

THE LUTHERAN 

FEBRUARY 2013

AMBASSADOR



On
campus

Repentance and growth

BY PASTOR KEN MOLAND

The man sitting across the table from me was a Christian, converted to Christ in his early adult years. Now years later, he said to me, "I don't really see the need or value of daily repentance. In fact, I've come to believe that it is counterproductive. Why should I repent of sins already forgiven by Christ on the cross?"

What do you think? Is repentance only for the unbeliever, or are believers also called to repent? While it is true that Jesus' warning, "Unless you repent, you shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3), is directed to unbelievers, He also speaks of the spiritual benefit of daily repentance for His children.

It was in this light that Luther wrote in the very first of his 95 Theses, "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, 'Repent' (Matthew 4:17), he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance." Luther went on to teach that spiritual growth, or sanctification, was accomplished in the believer's life by the Holy Spirit's working of repentance and faith. Spiritual growth is not the result of man's discipline or his aspiration to ever higher goals. And it is not joining the "Old Adam Improvement Society" that brings us spiritual victory.

As you might imagine, those whose theology finds daily repentance counterproductive are not too eager to walk through the seasons of the Church year that we know as Advent and Lent. To some this focus on the preparation of repentance would seem to distract from the joy and confidence of the Christian life. Likewise, some might ask why we must begin a worship service with a confession of sin, thinking of it as negative or perhaps counterproductive.



Might it be that these practices of the Christian Church are there in part to remind the believer of God's gracious work of repentance and faith? Of course, it is only by the work of the Holy Spirit, not by ritual or routine, that this miracle of spiritual growth takes place.

Consider God's work in King David's life. The great penitential Psalm 51 sheds powerful light on the work of the Holy Spirit in spiritual growth. God's purpose for David's life was restored by the Spirit's working of repentance and faith. Believers today can learn to grow by the power and control of the same Spirit who

transformed David to be a man after God's own heart.

David was led by God to see his sin clearly and to renounce it as evil in God's sight. God helps His people to see the repulsiveness of sin, even as in the graphic portrayal by the Apostle Peter as "a dog returning to his own vomit" (II Peter 2:22). Along with David, believers are called to the stark reality of their sins and the somber consequences. But that can never be the end of God's plan. There is more to renewal and restoration.

David was also given the gift of faith to believe that God was merciful and that he could be forgiven and restored in the joy of his salvation. The mercy of God was so great that David's sin could be blotted out and his transgressions remembered no more.

The Holy Spirit's work of daily repentance and faith, then, is God's effective means to spiritual growth. It will lead to restored, fruitful and joyful life in Christ.

Moland serves Our Redeemer Lutheran, Kirkland, Wash.

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We recommend that the _____ publish a bi-weekly paper. (a) The paper shall have as its aim that building up of Christian personal and congregational life within the church, the promotion of Christian work within and without our fellowship, and the dissemination of current news which affects the religious community. (b) The paper shall be subsidized if necessary by the Board of Administration or by such means as it shall be able to arrange.

—Resolution approved in October 1962 at the organizational conference of the non-merging congregations of the Lutheran Free Church

The work of editing a church paper should never become an easy thing to do; just as preaching ought never be. I am only hoping that with the passage of time, I shall be so well acquainted with the physical aspects of the task that more time can be devoted to the spirit of this ministry, and I consider this also to be a ministry in Christ's kingdom.

—Pastor Raynard Huglen

There is a desperate need today for a Lutheran seminary that will give young men a firm ground in the Scriptures and prepare them for a congregation-centered ministry. A seminary is needed that will inspire real faith in God's word as God's Word and open the eyes of the students to the lost souls about us who do not know the Savior. We have been much encouraged as we have begun moving into these fields. Because God has given them to us, we fear not.

—Pastor John P. Strand

You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden under foot by men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

—Matthew 5:13-16

Quotes from the Feb. 12, 1963, issue of *The Lutheran Ambassador*, Volume 1, No. 1.

moving forward

Schools pursue accreditation

By Pastor Martin Horn

For almost 50 years the seminary and Bible school have been training servants for the congregations of the AFLC. We see the fruit of this work as pastors serve their congregations in a ministry of Word and sacrament. And not only pastors. In congregation after congregation, we find other servants: congregational chairmen, deacons, Sunday school teachers, and WMF leaders who have trained in our Bible school to serve in their local congregations.

But the schools are a ministry that hasn't stood still. While keeping the same core principles of the inerrancy of the Word, Lutheran doctrine, and the centrality of the congregation, there has always been a desire to expand the schools and develop its ministry. So buildings were built, teachers were hired, and classes were added. And now that same desire to grow continues as members of the Board of Trustees have taken another step in the development of the schools. Board members have sought for and gained the approval from the AFLC Annual Conference and the AFLC Schools Corporation to seek accreditation.

When the request was approved, board members began working with TRACS, or the Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools. TRACS is recognized by the United States Department of Education as a national accreditation agency for Christian postsecondary institutions. TRACS works with more than 50 seminaries and Bible colleges throughout the United States and with several institutions in foreign countries.

The entire accreditation process may take several years. We plan to make the initial application to TRACS at the end of January. Upon acceptance of the application by TRACS the schools will complete a comprehensive self-study in preparation for a visit from a TRACS evaluation team. If the evaluation team determines that we are in "substantial compliance" with TRACS standards, then we will be awarded candidate status. At that point the schools will have provisional accreditation. When candidate status is achieved, we will have up to five years to achieve "full compliance" with TRACS standards and be granted full accreditation. We are confident that full accreditation should be achieved well before the end of the five-year period.

Will accreditation change our schools? No. Accreditation will not require that our schools change their current program, nor compromise their core values. The Bible school will remain what it is: a two-year school of the Bible. There are no plans to make it into a junior college. The seminary will continue to train pastors for

"free and living" Lutheran congregations. TRACS does not dictate what the program and curriculum of a school will be. TRACS' sole purpose is to assist the institution to pursue its own program with greater academic excellence.

What will be the benefits of accreditation for our students? Some of the benefits are financial. Currently, students who are veterans have limited access to veteran's benefits. With accreditation, these students will have access to the full range of veteran's benefits.

Students who have incurred student loans from other institutions will no longer be required to begin repaying these loans while they are attending our schools. Through accreditation, the repayment of student loans will be deferred until after graduation.

One point should be made, however. Although accreditation will allow access to the federal student loan program, members of the Board of Trustees have elected not to implement this program. There are two reasons for this. First, the student loan program itself comes at a cost as we would have to increase our staff to implement the program. Second, one of our goals is to keep our programs as affordable as possible and help our students avoid incurring debt.

The alternative to a student loan program is a robust scholarship program. If you are interested in helping lower the cost of the seminary or Bible school education, consider supporting one of our scholarship programs, such as the S-400 program in the Bible school. In this program we are seeking 400 volunteers who will commit to giving \$250 per year. In this way we will raise \$100,000 per year to help students defray the cost of their education.

Other benefits are academic. Accreditation should make it easier for Bible school students to transfer credits to other institutions. This does not mean that other institutions will be required to accept credits from AFLBS, but it does mean that another school would be more likely to accept these credits if they fit within the scope of a program.

Accreditation should also allow seminarians who desire to go on for further education better access to graduate programs in other schools.

I am grateful for our deans, Dr. Francis Monseth and Pastor Joel Rolf, who have provided leadership in this work. I am convinced that accreditation will strengthen our schools and will enhance our goal to train servants for free and living congregations.

Horn, chairman of the AFLC Schools Board of Trustees, serves Emmanuel Lutheran Church of Aspelund, Wanamingo, Minn., and Hauge Lutheran, Kenyon, Minn.



Moved to pray

Building a foundation for future growth

By Pastor Kirk Flaa

The Prayer Intercessor Team was formed in June 2010 as members of the AFLC Schools Corporation affirmed plans to continue forward with the goals of VISION, which would expand our campus with the addition of a dormitory and a multi-purpose facility. As a member of the Schools Corporation, I vividly recall the excitement of this meeting and the sense of anticipation as we considered how God would work through this expansion on our campus in Plymouth. I am grateful for the recognition at that meeting that the most important need of this work was not to be the brick, mortar, blueprints, or even the dollars—as great as those needs would be. Rather, the most important work would be prayer, a work that would start long before anything else and would need to be carried on far beyond the completion of the project. It was correctly acknowledged that evening in Sioux Falls, S.D., that prayer could not be an afterthought or an add-on, but would be an absolute necessity for the success of this endeavor.

A prayer team was formed with the purpose of engaging congregations and individuals in the ministry of prayer for VISION and for our schools in general. It was a privilege to be selected to lead this work in partnership with Pastor Joel Rolf, AFLBS dean and campus liaison for the Intercessor Team. Part of our vision for the Intercessor Team was that every church in our AFLC would have an opportunity to participate. It may be true that not all churches or individuals can give financially to the work of VISION, but there is no such limitation regarding prayer. In fact, prayer is an “equal opportunity employer”—God would desire all of us to be men and women of prayer.

To meet this goal, we produced a four-minute video that summarizes the ministry of the Intercessor Team, and distributed a copy to each church in the AFLC for their use within the congregation. At the close of this presentation, churches and individuals were exhorted to consider becoming a prayer partner, and develop their prayer muscles through exercising prayer on behalf of our schools and the work of VISION. A daily prayer calendar was also crafted for the purpose of helping individuals remember to pray

daily for a different area of VISION’s work. In addition, those who become intercessors receive biweekly e-mail updates regarding specific prayer needs for our campus.

The work of the Intercessor Team is essentially to lay the foundation of the buildings yet to be constructed—we do so through prayer and the seeking of God’s continued gracious favor and guidance in all we do. This work is far from over, and in fact, it is still beginning. Are you an individual who would appreciate being a part of something far larger than you? Are you an individual who desires to be used of God to expand our ministry footprint and the impact of the gospel? Are you an individual who recognizes that no work done rightly to glorify our Lord can be undertaken apart from prayer? If these statements describe you, would you contact us at 763-544-9501 or on the web at www.aflbs.org, and indicate your interest in becoming part of our Intercessor Team? There is always room for more. The work God does through this team will have an impact not only now, but in the eternity to come.

It has been a distinct joy to serve our Lord through the work of the Intercessor Team. We acknowledge a complete dependence upon Him regarding timing, funding, and the fruitfulness of VISION. This dependence is best acknowledged through prayer. As King Jehoshaphat prayed, so too we pray, “...we are powerless before this great multitude who are coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are on You” (II Chronicles 20:12). In these days may we see the urgency of preaching the gospel and the glorious opportunity that VISION provides for expanding our sphere of influence in a world that so desperately needs the good news of Jesus Christ. May God move upon your heart the desire to either continue your partnership with the Intercessor Team, or move you to contact us that you might become an intercessor partner. Our eyes are set upon expanding God’s kingdom in us and beyond us. May the reality of the shortness of time and the length of eternity spur us on to pray all the more for His work amongst us.

Flaa, who serves Abiding Savior Free Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls, S.D., leads the AFLC Schools Intercessor Team.





mti: change ahead



By Pastor Joel Rolf



Since 2000, the Ministry Training Institute (MTI) of the Association Free Lutheran Bible School has been training students in cross cultural ministry, youth ministry and mission aviation ministry. Now, the program faces major changes.

The majority of the coursework for each ministry track has taken place on campus during the fall semester and January term. Spring semester has been devoted to a three-month internship and further mentoring in the chosen area of ministry. But the MTI program is currently at a crossroads. There are a number of factors that have compelled a revamping of the program:

- The cost involved in providing the educational training in the three MTI tracks that have drawn few or a fluctuating number of students;
- The retirement of a couple of the MTI instructors, although they are still very willing to continue in a limited way;
- The accreditation process in which the Bible school and seminary is currently involved. The sustainability of each of these MTI tracks and the program as a whole would have to be remedied to gain accreditation for the program;
- The hesitancy of many students to invest in a third year in ministry training for various reasons.

Members of the MTI Advisory Committee, faculty and School board have met to discuss the best solution to these issues. Essentially, the recommendation was to assimilate some of the core MTI courses as electives during the two-year AFLBS curriculum, and drop the full third-year option. This plan was adopted by members of the AFLC Schools Board of Trustees at their Dec. 7, 2012, meeting.

Some of these courses have been available to AFLBS students as electives during the past several years, especially in cross cultural studies. Students have been able to take *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* (three credits) and *Urban Cross Cultural Ministry I & II* (six credits) as evening electives. Two classes, *Introduction to Missions* and *Mission Perspectives* (each one credit), are required for all students. For the past several years we have offered *Mission Field Study* (three credits), which includes a mission trip over spring break. Beginning this spring semester, we are offering MTI's *Introduction to Cross Cultural Ministry* (four credits) as an elective at AFLBS, which includes a two-week mission trip to Ecuador during spring break. AFLBS students desiring further training in missions can take advantage of these classes in addition to required Bible and elective courses during their two years on campus.

Those sensing a call to or desiring further experience in world missions can apply with AFLC World Missions to be a short-term mission assistant, offering a viable option to the three-month internship required for MTI cross cultural students.

In the area of youth ministry, we are currently offering the two-credit courses *Introduction to Youth Ministry*, *Introduction to Family Ministry*, *Biblical Worldview*, and *Biblical Counseling* as

electives. Beginning next fall we will offer the MTI youth ministry core classes of *The Youth Ministry Methods of Jesus*, and *Growing a Healthy Youth Ministry* (each two credits).

Our goal is to identify students early on who sense a call to youth ministry. We want to begin mentoring them and offer them further training or an internship following their AFLBS graduation. Such students would work with AFLC Youth Ministries for the application, recommendation, placement, and coordination of an internship in an AFLC congregation after graduation. While the Bible school's role in formal training would conclude upon graduation, AFLC Youth Ministries would have a greater freedom, as it does already, to develop a more comprehensive/systematic approach for ongoing training and support of youth workers. This approach will enable more students to receive training in youth ministry during their two years at AFLBS. It is also a win for our congregations, which will have access to more students trained in youth ministry and ready to serve.

AFLBS will work with AFLC Home Missions and the Free Lutheran Association of Pilot Supporters (FLAPS) in the coordination of the *Introduction to Mission Aviation Ministry* course for those desiring to take it. Students desiring additional flight and aviation mechanical training will be referred to the Mission Aviation Training Academy (MATA) in Arlington, Wash. Students desiring an internship and mentorship in mission aviation would work with AFLC Home Missions and FLAPS for the application, recommendation, placement, and coordination of the details of the internship.

It is important to note that the changes to the MTI program will not affect other AFLBS ministries. The school will continue to offer the entire 20-plus credits of music ministry electives that students might earn during their two years in choirs, gospel teams, instrumental ensemble, etc.

We are very grateful for the great investment of time and training that many pastors, missionaries, youth workers, and others in congregations and the various mission fields have invested in training and mentoring our MTI students. We are also very grateful for the MTI directors God has provided through the years: Dr. Norvald Yri, Pastor Todd Schierkolk, Pastor Richard Gunderson and Pastor Connely Dyrud. Many MTI graduates today are serving in full- or part-time ministries and are mentoring others in God's kingdom work. To God be the glory.

It has been a great joy as we have worked through these proposed changes to have the full support of all of these AFLC departments and their boards. Together we see that it can strengthen the ministry of our schools and AFLC ministries in equipping students to serve in free and living congregations here and abroad. Continue praying with us as our dependence is on the Lord to accomplish His work.

Rolf, a member of Grace Free Lutheran, Maple Grove, Minn., is the dean of the Association Free Lutheran Bible School.

Beyond these walls

Alumni organize effort to reenergize student body

By Paul Hensrud

I have found myself recently surrounded by long-time friends and family reflecting on the past. Often our conversation is about times spent at AFLBS. The memories, friends and learning formed during those times will always be with me and treasured.

I have been involved in the steering committee for the AFLBS Alumni Association the past few months and wanted to share with you how this process began and why we feel it is important to revive this program. During a conversation I had with a few other AFLBS alumni, we shared the passion we have to see an alumni association continue for generations to come. I have been blessed to have had two brothers, two brothers-in-law, three sisters-in-law and my wife also go to AFLBS and have seen the impact it has had on all of them.

However, as I talked with family who are currently there and people at the school now it seems that student enrollment is lower than it has been in the past. Fewer people are taking advantage of the opportunities AFLBS affords, and connections with the school are being lost. It made us wonder if the value of attending Bible school has changed from when we attended or if many were just unaware of the actual value of going to AFLBS. If it is the latter, we talked about how to address this problem.

The beginning stages of the process of re-forming the alumni association came from these discussions and have been shaped by many other meetings. We felt that reenergizing AFLBS' student body should start first and foremost with the alumni, those who have experienced first-hand the importance of the school in their lives. It seems that over time the passion and excitement regarding our days at AFLBS begins to fade as we forget and go on with our day-to-day lives. Our hope is to reconnect our alumni with their



memories at AFLBS and rekindle old relationships and memories to help foster new excitement around the school.

The goals we had initially were simple: encourage prayer for AFLBS, existing students and faculty; provide information and generate excitement for prospective students to consider attending AFLBS through our local churches and entire community; financially support the school in order to provide reduced tuition and extra-curricular costs; and provide opportunities for alumni to reconnect. We felt the alumni would be the best facilitators of these goals.

Since these initial discussions, we have started a committee to begin the formation of the association and have been gathering information on how to move forward. We held an event at the beginning of the year while students moved in and recently hosted a coffee house prior to the campus Christmas concerts. We will continue to have events at the school and will be looking for more opportunities to connect with alumni through different avenues, as



well. Over the next few months we will be formalizing the plans and goals for the association and preparing to bring more information to you as this exciting process develops.

Along with gathering with alumni throughout the year I would challenge you to find ways to encourage AFLBS within your family, church and community. I am excited to see how God will work through you as you do His work faithfully. I was blessed to be part of a small congregation in North Dakota that recognized the eternal value of spending time studying God's Word at AFLBS. For many years they have been providing scholarships for students to assist them in the cost of attending Bible school. While I'm sure this has been a challenge for the church financially, God has continued to provide and the impact of the experience for each student has been invaluable.

A common theme I have heard from prospective AFLBS students is that they would rather go to a college right away so they are able to get into the work force and not incur the extra cost and

time of a two-year Bible school. I would encourage each of you to consider the value of this experience. As I write, there has been another school shooting. Yet we are told that we need to separate God from our schools. For many people the Word of God has been and continues to be ignored and only applied if it is convenient or politically correct. The need to develop leaders who are founded in the truth of God's Word is more important than ever. And the need for students to grow spiritually has eternal implications and priceless value.

My experience at AFLBS has been greatly rewarding and I hope that we are able to provide an alumni association that encourages its members to gather and find ways to support the school for generations to come. We are excited for this endeavor and how the Lord will provide through it.

Hensrud, a member of Bethel Free Lutheran, Grafton, N.D. is a 2002 graduate of AFLBS.



Considering the call

*Seminarian and his wife
look toward mission field*

By Brent Raan



In July 2012, my wife, Emily, and I were blessed to join a group from the AFLC on a mission trip to India. As missionary candidates for AFLC World Missions, we are praying about the possibility of serving the Lord in India after I graduate from seminary.

How did we get to this point? God started working in and through our lives years before Emily and I met.

Emily has been on a number of mission trips to Mexico, England and Tanzania. I have served in Mexico, China and Brazil. It was through these trips before we were married that God worked in our lives, instilling in each of us a heart for the people around the world. This desire for mission work flourished during our time at the AFLC Bible school as we were taught the Word of God and the pure gospel that alone rescues the souls of men.

The Lord brought us together in marriage in June 2011. It has been our prayer since then that the Lord would use our marriage and our lives for His glory, no matter what that means. Just a few months later I entered seminary, and Emily started her next year of college.

The first year of marriage and seminary was a blessing as we were privileged to have friends and family praying for and encouraging us through various means. It was during this year that we were confirmed to go to India. We continue to pray for God's leading in our lives as we consider the costs of serving in India full-time.

We traveled to India last summer with Pastor Del and Karen Palmer (Del is the director of AFLC World Missions), Scott Erickson (a member of the AFLC World Missions Committee) and Andrew Abel (videographer). After several plane rides, we found ourselves amongst the people of India. We were delighted by the smiles, the beauty of the people, and God's creation. Sure, the culture is completely different from anything that we have here in America, but the need that we have here is the same around the world. This need is the life, death, and resurrection of our blessed Savior Jesus Christ.

God was working in us and through us as we were in India for ten days. We were amazed to see the development of the ministry of AFLC-India, which includes 56 churches, a Christian school,

orphanage, and ministry to completely unreached villages. The ministry has national pastors reaching their own people, and souls are being saved.

The question I kept going back to was, "Why are we considering sending a missionary to such a developed mission field?" This question was answered when I sat face-to-face with Pastor D. Luther Sastry, president of AFLC-India. He stated that they are in need of theological training and they are open for a missionary to provide that help. Along with the theological training, they want an individual to help out in the Christian school and, especially, in teaching English to the students.

Recently, Emily graduated with a degree in 5-12 math teaching and, therefore, is well trained in education. Does this mean that we should pack our bags and go? That is the question that we are still praying about. As we continue to seek out this possibility, members of the World Missions Committee have granted us a short-term missionary status and support our plans to return to India this summer for a month.

The purpose of our next trip will be to continue to grow relationships with the nationals, experience more of the culture and language, and try to understand more of what day-to-day life might look like for us. We are very excited for this next trip. We are also excited to see what God is going to do in our lives.

Currently, I am in the midst of my second year of seminary. I have been challenged and blessed through classes and I have been asking myself how I might teach these truths in the Indian culture. I hope to focus more on the ministries in India and the Telugu language next school year.

Please pray for me and my wife as we return to India this summer shortly after the annual conference in June. This may be our last opportunity to visit India, should God continue to lead in that direction. If you would like to stay informed as we prepare for this trip, and as we are there, visit brentemilyraan.blogspot.com.

Raan and his wife, Emily, are AFLC World Missions candidates considering a call to India. Raan is currently in his second year at the Free Lutheran Seminary. Emily is a member of the faculty at Heritage Academy, Maple Grove, Minn. (Photos by Andrew Abel.)

On turning 50



The AFLC published the first issue of The Lutheran Ambassador on Feb. 12, 1963. Fifty years and 1037 issues later, our magazine has changed in many ways, but not its heart to serve the people of the local congregation.



It was decided that the first *Ambassador* would come out in February 1963, with two issues each month, except one month in the summer having only one, for a total of 23 in a year. [Ed. note: For many years, Pastor Huglen published 25 issues yearly.]

Arrangements were left to me. One possible printer would have me doing the layout, that is, cutting and pasting the proofcopy for each page. I didn't want to be involved with that, only content. The printer we chose, Bethany Fellowship of Minneapolis, would provide that service and took care of our work well for quite a few years.

~Pastor Raynard Huglen, editor, 1963-1990



It was privilege, for 18 years, to be part of the team that put together *The Lutheran Ambassador*—the voice of the congregations. I viewed it as getting the chance to enter thousands of living rooms and share the good news of God's Word with people. I'm thankful for the readers who let us share Jesus with them.

~ Pastor Craig Johnson, editor, 1993-2011



One of my fondest memories of past service with *The Lutheran Ambassador* has been of specific words of encouragement from many in our church family. People were reading it and responding, sometimes referring to a special issue or even to a quote from an editorial, and this strengthened me to press on. I have been grateful, too, for those with whom I was privileged to serve (Raynard Huglen, Solveig Hjermsstad, Ellis Bloomfield, and now Ruth Gunderson), as well as the great work of so many gifted and willing writers.

~ Pastor Robert Lee, editor, 1990-1993, 2011-present



Twenty-plus years of meeting *The Lutheran Ambassador* deadlines packs a lot of memories. I can still sense the urgent hope for friendly stop lights to catch the five o'clock mail truck and send the layout to the printer on time. Those every-other-week deadlines appeared quickly. Electronic transfer of files was yet to come; nevertheless, I did enjoy some of the technological changes during the '80s and '90s. However, the real treasure of those years was working beside men and women faithfully serving our Savior.

Each of the three editors I worked with were uniquely gifted. There was one clear constant amidst change: Christ was to be glorified always as we sought to connect our congregations and ministries to one another.

The input from people throughout our congregations was invaluable. I'll never forget the phone calls to Wilma Wissner, then editor of the *Ruthfred Lutheran Herald* in Bethel Park, Pa., who graciously shared her wisdom and encouragement with me. Pastor Orville Hiepler made it easy to want to find and tell the good news of what God was doing in California and around the world. Carolyn Dyrud was thrilled to successfully send a photo of a precious young resident of the Miriam Infant Home in Brazil via computer.

The list could go on filling pages of individuals willing to work together to inform, unite and inspire our readers. It was a privilege to be part of a team sharing God's Word while telling of His mercies and goodness throughout the AFLC.

~Solveig Hjermsstad, assistant to the editor, 1979-2001

A magazine for the local congregation

- First published on Feb. 12, 1963, with eight pages.
- Four printers have been used: Bethany Fellowship, Minneapolis; Printing Arts, Minneapolis; Roscoe Printers, Wanamingo, Minn.; and Nystrom Publishing, Maple Grove, Minn.
- Pastor Huglen served as sole editorial staff member for 16 years before hiring Solveig (Larson) Hjermsstad.
- All three editors (Huglen, Johnson and Lee) have served AFLC congregations while also working for the magazine.
- Throughout every changed weathered by the magazine and its staff, the primary purpose of the *The Lutheran Ambassador* remains the same as it was when the first lines of copy were set in 1963: "We are ambassadors for Christ." (II Corinthians 5:20).



FEBRUARY 27

WATERS IN THE WILDERNESS

“He who loves his life, loses it; and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life”
(John 12:25).

God’s mathematics is different from ours. Among men it is said: Save what you have received, and you will become rich; lose it, and you have nothing left. In God’s book of rules it goes like this: Love your life, and you will lose it; hate it in this world, and you will have it throughout eternity.

Life is not primarily to be loved, but to love. It is the subject which loves rather than the object which is loved. When life is loved above all else, it turns sour; when it is used to love that which God loves, it remains fresh and fragrant. Even in old age a loving life brings cheer; but a life which thinks it ought to be loved is rancid already.

But are we not supposed to love the life which God has given us? At least we are told to love others as ourselves; and this presupposes that we have both a right and a duty to love ourselves.

All of this is true. To love ourselves is to wish for ourselves what God wants for us. He wants us to be with Him in heaven forever. No one really loves himself unless he has made arrangement for heaven. Then he will want his brother to be there, too. He learns to love God above all else; and then he loves his neighbor in the same manner.

Dr. Iver Olson served as dean of the Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary from 1965 to 1971. He taught theology courses at the AFLC Schools until 1977.

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.

So great a salvation

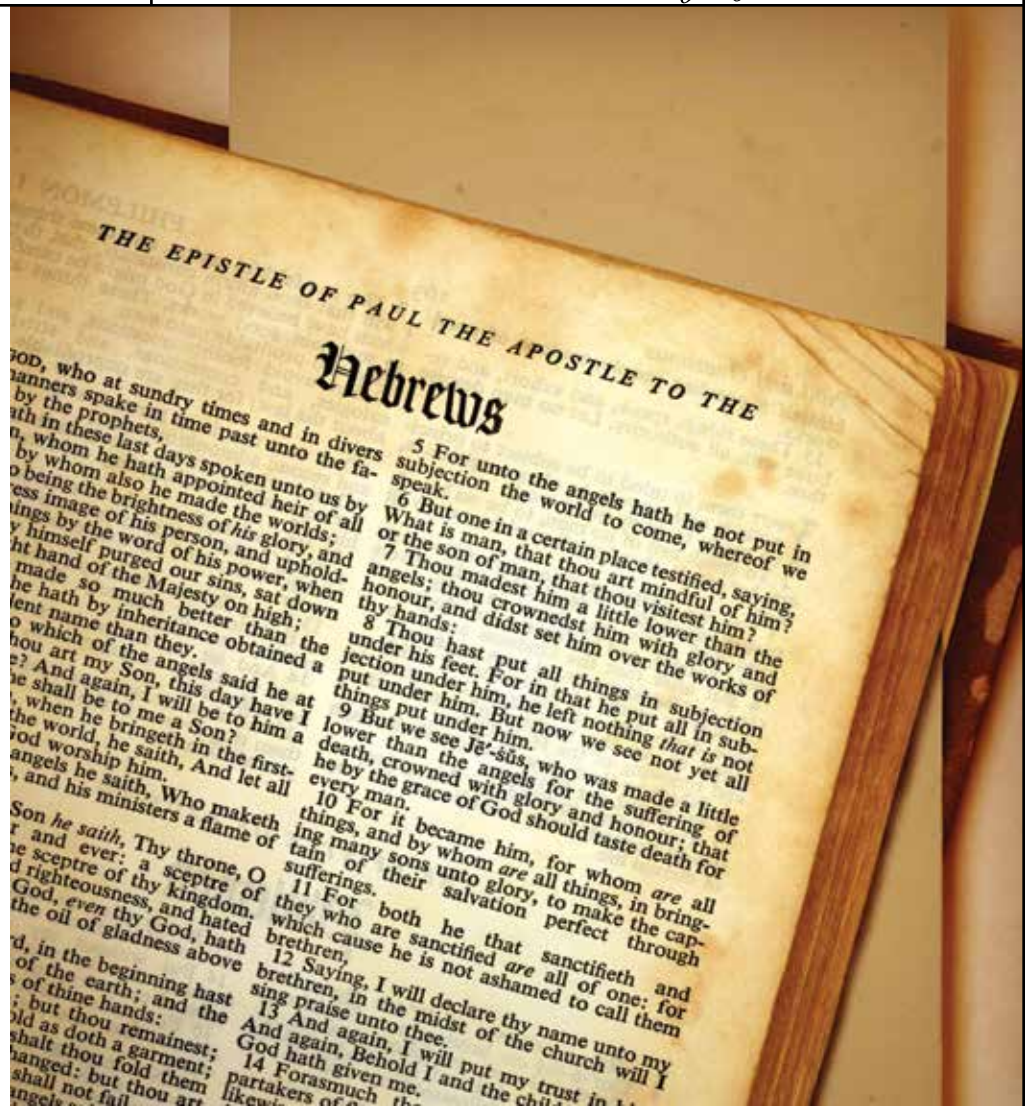
BY MARGIE LEE

Hebrews is a good book. Actually, Hebrews is a “better-than” book. My congregation recently finished a sermon series and an adult Sunday school class on the Book of Hebrews. And I am currently in the middle of a Kay Arthur Precepts Bible study on the Book of Hebrews. Other than having a few favorite verses from Hebrews, I haven’t studied the New Testament book very much in the past. But I think God is trying to change that.

Throughout the Book of Hebrews, I’ve found that one recurring theme is “Jesus is better.” Jesus is better than the angels, Moses, and the Aaronic priests. I’ve learned that through Jesus, we (as believers grafted into the faith) have a better covenant, a better sanctuary, and a better sacrifice.

One verse that stands out to me is Hebrews 2:3. Here the author is asking the Jewish Christians, “How will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard.” In this verse I see how this could describe our own culture, which has neglected “so great a salvation.” Non-believers mock that great salvation (which required the blood of Jesus as a sacrifice for our sins), relegating the story as a fairy tale or myth. It also seems like many believers take the sacrifice of Jesus for granted. This is where another Hebrews verse comes in. Hebrews 3:12-13 says, “Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called ‘Today’ so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.”

My family and I have been members of an AFLC congrega-



tion for around nine years. We are particularly thankful for the encouragement we receive through being a part of this body of believers. We are encouraged to stand firm on the inerrant Word of God. Hebrews 4:12 reminds us of the power of God’s Word: “For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” Just as we should not neglect so great a salvation, we should not neglect God’s Word, either.

A few years back we had a visiting pastor preach on Hebrews 11, the “Hall of Faith.” After looking at those martyrs and heroes of the faith, we were encouraged to carry on their legacy today. We are thankful for the missionaries, pastors, worship leaders, and friends with whom we gather at the annual conferences, spiritual life meetings, WMF rallies, family camps, retreats, and on Sunday mornings. I envision these fellow Christians, many of whom have gone before us, as part of that great cloud of witnesses in Hebrews 12:1. They serve as encouragement for us to run the race set before us, and a reminder to not neglect so great a salvation. May it be so.

Lee is a member of Prince of Peace Lutheran, Beulah, N.D.



Leon, Mexico, congregation dedicates new building

Group from AFLC World Missions attends service



Members of San Andrés Apóstol, a Central Mexican Lutheran Church congregation located in León, México, dedicated a new church building on Jan. 6. The congregation is served by Pastor Samuel Flores and his son, lay pastor Heber Flores.

The congregation began as a house church in 1977. Eventually, the congregation purchased a property where they met. The new sanctuary building was added to this property. The old sanctuary will be used as a fellowship hall and meeting rooms.

Attending the dedication were Pastor Milton Flores, who serves in Celaya, Mexico, Pastor Del Palmer, director of AFLC World Missions, Pastor Richard Gunderson, assistant to the president of the AFLC, and Vern Russum, Grafton, N.D., is a former World Missions Committee member and supporter of Mexico mission work.

Handle with care

BY PASTOR KEVIN OLSON

Dario's family and neighbors had gathered to study the Bible lesson that would be used for the upcoming Sunday service. The smell of banana bread wafted in from the kitchen where his wife, Gloria, was busy working. Their children, Adriana, Ruth and Sophia, were among the study group. The challenge Dario had faced in the past was trying to teach a lesson that he was still trying to understand. How could he teach the text in such a way that everyone could relate to and engage with it?

This time, however, he was approaching the study with a new perspective. The previous weekend, Dario had been a part of a workshop that taught leaders how to use the Ambassador Institute interactive oral style of training instead of the traditional lecture format. Dario was ready to try it for the first time.

The families trickled in. Dario began by reading from Mark 2:1-12 about the paralytic who was brought to Jesus by his friends. Next, Dario chose six people to act out the story. One represented the paralytic, four were the friends who carried him, and the last was Jesus. It was evident by the laughter that everyone enjoyed the lesson. The third step was to review the story together to make sure that they had told the story correctly.

As they began to study and apply the text, it was obvious that it spoke to different people in different ways. Maria emphasized how easy it is to be like the Pharisees who questioned why Jesus would say, "Your sins are forgiven." Paulo mentioned that the friends demonstrated their faith by going to such extremes to see Jesus. Dario's brother-in-law talked about the importance of carrying people when they are crippled. As a former alcoholic, he had been helped by people who had carried him through those times. It was evident that the Lord spoke to them by their body language—a trembling voice, a downward glance, passionate



A Bible study group meets in the home of Dario and Gloria in Cuenca, Ecuador.

words and damp eyes.

The new style of studying God's Word had been received well because everyone had participated and it had spoken to their hearts. The importance of this study was not just a process of gaining wisdom or knowledge in God's Word, although that would have been a worthy goal. Dario's family and neighbors were growing in God's Word. Dario was given an opportunity to pass on the faith of Jesus as a privilege and a treasure to be handled carefully.

Matthew 13:34-35 says, "Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable. So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet: 'I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world.'"

Olson, a member of Emmaus Lutheran, is the director of the Ambassador Institute, a division of AFLC World Missions.



Campus Life

TOP: Jerrell Hein (right), a senior seminarian, critique's a fellow student's sermon during a class on Expository Preaching.

LEFT: Pastor Jerry Moan teaches a class on Bible Orientation/John, which is part of the fall semester schedule for junior AFLBS students.

ABOVE: A group of Bible school students sing happy birthday to a fellow student during lunch. (Photo by Sam Nelson)

learning to just be

BY PASTOR WALT BEAMAN



Someone asked me once if I noticed any differences between being a pastor and being a chaplain. I thought about this question recently and realized that having spent nearly 50 years in ministry either as a missionary, youth worker, ordained pastor, or a certified chaplain in a nursing home it is not an easy question to answer.

Certainly in both areas one proclaims Christ and encourages others in their walk of faith. Apart from the obvious absence of doctrinal issues and certain church affiliations, there are some areas that are very different.

Part of this difference comes from the fact that in working with elderly people there is much more one-on-one ministry. We meet individuals where they are, with preference to their agendas. Often times our conversations focus on areas other than spiritual topics, with little spiritual guidance on my part. It is very different from my years in other ministries.

Most chaplains could adapt to being a pastor, but not all pastors could work in chaplaincy. You often have to be willing to become all things to all men, and sometimes your personal views and values are far different from the one to whom you are ministering. At times I've left a conversation wondering if I've accomplished anything at all, spiritually or physically.

In times like these I am reminded for a gem of insight that was shared with me by a friend who has spent much more time in

the chaplaincy ministry than I: "Wait. There are times when you are called upon not to say or do anything, rather, just be." That statement has rich and deep insight for me.

Whether it means taking a walk with someone who is confused, sitting at a table sharing time and space but little more, filling a need to be near someone, a caring touch or easing the lonely hours, just be. I was once asked to come into a room and straighten a rug and move a chair. Later, the same person called me again and we shared in depth on spiritual matters. Without having been willing to "just be," the door may never have opened for spiritual ministry.

Are pastors and chaplains the same? Yes and no. A chaplain must be able to adapt and reach across all boundaries of faith—or lack of it—meet personal needs, and learn how to just be when, where, and however is needed. Institutional chaplaincy demands that I wear a much different hat from the one I wore for parish ministry. I am thrilled and privileged to be allowed to change hats in my advancing years and joyfully serve my Master.

I am grateful for the opportunity to walk as a chaplain in this area of service. I trust that whatever the moment calls for, physical or spiritual, my time, attention, and love will be used. I pray that I might always have joy in serving Jesus.

Beaman serves at Valley Memorial Homes, Grand Forks, N.D.

AFLC memorials: December

AFLBS

Melvin Finstrom (2)
Iris Brustad
Dave VanHoveln
Luella Wignes
Jim Papillon
Alfie Whitaker
Doris Nesland
Ken Myhre
Ruth Claus

AFLTS

Gaylord Hauge
Julia Barstad
Merlen Perseke
Lloyd Thorsgard
Melvin Finstrom

Evangelism

Melvin Finstrom

FLAPS

Melvin Finstrom
Robert A. Olson

Home Missions

Clayton Syvertson
Louise Warwick
Melvin Finstrom
Rudy and Julia Barstad
Lois Kurue

Parish Education

Rachel Norstad

World Missions

Horst Witt
Dick Kraning
Melvin Finstrom
Herb Enns
Lloyd Thorsgard

... in honor of

AFLBS

Beverly Enderlein

St. Paul's School-India

AFLC headquarters staff

AFLC conference sites, themes

The AFLC Annual Conference dates, themes and host cities have been announced for the next three years.

The 2013 conference is scheduled for June 11-14 at the Association Retreat Center, located near Osceola, Wis. The conference theme, taken from Jeremiah 31:17, is "There is Hope for Your Future."

The 2014 conference is scheduled for June 10-13 at Valley City, N.D. The conference theme, taken from Nehemiah 2:18, is "Let Us Rise Up and build."

The 2015 conference is scheduled for June 16-19 at Warm Beach, Wash. The conference theme, taken from Ezekiel 33:7, is "A Watchman."

Pastor Norr honored by congregation

Pastor Donald Norr, who serves Good Shepherd Lutheran Free Church, Virginia, Minn., was honored by his congregation on Oct. 14, 2012, with a special celebration.

The entire congregation, decked out in matching T-shirts with "I ♥ Pastor Norr," greeted him as he arrived for the Sunday service. The surprise event was meant to thank Norr for his 24 years of service to the congregation and community, as well as to mark his 80th birthday.

"It was all a surprise to me," said Norr, who was quoted in a story in the *Mesabi Daily News*.

Pastoral work is Norr's second career, having worked for 32 years in construction sales. His community work includes volunteer chaplain work at the Virginia Regional Medical Center, working with the Fifth Step program, outreach services at the Columbia Apartments Washington Manor and Edgewood Vista, as well as being on the 8:30 a.m. Sunday service radio hour on 1340 AM.

People and Places

Word has been received of the death last summer of **Pastor Robert Moylan**, 79, Spokane, Wash. In addition to several pastorates, he served as academic dean of the Lutheran Bible Institute of Seattle (now Trinity Lutheran College), and he was a charter member of Lord of Life Lutheran Church (AFLC), Mt. Vernon, Wash. Blessed be his memory.

A funeral service for **Pastor John Ottesen**, 86, was held Dec. 29, 2012, at Cross and Crown Lutheran Church, Montebello, Calif. Ottesen served as a missionary in East Pakistan/Bangladesh and Ecuador, as well as on the staff of the United States Center for World Missions, Pasadena, Calif. Among his survivors are his wife, Lois; six daughters, Margaret (Bob) Lee, Naknek, Alaska; Ruth (Arlin) Olson, Strongfield, Sask.; Grace (Jeffrey) Stoope, Cascade, Mont.; Julie (Paul) Frantsen, Waverly, Iowa; Kathie (Jeff) Dahl, Arden Hills, Minn.; and Amy (Wesley) Lennertz, Yuba City, Calif.; and one son, John (Sarah) Ottesen, Rosemead, Calif. Blessed be his memory.

Pastor Brad Hoefs, who serves Community of Grace Lutheran Church, Elkhorn, Neb., is the author of a new book released in January titled *Fresh Hope: Living Well in Spite of a Mental Health Diagnosis*. The book is available through Amazon and Christian book stores.

Messiah Lutheran Church, Champaign, Ill., officially closed on December 31. Organized in 2005, the congregation was mostly recently served by Pastor Paul Hanson, who retired.

Dr. John Eidsmoe, Pike Road, Ala., was a guest professor in December at the Handong International Law School in South Korea. His three-volume *Historical and Theological Foundations of Law* was recently published by Tolle Lege Press.

Brandt book published in e-version

The book *Sent and Received: This Mourning's Emails, Packaged with Prayer* by Pastor Michael Brandt has been republished by WestBow Press and is available from several sources, including Barnes and Noble, Amazon, and Kindle (an e-book edition). The book contains a compilation of e-mails sent to family and friends by Brandt during the months when his late wife, Jeannie, was battling cancer. All proceeds from the sale of this book goes to the Legacy of Faith Foundation, which supports various Christian ministries.

AFLC BENEVOLENCES Jan. 1-Dec. 31, 2012

FUND	REC'D IN DECEMBER	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$54,539	\$339,711	\$341,210
Evangelism	14,398	134,338	132,343
Youth Ministries	9,613	101,007	123,847
Parish Education	16,764	122,918	132,303
Seminary	48,679	252,119	235,065
Bible School	74,200	449,251	453,205
Home Missions	82,732	494,647	481,204
World Missions	52,585	424,521	428,532
Personal Support	74,544	508,622	442,259
TOTALS	\$428,053	\$2,827,134	\$2,769,968

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

On turning 50

Happy birthday, old friend! It's hard to believe that you are already 50 years old, but your family of readers is grateful for milestones like this one, as they provide us with an opportunity to consider how much you have meant to us over the years.

You have chronicled the growth of our AFLC, from a cluster of 50 or so congregations to a fellowship of almost 300. Church anniversaries have been celebrated, reminding us that we have old roots,



Pastor Robert Lee

and the story of newly established congregations has been recorded. A worldwide mission outreach has also been introduced to us in your pages, expanding from work on the Mexican border

and on the Brazilian frontier, and eventually spreading to Asia and Africa.

We were amazed at the ongoing account of an army of volunteers attempting to produce a full Sunday school curriculum, and the results continue to improve, blessing our congregations and others. The ministry of evangelists was announced, and today we learn from various issues of efforts to encourage each congregation to be an evangelistic force. The Luther League Federation became Free Lutheran Youth (FLY), and it is been so encouraging to read the reports and see the photos of the biennial Estes Park events.

You told us that our newly organized church body would need a seminary for the training of pastors, which became reality in less than two years and is already planning to celebrate its 50th birthday next year. It was exciting to see photos of the

chapel building in Plymouth, Minn., which would also become the national headquarters. Two years later you reported the resolution of the annual conference calling for a Bible school to be established, and who would have believed that this could have happened so quickly. The many photos of the campus expansion over the years have made the newer buildings seem familiar to us even if we have never visited them, and allowed us to see how the Lord has provided for our growing student body.

The inspirational and instructional articles have allowed us to become acquainted with many, many members of our church family, and they have genuinely ministered to us through your pages. Our faith has been strengthened. You have informed us of ordinations, pastoral moves, and the deaths of some who labored among us, providing us with a wonderful prayer guide. Scripture tells us to know our leaders (1 Thessalonians 5:12), and the very first issue introduced Rev. John Strand, our first president, to us.

The annual conferences are meant to be "spiritual powerhouses," and you have played an irreplaceable role in announcing and reporting them, as well as informing our fellowship of the elections and the resolutions approved. You have educated us about what it means to be free and living Lutheran congregations, both preserving and propagating our unique heritage.

Thank you, old friend. We look forward to your future service for our Lord and our AFLC.

Where is God?

Flags hang at half mast and our country is in mourning as this editorial is writ-

ten. Surely none of our readers missed the tragic account of the Connecticut school massacre on Dec. 14. We look at our own children and grandchildren, and it is hard not to shudder. Could something like this happen in our communities? How could such a monstrous tragedy occur? Are there any answers?

Such a disaster is a powerful reminder of the reality of evil in the world. Make no mistake, this catastrophe cannot be explained apart from the wickedness that

*Thank you, old friend.
We look forward to
your future service for
our Lord and our AFLC.*

motivated it. All attempts to account for it will ultimately fail unless this is faced.

Where is God?

We have no glib answers that will easily calm our fears and heal broken hearts. Yet we can still declare that He is real, and He is in our midst. He brings comfort to the sorrowing, through His Word and by means of His people. When there are no answers that completely satisfy, we learn in new and powerful ways that He Himself is the answer. In this we rest.

So we pray with confidence, not for the answers, but for those who suffer unimaginable grief and pain, that God would be their ever present help in time of trouble and that many would cast their cares on Him.

building the base

The lovely unlovely marigold

BY CHRIS KUMPULA

Gardening is a healthy hobby for the soul. It is the perfect place to experience God's variety and enjoy the tranquility of fragile, beautiful flowers. Who can resist gazing at the brilliant color and inhaling the effervescence of roses, carnations, gladiolas, geraniums, daffodils, tulips, and a hundred others? It is easy to love such beauty. But for the avid gardener, one grows a special patience to enjoy life's smaller, fouler flowers.

It began with a simple parting gift from my old Sunday school teacher: a small yellow African marigold in a foam coffee cup. It was insignificant on its own, but precious coming from a godly woman just on the cusp of her battle with cancer. I certainly did not like my little flower for its bitter odor. Still, I cared for that pathetic marigold as I would a child. It was diligently watched until it grew into a flourishing shrub as tall as I was then. "How so tall?" my astonished teacher asked when she saw the picture later. I still could not say. Perhaps it was good fertilizer. Maybe it was a few tears from a child missing his teacher.

I still love my lovely unlovely African marigolds. Do you know that they serve a practical purpose? They repel insects and predators. Without them, the flowers we hold in higher esteem for their loveliness and beauty would suffer. The best gardener uses the practical for the beautiful.

I think Jesus loves marigolds, too. In Matthew 25, Jesus talks about the inheritance of the Kingdom of God belonging to those

who care for others in a Christ-like manner. Jesus says in verse 40, "Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me." Jesus weeps for the least, the pathetic, and the unlovely. We must love as Jesus loved.

As we reflect on building the body of Christ, it is easy for us to miss the unlovely people. We judge by appearance or impression. We like to think that the best ministries are made by putting the flashiest people together all at once. God gardens differently. He brings glory through the obscure and destitute. He wants us to care for the marigolds in His garden. Many gardeners want to choose only the brilliant, beautiful, and healthy plants. But the best gardeners find joy in making the unlovely part of a beautiful landscape.

In building our ministries, we should recognize God's design for variety in the body of Christ. I Corinthians 12 reminds us to care for one another, to rejoice with one another, and to suffer with one another. It is a tough calling when it involves caring, rejoicing, and suffering with the unlovely. Do not miss people you can draw into your ministry just because they are not your favorite flower. God can still use them in important ways. Every garden needs its lovely unlovely marigolds.

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