy discussion that ensued mentioned women who studied nursing at Deaconess Hospital, congregations electing deaconesses, concerns about women's ordination, etc., almost all of which really did not apply to the issue at hand, creating confusion and frustration for many.

A recent article in the *Metro Lutheran* relates to the history of the deaconess movement among Norwegian Lutherans in America, highlighting the remarkable ministry of Sister Elisabeth Fedde, a relative of Miriam (Todd) Klemme. To view this article, visit the Web site (metrolutheran.org/2013/06/sr-elisabeth-fedde-and-the-norwegian-american-deaconesses).

The second issue is one that has often been addressed. Those with a more synodical perspective seem to believe that resolutions have more weight than they really do, devoting considerable effort to formulating and approving ones regarding special concerns. Even when there is no lack of clarity as to where past conferences stand on certain issues, some believe it is necessary to reaffirm it, which may be a helpful reminder. Occasionally someone remembers to amend a resolution, removing any language that suggests authority and adding the word "recommends," for AFLC conference resolutions are recommendations not commands.

Last year's conference reflections editorial stated: "One may say that our annual conference voted for this or that. Take the resolutions back to your congregation, discuss and debate them, and if you wish to make them your own, then do so. It is the voice of the congregation that has authority, not the voice of the AFLC. Better yet, remember that it is the voice of God in His Word that is the highest authority of all, overruling resolutions contrary to His will and empowering the ones that are faithful."

building the base

A rose by any other name

BY CHRIS KUMPULA

There is no such thing as a casual rose gardener. Rose gardening requires deep knowledge and understanding. Nonetheless, roses have persisted as popular domesticated flowers for centuries. We are familiar with the white rose famously emblazoned on Luther's Catechism. And none can forget Shakespeare's famous lines written shortly after Luther's time:

"What's in a name? that which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet"
(*Romeo and Juliet*, Act 2, Scene 2)

A name is just a name. But too often we find names misapplied and identities confused.

In I Samuel 8, we are given the account of the monumental transition from rule by the Judges of Israel to a monarchy copied from the man-made political arrangements of other nations. "There shall be a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles" (I Samuel 8:19-20). God made it clear to Israel that this government would not offer a benevolent hero to lead them from the front. Instead, their governors would become a burden to the people, persisting through time. "You will cry out in that day because of your king ... but the Lord will not answer you in that day" (v. 18).

The mission of the Church of Christ cannot be executed by the hand of government. Such beliefs led to numerous follies in the Church and instigated the departure of colonists from England to

go to a new land—America. Roses came with them. The colonists recognized the five petals as symbolic of the five wounds of Christ. Such symbols were real to people who had escaped their own persecution to establish free worship in a harsh, unknown wilderness.

That rose in the wilderness grows next to the rose that is now internationally associated with socialism. Adopting the language of Christian charity, a socialist spirit seems to have infiltrated portions of American religion. Some promote the expropriation of private property for redistribution as a means to Christian charity. Tithing is confused with taxing, charity with welfare, evangelism with politics.

The ninth and tenth commandments were very important to American settlers. They explain the foundational importance of the rule of law and property rights in American law. Property and liberty restrained the cancerous growth of the state and secured the freedom for an open church society.

Like the skilled gardener, we must understand things as they are. Ideas like "charity" can be so greatly misapplied. Remembering Jesus' name will prevent us from being mistaken about what the Church is and what it is not. "Give unto Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's" (Mark 12:17). Be careful that you are not serving another god. As you think of the rose, think hard about what that rose means to you. We are called to be citizens of heaven.

Kumpula is a member of Grace Free Lutheran, Maple Grove, Minn.