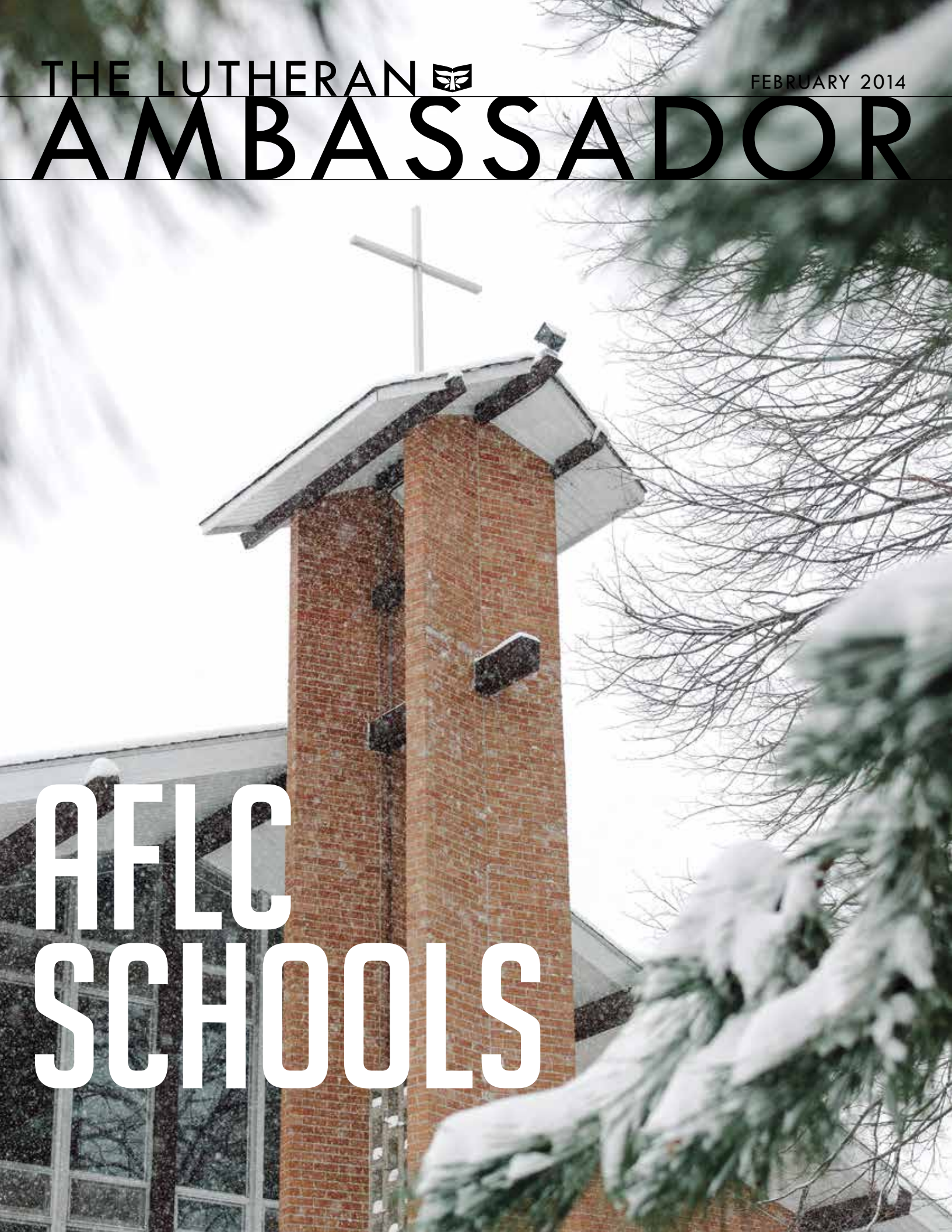


THE LUTHERAN 

FEBRUARY 2014

AMBASSADOR



AFLC SCHOOLS

Falling in the dark

BY ANDREW KNEELAND

When falling down a mountain face-first, it helps to have the path lit. A few weeks ago my soon-to-be brothers-in-law dragged me up a mountain, strapped a board to my feet, and pushed. It was my first time snowboarding, and I came back not only broken and bruised, but exhilarated and itching for more.

But as I tumbled down that mountain, having the time of my life, I couldn't help but recognize the life parallels.

We ventured up to Stevens Pass in the evening hours because I was told there's nothing quite like racing down a mountain under the stars. (And it's much cheaper.) But while the runs were well-lit with dozens of flood lights, there was piercing darkness if you ventured too far left or right. That was one of the first things I was told: "Stay where there's light and you'll be safe."

There can be scary and dangerous things hidden in the dark. Steep drop-offs, pesky moguls, and buried trees are all obstacles best avoided. This world is dark, too, and plenty of trials and temptations wait wherever the Light isn't shining. How do we go through life as Christians with so much darkness and danger out there? Cling to Jesus.

"Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life'" (John 8:12, ESV).

Jesus spoke these words during the Feast of Tabernacles, which was a week-long festival in the Jewish calendar that reminded everyone of God's goodness and provision during the



journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. The week was jam-packed with symbolic events and ceremonies, one of which Jesus might have used when He claimed to be the light of the world.

On the first night of the feast, four giant lampstands were built in the temple court. Each of the 75-foot tall candelabras had four massive bowls of oil, which were all lit on fire, flooding much of the city of Jerusalem with light. Just as these mammoth candles were being lit—as listeners prepared for awesome, city-wide illumination—Jesus claimed to be the light of not only the city of Jerusalem, but of the

whole world.

But for as offensive and assumptive as Jesus' statement was, it's a perfect description of who He is and what He does. He's a light, guiding His flock and drawing the lost to Himself.

Just as there was no light or life before creation, there would be no light or life in the world if it weren't for Jesus. We have no hope of rescuing ourselves from this darkness. But just as God created life and light from nothing in creation, so also the Holy Spirit creates light and life from nothing in each of us.

Night-time snowboarding lived up to the hype. But praise God for the lights giving me a way down. And praise God for the Light of the World, providing our way to salvation.

Kneeland, a 2013 graduate of AFLBS, attends Atonement Free Lutheran, Arlington, Wash.

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The real fitness of the preacher and spiritual guide does not depend on a purely human intellectual development and the acumen that comes as a result of that, but on the personal experience of the saving power of the Gospel and the thorough knowledge of God's revelation and the need of the human heart.

—Georg Sverdrup

The Lord of the Church, since Paul's generation, has raised up men of the Word who are willing to study and teach the Word as it is written for the next generation. This has been and still is God's method for passing on Scriptural truth from generation to generation. The faculty and staff of the Theological Seminary of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations are, under God, committed to stand in this time-proven tradition. Our aim and purpose is to give Christian teaching and training in uncompromising loyalty to God's inerrant Word.

—Amos Dyrud, Seminary Dean, Report to the 1972 Annual Conference

We live in a day when we must more earnestly than ever contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. The Word of God will need to be set forth clearly while about us reigns much theological confusion. It is in His will that God shall give us faithful servants for the days ahead, for we realize that the heart of any kingdom work lies in such an institution as shall train our youth to be good pastors, teachers, and church leaders.

—Report of the Organizational Conference of the AFLC,
October 25-28, 1962

If the Association of Free Congregations is to live and grow, if our congregations are to be free and living, pastors must be trained in the right kind of seminary. The seminary can in a sense be called the heart of our work. Its importance and place can never be over-emphasized.

—John Strand, Seminary Dean,
Report to the 1966 Annual Conference



BY PASTOR ROBERT RIETH

Even though I had graduated from college and began teaching secondary school, I knew that God was calling me into the ministry. Finding a seminary that was true to the Word of God and evangelical in emphasis was most important to me. When the fledgling Association of Free Lutheran Congregations planned to open a seminary, I was very encouraged. I was honored to be accepted as part of the original student body.

It was a deep and personal call to ministry that brought me to the point of looking for a seminary where I could grow as a Christian and develop as a servant of Christ. After several years of prayer, planning, and preparation, I looked forward with anticipation to learning from godly men who knew the Lord and believed fully in the Word.

My most enduring memory is how we began each day. We entered the classroom every morning and knelt before our chairs for a lengthy time of deep prayer and supplication. These times spent reading the Scripture and kneeling before the Lord centered our hearts and minds on the One

who is the center of all things.

I am thankful for the godly leaders in the seminary and remember them for these qualities.

Pastor John Strand was a man gifted and called to be the first leader of the AFLC. I served under him as a lay pastor in Tioga, N.D., the year before the seminary opened. He was a man strong in faith and gifted in making good decisions as he led the schools, missions, and work of the AFLC as a whole in those early years.

Pastor Fritjof Monseth was a man with a deep and abiding faith who epitomized the man with a pastor's heart.

Dr. Iver Olson was a man grounded in the Lutheran teachings and practices, with so much wisdom to share with us.

Dr. Uuras Saarnivaara was a true student of the Word. He spoke 11 languages and wrote in 13. He had a concern for our families and he and his wife invited us as couples into their home. They wanted to be sure we were prepared for life in the parsonage.

Pastor Clair Jennings was the man with unending energy. I remember him for his favorite expression, "I would sooner burn

CAPTION

TOP: The first class of the AFLC Seminary (from left) were Francis Monseth, James Jacobson, Edwin Kjos, Reuben Evenson, David Molstre, Richard Gunderson, Robert Rieth, Howard Kjos, and Raymond Peterson. Standing are Pastor John Strand, Dr. Uuras Saarnivaara, and Pastor Clair Jennings.

out than rust out." He had the gift of evangelism.

Last, I remember that first student body—all men who were born again and had a sense of call to be ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I appreciated our lively discussions, not always in full agreement, but with an underlying love for the Lord and respect for each other.

I am thankful that I was able to be a part of that inaugural student body of the AFLC seminary.

Rieth, Bothell, Wash., is the president and founder of Media Fellowship International.

SEMINARY AT FIFTY

BY PASTOR RICHARD GUNDERSON

What is today named the Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary began in September 1964. No bells. No whistles. No kick-off gala events.

As a matter of fact, there were no desks, no blackboards, not even a classroom. At the beginning of the first class, teacher and students went hunting in the chapel building for some folding tables and a portable blackboard. Then, the first class was held in what was then the overflow area on the south side of the chapel. We pulled the accordion curtains shut and then had a classroom.

Three pastors took up the mantle of seminary instructors: Pastor John Strand, Pastor Clair Jennings and Dr. Uuras Saarnivaara.

Ten men did show up for that first day. They were from various places and backgrounds, which meant that they reflected even in those early years the diverse representation of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations. One student arrived from the West Coast. Others came from the Iron Range of Minnesota, and some from North Dakota and Iowa.

The diversity was reflected in that most of the students were from church bodies other than the former Lutheran Free Church congregations. Francis Monseth, Bob Rieth, Ed Kjos and his brother, Howard, were from the Lutheran Free Church. David Molstre, Reuben Evenson, Jim Jacobson, and Bud Peterson were from the American Lutheran Church. Arlie Kuhl was from the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. I came from the old Augustana Synod, which had merged with other synods to form the Lutheran Church in America.

Let me be clear, the AFLC and the seminary as a part of this new Lutheran fellowship was, in its formative years, definitely



the extension of the former Lutheran Free Church and its commitment as expressed in the Fundamental Principles.

Before the search for tables and tools that first day, we were led in devotions and were on our knees in prayer seeking God right from the beginning. We continued to begin each day on our knees. And as we prayed, God led.

I cannot remember that the seminary had a name when we began, and my certificate of graduation only says, "The Theological Faculty of the Seminary of Free Lutheran Congregations." Like the title of the seminary, many things have changed

over the years, but one thing has not changed. The seminarians continue to daily begin the day in the reading of the Word of God and on their knees in prayer before the Lord. That is as good a place to start as any.

Fifty years later, the promise that the seminary was founded on remains the same: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on our own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight" (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Gunderson, Cambridge, Minn., is the assistant to the president of the AFLC.

THOUGHTS FROM TWO CURRENT STUDENTS



WE'RE GRATEFUL

BY NATHAN OLSON

My first experience with our AFLC seminary came when I watched my father go through his seminary years. As a young boy, I remember realizing by the way that my dad talked about his classes that the Word of God and Jesus Christ must have been pretty important focuses. Now, 20 years later, though the classroom is bigger and professors have come and gone, that same emphasis remains.

I am now in my last year of seminary, and I have gotten to witness firsthand the same things that my father displayed for me when I was a child. I have gotten a chance to see the Word of God up-

held and salvation through Jesus Christ proclaimed. Even though the faces, the names, and the community around the seminary have changed over the years, God in His faithfulness continues to provide for us.

One way that I have continued to see this has been in God's calling of various men to join me in my time during seminary. In my senior seminary class, I am joined by 11 other men in the daily study of God's Word and fellowship: Daniel Antal, Rob Edwards, Daniel Hurner, Jarrod Hylden, David Lusk, Brandon Marschner, Brad Novacek, Brent Raan, Brian Ricke, Ryan Tonneson, and George Winston. The opportunity to see the

various gifts, callings, and personalities that God has brought to our seminary has been a huge blessing. He is doing a work in our midst and is raising up a new generation of men to be laborers in His kingdom.

In regards to our full-time faculty, God in His grace has also continued to raise up faithful men to lead and teach us as we study. As interim dean, Pastor Robert Lee has carried us well through the transitions of the last year, reminding us of the practical nature of what we are learning. Pastor Brent Olson has been one who has continually directed our eyes forward to see Jesus throughout our Old Testament classes. Pastor Phil



BY ALEX AMIOT

The seminary is a reminder to me of the faithful and persistent work of the Lord in my life. For a number of years before entering seminary, I discarded my plans of training for ministry. I was no longer the confident youth who was sure of his convictions and excited to participate in all forms of ministry. I stood on tiny faith and I was afraid to make a move.

One spring day I was visiting with a good friend who happens to also be a seminarian. He suggested that I was focusing on the size of my faith rather than on Jesus. As this sunk in and I began visiting with my wife, I found my faith no longer resting in its size, but only in Jesus. With my own confidence no longer an issue and only the strength of Jesus to consider, we began the application process.

I was nervous driving onto campus for my first day of seminary. My hands were shaking and a not-so-comforting thought reminded me that I am inadequate for service in ministry and I must be out of my mind to move my family to Minneapolis. A room full of fellow seminarians greeted me and I began to realize that Jesus is the adequate one who will equip and sustain each of us despite our inadequacies.

The common refrain that the Lord equips those He calls has been an encouragement to me. I vacillate between overconfidence and a simple trust in Jesus, but I have found God's Word to be stable and unmoving.

I am grateful for the Lord bringing me here, and I am grateful for the five semesters to come. There is a unity among my classmates that makes every interaction enjoyable. We appreciate our professors' knowledge of God's Word and their interest in our welfare. Every class period and hour of homework has taught me more about the Scriptures and the wonderful work of Jesus that is greater than all my sin.

As a student in my first year of seminary, I am so thankful for the time of preparation and training that remains ahead of me. I suppose there have been quite a number of first-year seminarians at AFLTS in the last 50 years. I am blessed to be one of them.

BIOS

Olson, a senior at AFLTS, is a member of Faith Lutheran, Shakopee. He graduated from AFLBS in 2009.

Amiot, a junior at AFLTS, is a member of St. Paul's Lutheran, Fargo, N.D. He graduated from AFLBS in 2008.

Haugen has faithfully explicated the New Testament Scriptures to us, teaching us correct hermeneutics and the distinction between the law and the gospel. Pastor Jerry Moan has continually urged us to remain true to sound doctrine and to live godly lives in this present age.

Therefore, as I come to the end of my time in seminary, I look back with thankfulness and I look forward with thankfulness. I know that the same Lord who has been doing a good work will remain faithful to continue that work. I know that as God's Word goes forth, it will continue to transform lives just as it has done thus far. Praise the Lord for His work.



..... IN THE

BEGINNING



PASTOR RAYNARD HUGLEN

It was an early goal of the AFLC congregations that we should have a school of our own for training pastors for the churches, and that was realized in September 1964.

Fargo, N.D., and Minneapolis were the leading choices for the headquarters of the Association. In the end, Minneapolis was chosen. A Seminary Committee was in charge of the arrangements for a seminary until a Board of Trustees was formed. That committee's members looked into the possibility of renting space at Northwestern College, which was then located in downtown Minneapolis. The rent was no doubt reasonable, but was felt to be too high for our small group. Fortunately, the purchase of the Hauge Federation property on the shores of Medicine Lake in Plymouth, Minn., provided the facilities we needed.

Pastor John Strand, our president, was willing to be the acting dean, and Dr. Uuras Saarnivaara, a noted scholar and author from Finland, agreed to take on the major

teaching load. Pastor Clair Jennings would also teach.

It was a great encouragement that we could begin the school with ten students. One outside assertion spoken of about the Association from the beginning was that we would have few young people willing to be with us. But the formation of a Luther League Federation, as it was called, and the interest of so many men applying for entrance to our own seminary, challenged that claim. That was even more so in 1966 when the Bible school was founded.

On Sept. 18-20, 1964, we were further inspired by having several hundred people attend a weekend of festivities inaugurating the beginning of what became known as the Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary. There was a spirit of optimism present. We were moving forward and there was no turning back.

Huglen, first editor of The Lutheran Ambassador, is from Newfolden, Minn.



SEMINARY WIVES

BY GWEN HAUGEN

The seminary student and faculty wives have been meeting together since the seminary began in 1964. The purpose of these meetings has been to encourage fellowship with each other as well as to encourage each of us as we support our husbands in their training and ministries. Mildred (Mrs. John) Strand, Myrtle (Mrs. Iver) Olson, and Evelyn (Mrs. Arnold) Stone were among the faculty wife leaders in the early years. Later, Ovidie (Mrs. Amos) Dyrud was advisor, followed by Ellen (Mrs. Francis) Monseth.

The seminary and faculty wives select a different theme verse each year, such as I Peter 3:15 in 1998: “But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.” A highlight activity that we have worked to offer each year is a panel discussion. We invite local pastors’ wives to come in and join faculty wives in discussing life in the parish and to answer questions the students wives may have.

Many aspects of the seminary wives group have changed over the years. For many years the group met monthly. Devotions were shared, and we had a special speaker. A short business meeting was held and, of course, there were refreshments. That schedule changed several years ago when some of the wives expressed a desire to meet more than once a month. It was decided that there would be two meetings each month: one would be a study evening (a Bible study or a speaker focusing on various aspects of life as a pastor’s wife) and one would be focused on fellowship time (games, crafts, meeting for coffee at Caribou, etc.). Refreshments now include “healthy” treats as well as sweets.

There have been major changes in the way we communicate. Notices used to be sent through the mail. When necessary, phone calls were made. Our prayer chain was more formal with written rules, a prayer chain list (the order calls were to be made), and then the phone calls made according to those rules when requests came. Now communications are primarily by email, Facebook, and text.

What has not changed is the diversity of the women in gifts, talents, and personal ministry focus. There is still a wide range of spiritual gifts. Some are gifted as speakers, some as writers, and some as encouragers. Some have gifts of hospitality or creativity. Some have gifts of organization.

The women still have a strong desire to grow in the Word. They still express a strong desire to encourage each other in encouraging our husbands, in being godly mothers, and in creating homes that will be places of sanctuary and refreshment for our husbands and families. And there is still a desire to see what God would have each one do in our families and in our churches. These women recognize that each of us has been created by God for His own purpose, and that we each have a different role to fill, also created by Him.

CAPTIONS

TOP TO BOTTOM: Mildred Strand, Ovidie Dyrud and Myrtle Olson were three faculty wives involved in the early years of the seminary wives.

Haugen is the wife of Pastor Peter Haugen, full-time faculty member at the AFLC Schools.

ADJUNCT FACULTY

BY LAURA HEDSTROM



PASTOR LLOYD QUANBECK

Pastor Lloyd Quanbeck taught *Principles of Congregational Life* to juniors at AFLBS this past fall. Quanbeck is no stranger to the AFLC campus, having graduated from both AFLBS and AFLTS, and currently serving on the AFLC Schools Board of Trustees. He has worked in pastoral ministry since 1990, and has spent the last five years at Maranatha Free Lutheran Church in Glyndon, Minn. Quanbeck is married to Jean, also an AFLBS graduate, and the couple has seven children—the third, Andrew, is a senior at AFLBS this year.

Quanbeck talks about how personal interactions with students have blessed him this semester. In addition, he has been encouraged even as he corrects homework. He

cites the example of an assignment he gave for students to write a report on their home congregations. Through this, he read numerous students' testimonies of God's work in their home congregations, and he has heard stories of local congregational support for AFLBS.

As Quanbeck has balanced pastoring and teaching, the multiple pastoral staff at Maranatha Free Lutheran have covered for him and helped him manage his time. As he taught, he has become a student first as he learns afresh old material and discovers new things.

Quanbeck's advice for current students? He leaves it at this: "Get more sleep." Quanbeck encourages students to consider attending AFLBS because of the role it plays in laying a foundation for students' faith: "While many schools prepare you for a job, AFLBS prepares you for life."



PASTOR JASON GUDIM

Pastor Jason Gudim taught *Basic Principles of Theology* at AFLTS and *Bible Doctrine III* at AFLBS this fall. He has been married to Esther for 11 years, and the couple has four children under the age of 9. In addition, Gudim has pastored Faith Free Lutheran Church in Minneapolis since he graduated from AFLTS three years ago. Gudim describes pastoring full-time and teaching two classes as “crazy,” but good. With his church work and teaching combined, he had an average of five lessons or sermons to prepare each week. It’s not surprising, then, that the biggest thing he has learned this fall is time management. Because of this semester, Gudim has no idea what a day “without anything to do” looks like, but in his free time he does enjoy reading, baseball, and playing with his kids.



Teaching Bible school and seminary classes have personally strengthened Gudim by forcing him to “study the basics.” Both of his classes focused on the fundamentals of the faith, so he says it has been good for him to immerse himself in what is foundational and imperative about Christianity. Gudim says his teaching has strengthened his church work and matured him as a pastor. Similarly, his parish experience has influenced his academic teaching.

Gudim has one piece of advice for current students of AFLBS and AFLTS: Never graduate from the gospel. “It’s so easy to think we can move on to what we can do for God,” Gudim says, “but it’s the gospel that grounds us in our faith.” Gudim has personal experience with both schools, having graduated from both AFLBS and AFLTS. He encourages students to consider attending the AFLC’s schools because they are places where faith is grounded to meet the real world.

CAPTIONS

TOP LEFT: Pastor Jim Johnson, Fergus Falls, Minn., taught “Pastoral Letters” to the senior class during fall semester.

TOP RIGHT: Lucie Mannheimova, a junior from Trinec, Czech Republic, takes notes during a “Principles of Congregational Life” class taught by Pastor Lloyd Quanbeck last fall.

Hedstrom, a senior at AFLBS, is from Oxford, Neb.



PASTOR JIM JOHNSON

Pastor Jim Johnson taught *Pastoral Letters* to AFLBS seniors this fall. He is married to Marsha, an AFLBS graduate. The couple has two children—Marli, their second, will graduate from AFLBS this May. After graduating from AFLBS, Pastor Johnson graduated from AFLTS in

1985 and has served in the pastoral ministry since then. He has spent the last 12 years at Calvary Free Lutheran Church in Fergus Falls, Minn.



Like the other adjunct instructors, Johnson acknowledges the busyness of balancing full-time pastoring and teaching a class. But it has been good, he says. He has loved to both teach and preach and enjoyed the challenge of this past semester.

When not working, he enjoys sports, reading, and spending time with his kids. Teaching at AFLBS has personally encouraged him by building connections with students. As he notes where students are from, where they’re at, and where they’re headed, Johnson has witnessed positive things going on in their lives. Teaching at AFLBS has shown him how God is working in the lives of students.

Pastor Johnson advises students to “make sure, in all the things going on at Bible school, to keep focused on the Bible.” After all, he says, it’s the main reason they are there—to learn more about God and grow in a relationship with Him. When asked for just one reason to consider coming to AFLBS, Johnson answers this way: “To get into God’s Word and know God’s Word.” Many things are important, he says, and many things are good—but there is never too much time spent in God’s Word.

BLESSED

ASSU

BY PASTOR JERRY MOAN

As a young pastor serving my first parish, one of the biggest surprises for me was to discover how many church members—people who had heard the Word preached faithfully year after year—still lacked real assurance of salvation. Some of the nicest people, whom I would have least expected to be struggling with assurance, when we got down to business and asked the simple questions of eternal value (e.g., “Do you know for sure, if you failed to wake up in the morning, that you would go to be with Jesus in heaven?”), could not affirm that they possessed this precious certainty.

What I learned was this: as a pastor (and this is true for any witness for Christ), we cannot assume that the folks occupying our church pews are ready to meet the Lord just because they’ve settled down in a Bible-believing church for X number of years. People *need* to be asked one-to-one. They deserve that much. They deserve to have a shepherd—someone who cares enough for their souls to set aside the uncomfortable, awkward feelings that dog most witnesses in order to share with them about what matters most: Are you saved? Do you know for sure? How do you know? On what basis do you believe that God will one day receive you into His perfect dwelling place?

This was impressed powerfully on me one evening years ago as I was heading home for supper after doing some afternoon visitation. I was tired and had expended sufficient pastoral effort for one day, so I thought. But as I drove along, an impression began flashing in my mind—a prompting of the Spirit of God, I believe. “You need to make one more stop. Turn around—go to the hospital to see Marie.” My flesh fought against it. I was hungry. I was anxious to get home to my family. But the prompting only intensified. I was finding it increasingly difficult to ignore it. My

bucket of excuses was running dry.

Thankfully, that night my flesh lost its battle with the Spirit. It was a Power outside of myself that turned the car around and pointed me in the direction of the hospital. Marie was suffering from terminal cancer. We didn’t know how long she had to live. But as I stepped into her room, I was relieved to see how talkative she was, even in her weakened condition. She seemed actually comforted by the fact that I had cared enough to stop by. As if Jesus had visited her.

We had shared together on a number of occasions, especially in recent weeks. But the thought occurred to me that I had never asked Marie about her spiritual condition. I had assumed that all was fine. So, once again, the Spirit prompted me to ask a very personal question: “Marie, if you were to die tonight, do you know for sure that you would go to heaven?” It would be nearly impossible for me to forget the sad expression on her face as she confessed, “I really don’t know for sure.”

The good news is, Marie *wanted to be sure*. What a blessed moment it was to open the Scriptures together and to share with her (from I John 5) how anyone can *know* that they have eternal life. After we had prayed together, it was like a huge load was lifted and Marie almost needed her side rails up to keep her from floating out of her hospital bed.

Marie wasn’t the only one who was walking on the clouds that night. As I praised the Lord all the way home, it dawned on me—what if I had resisted the Spirit’s prompting to be a witness for Jesus? What if I had allowed my stomach (and my selfish excuses) to guide the steering wheel instead of the Lord? What would it have meant for Marie?

The next morning, sitting at my desk at the church, the phone rang. It was the hos-

pital. The nurse informed me that Marie’s family had been notified that she was not doing well. I was invited to gather with them at her bedside. I was stunned. Marie had seemed to be doing surprisingly well just the night before.

Then the truth hit me. The Lord knew. He knew all about her secret need. He knew it would be my last opportunity to share with this dear woman. So He stirred my heart to go to her. It was Marie’s appointed time.

As I hurried to the hospital, again I was overwhelmed with gratitude, as if in a dream, as I relived the events of the previ-

ASSURANCE



ous evening. Stepping into Marie's room, I was stopped in my tracks as I witnessed the nurse gently checking her pulse. Marie had just taken her final breath on this earth.

How many people, like Marie, go through life lacking the blessed assurance promised to us in God's Word? Our Lord does not will it to be this way. "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life" (I John 5:13).

This is what God's Word says. It reveals to us that it is possible (and sadly, all too common) for a person to be trusting in Jesus as their Savior, and yet to lack the

assurance of all that this means. Such an uncertain faith robs us of the peace and spiritual rest that God intends for us to enjoy. And the only way to gain this assurance is to take God at His Word, believe in His promises recorded for us in black and white, and, finally, to ask Him for what we need/seek.

"This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him" (I John 5:14-15).

"For as many as are the promises of

God, in Him they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us" (II Corinthians 1:20).

Our Lord wants us to know. He also wants us to go (Matthew 28:19). How sad when those who have experienced the security of our hope in Jesus fail to listen to the prompting of His Spirit to be faithful witnesses as He gives opportunity. Lord, work in my heart that I will willingly respond, "Here am I, send me!"

Moan, a member of Solid Rock Free Lutheran, Anoka, Minn., is a full-time faculty member at the AFLC Schools.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

BY STEVE JANKORD

As we look to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the seminary this summer, it is hard to do that without remembering the life work of Dr. Francis Monseth. I cannot think of any pastor, congregation, or ministry of the AFLC that has not been impacted in some way by Dr. Monseth.

When I hear the stories about how the AFLC started more than 50 years ago, I find it hard to imagine the faith and vision that it took to stand on God's Word and start an association grounded on that very Word. Then shortly after, the Association started a seminary based on the conviction that God would bless the rightful teaching of that Word as instructed by II Timothy 2:2, "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."

When Francis Monseth was called to be the dean of the seminary more than 40 years ago, there was strong support and encouragement for him to pursue an advanced degree (doctorate). This was not easy for a young man with a family, but financial support and time to study was given to help him achieve that degree and, thus, faithfully lead our seminary for these many years.

With his passing last year, the board and faculty have come to understand every day what we have missed as a friend and leader in Dr. Monseth. We also realize that we not only need a new seminary dean, but we also need to plan for new faculty in the future. This all takes time and significant effort.

In order to continue to encourage faithful men to develop their God-given talents to effectively teach God's Word, the Board of Trustees has approved the Dr. Francis Monseth Fund for Faculty Development. This fund will be used to support and encourage men who sincerely love Jesus and His flock and are called of God to teach that Word to faithful men who will be able to teach others, also. With financial gifts from Dr. Monseth's memorial service and a recent additional gift from his family, we have more than \$38,000 in this fund already. The interest and/or principal will be dedicated to support and encourage full-time and part-time faculty and future faculty to develop their gifts to teach others to further the work of the AFLC Schools and thus the whole of the AFLC ministries. We invite others who share this vision to consider financial gifts to this fund.

When I was at the memorial service for Dr. Monseth, I was touched by the poem

titled "Safely Home" on the back of the bulletin. This poem was found in Dr. Monseth's Bible. The poem was more meaningful to me as this is the same poem I found in my mother's Bible when she passed away 17 years ago. I will close this article with a quote from the end of that poem:

Then you must not grieve so
sorely, For I love you dearly still:
Try to look beyond earth's shadows,
Pray to trust our Father's Will.

There is work still waiting for
you, So you must not idly stand; Do
it now, while life remaineth—You
shall rest in Jesus' land.

When that work is all complete,
He will gently call you Home;
Oh, the rapture of that meeting,
Oh, the joy to see you come!

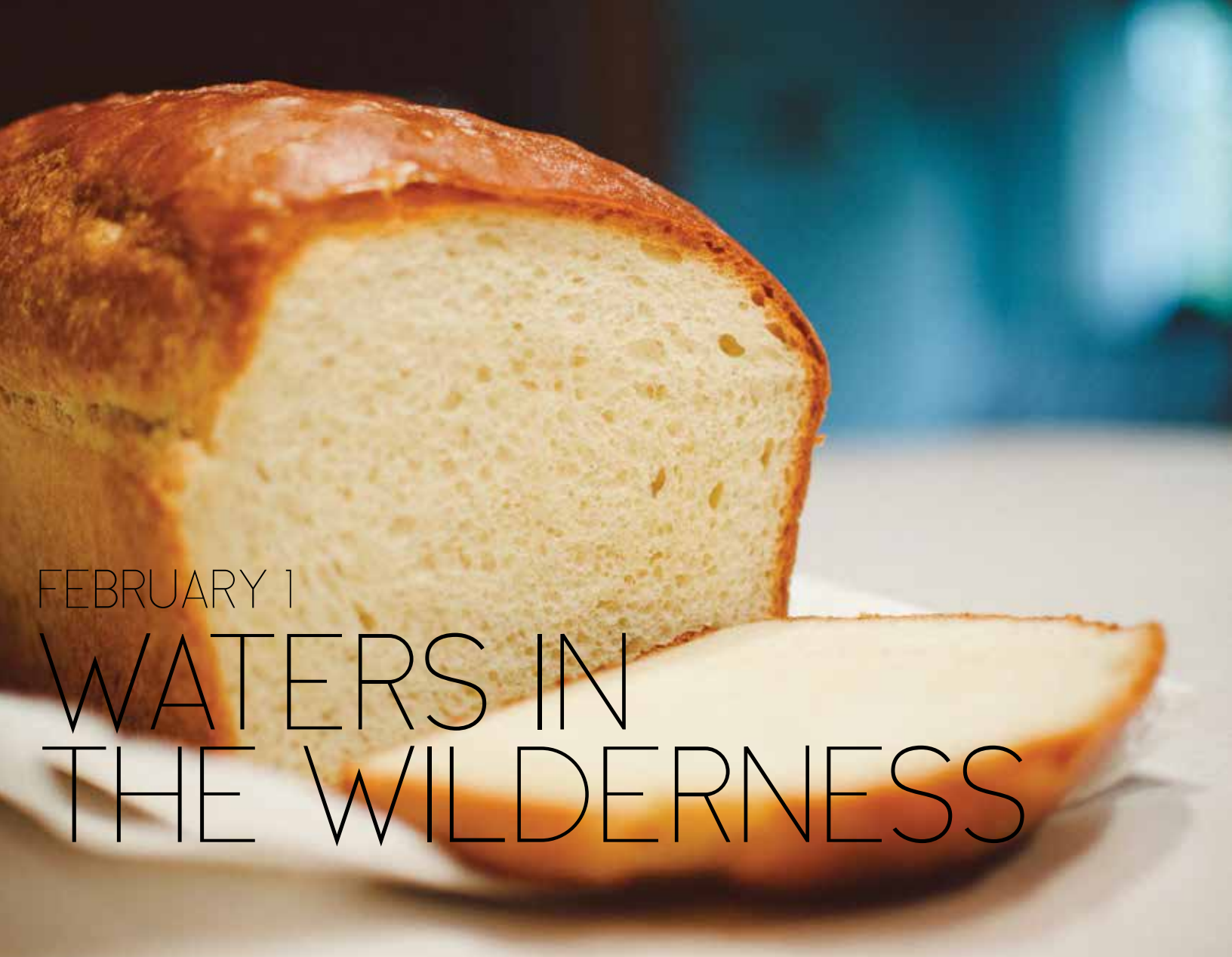
We ask you continue to pray for the members of the Board of Trustees, the deans of our seminary and Bible school, and its faculty at this time. As you pray, ask God how He might use you to be a blessing to the AFLC.

Jankord, Fort Mill, S.C., writes on behalf of the AFLC Schools Board of Trustees, of which he is a member.



CAPTION

Pastor Peter Franz is a guest speaker during a fall class on "Christian Education and Catechetics."



FEBRUARY 1

WATERS IN THE WILDERNESS

“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God”
(Matthew 4:4).

We have all had the experience of being hungry. When we come home from work, some of us have had the good fortune of sitting down to a meal of homemade bread. We remember how good it tasted and the feeling of well-being that we had after eating of this bread. With the physical appetite satisfied, we would look forward to a period of rest and realization after a day of toil.

But it was not always possible to relax completely. Many of the troubles of the day, and worries for the next day, would disturb our rest. Often, too, we have at such times felt the need of something

more than bread. We realize that there is more to life than food for the body. Life has a greater meaning and purpose than working and eating. We need more than physical health and strength to cope with the problems that arise in the lives of every one of us. We sense the need of something more than mere bread.

This is precisely what Jesus had in mind. There is a need which bread cannot fill; only the Word of God suffices. Have we not also had the experience of how strength has returned to the weary soul when at the close of the day we have let the Word of God really feed us?

Clarence Larson, Winger, Minn.

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.



Come, follow me

BY VICKI JOHNSON

These are the words of our Savior, Jesus Christ, beckoning His disciples to begin their journey with Him: to leave the known and delve into the unknown. We, who are the called, have been issued the same invitation. Jesus calls to us, "Come, follow Me." And so begins our walk of faith.

Come

We are facing Him, turned to Him in relationship. In effect, we are leaving the old life behind. Jesus invites us to come to Him daily and learn of Him, of His meekness and humility. It is only after we *come* to Him in humility that we can *go* to the world and preach the gospel of salvation in His name.

Follow

Our focus is set on the One who leads us. We are not in the lead position. We move in obedience to *His* will. As we follow Jesus we will journey from glory to glory as we are being transformed into His image. He may or may not change our physical location, but He will definitely cause a metamorphosis in our souls.

Me

Jesus speaks to us directly, extending a personal invitation. His invitation is exclusive. We are not to pursue other disciples or leaders, but Jesus alone. Although we may find wonderful examples in others who follow Jesus beautifully, *their* lives are not to be *our* goal. We must be close enough to Jesus to hear His still, small voice speaking to us, as it says in Isaiah 30:21, "Your ears will hear a word behind you, 'This is the way, walk in it,' whenever you turn to the right or to the left." The Word of God, our Holy Bible, is the primary means by which we know God. Read and study God's Word directly.

We are each called to journey with our Savior on a life-long walk that is uniquely suited to each believer's development and growth in Christ. Sometimes we are tempted to compare our walk with another's, evaluating progression, perfection, and punctuality. However, the evaluation lies within Jesus' jurisdiction, with the fruit of the Spirit as evidence of our walk's success. But it isn't enough to begin the journey well. We must finish well if we want to receive the reward. The Apostle Paul encourages us in Philippians 3:14, saying, "I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

So then, "let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful" (Hebrews 10:23). We are called to walk a faithful walk with a faithful God.

Johnson is a member of Living Faith Lutheran, Boyertown, Pa., where her husband, Pastor David Johnson, serves.



J-term at Bible school

Students of the Association Free Lutheran Bible School returned to campus in January for three weeks of special classes, and an emphasis on missions. Classes offered included Missions I & II taught by Pastor Kevin Olson, Evangelism and Discipleship taught by Pastor Jim Rasmussen (pictured at right), Biblical Worldview taught by Pastor Jason Holt (pictured at top), Dynamics Within a Living Congregation taught by Pastor Paul Nash, and The Unity of the Testaments taught by Pastor Phil Haugen.



The gift of giving

BY PASTOR KEVIN OLSON

It seems like a paradox. But so often, things of God are. Sitting in a small hut with a dim light, eating a simple, late-night meal of beans and rice or sleeping on a hard bed—these might be considered a challenge or difficult. However, it is in those times when hospitality can be uniquely displayed that gratitude takes on a living persona and love has a depth that surpasses language, culture, or distance.

Yesu Daima is a unassuming Indian woman and a pastor's wife. Her home is a mud hut with a dirt floor and thatched roof, but when she hosts, she makes the most delicious food, the kind found only in fine restaurants. She insists that her guests have seconds and thirds, even though she and her children will not eat anything until the meal is over and the guests are gone. She has a joy that overflows from her countenance.

Samuel is Yesu Daima's husband. He pastors a small congregation that cannot afford to pay him, but he is also full of joy and generous with the little that he has. He is quick to give people rides on his motorcycle, and often purchases a soda for his passenger with the money that he should use for gasoline. The visitor going to see Samuel and Yesu Daima might make some sacrifices to reach their home, but the love that they receive makes the effort seem small in comparison.

Devasahayam is a prayer warrior. He spends hours a day pleading to the Lord on behalf of people whom he has never met from another part of the world. In exchange, people see in his countenance a radiance that reflects time spent with Jesus, and many are drawn to hear the promises of God that he has to share.

Wilson is a teacher. He invests everything that he has to disciple others. Each week, he teaches between four to six classes. Each week he spends days on the road so that he can share God's Word with people who have not heard, cannot read, and do not

know what it has to say to them. In return, Wilson has a growing family of children in the faith, people who have been changed by God's Word working in their hearts. His reward is an eternal one that can never be taken away no matter what the future may hold.



The gifts that our international brothers and sisters have to give are not measured monetarily, rather, by faith, love, and prayer. Their significance may never be known in an earthly realm, but the kingdom of God has a record of every sacrifice.

Think back on your years of involvement in other people's lives. Was it not the sacrifices that seemed to be the greatest, which turned out to be the source of the greatest joy? Did the times of comfort and ease lead neither to personal growth nor inner satisfaction? It seems that the Bible consistently demonstrates that the greatest gift we can receive is the one that we give.

I Corinthians 8:7 says, "Since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you—see that you also excel in this grace of giving."

Olson, who leads the Ambassador Institute, is a member of Emmaus Lutheran, Bloomington, Minn.

Olson accepts full-time CAO position

Dr. Mark Olson, pastor of Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran Church, Lakeville, Minn., has accepted a call to serve as full-time interim Chief Academic Officer (CAO) and Institutional Effectiveness Director for AFLC Schools, starting January 2.

Olson began serving the AFLC Schools in a one-fourth time position last summer when the Board of Trustees first created the new position.

"I am very humbled and honored to be able to serve in this capacity," said Olson, who is in the process of stepping down from his pastoral role at Minnesota Valley. "I'm going through this identity crisis. I'm not going to be a pastor, and I miss it probably more than I realized."

Olson's main focus is meeting academic guidelines as the schools work



Dr. Mark Olson, Lakeville, Minn., has an office in the faculty area of Heritage Hall as he takes on the full-time role of Chief Academic Officer and Institutional Effectiveness Director.

through the accreditation process with TRACS (Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools).

"The big goal is to carry on the wonderfully biblically based traditions in the Bible school and seminary," said Olson, who emphasized that the process will

not change any core programming at the schools. "I believe accreditation helps what we are already doing."

Olson earned an EdD (Doctorate of Education) in 1999 from USD, Vermillion, S.D. He focused on educational administration in adult and higher education.

Housing options for the 2014 conference in Valley City, N.D.

The hosting committee for the 2014 Annual Conference have announced housing options available in the Valley City, N.D., area. The conference will be held June 10-13 at Grace Free Lutheran, Valley City. The following options are available:

Hotels and Motels

AmericInn

280 Winter Show Road
73 rooms blocked for AFLC or Grace Free; indoor hot tub and pool, fitness room, meeting room, complimentary breakfast, executive suites, cribs available.
701-845-5551 or 877-845-0007
www.americinn.com/hotels/ND/ValleyCity

Super 8

822 11th Street SW
30 rooms; family restaurant next door, outside outlets, cribs.
701-845-1140 or 800-800-8000.
www.super8.com

Wagon Wheel Inn

455 Winter Show Road
88 rooms; lounge, fitness room, meeting room, executive suites, laundry facilities, complimentary continental breakfast.

701-845-5333 or 800-319-5333
www.wagonwheelinn.com

Valley City State University

Suites (2 rooms with a shared bathroom)
\$35/night for 1; \$28/night for 2
Linens are available for \$10.
Contact Kayla (701)845-1724
Email: housing@vcsu.edu

Bed & Breakfasts, Inns

Beste Mor Guest Inn

113 2nd Ave, Kathryn, ND
701-845-1995
www.mybestemor.com

Lakeside Bed & Breakfast

113 Lee's Subdivision, Lake Ashtabula
701-646-6759
\$110/night or \$750 week

President's House Guest Inn

VCSU campus
701-845-7122; www.presidentshouse.com

Sheyenne Riverbend Farm Inn

3716 117th Ave SE, Valley City
701-845-1377
www.riverbendfarm.com

Three Oaks Guest Inn

530 3rd St. SE, Valley City, ND
701-490-6000 or 701-845-4571

Tower City Inn Bed & Breakfast

502 Church Street, Tower City
Contact Joanne: 701-749-2660
towerbedandbreakfast.com

Victorian Charm Guest Inn

535 Central Ave N, Valley City, ND
701-845-0887
\$58 flat rate

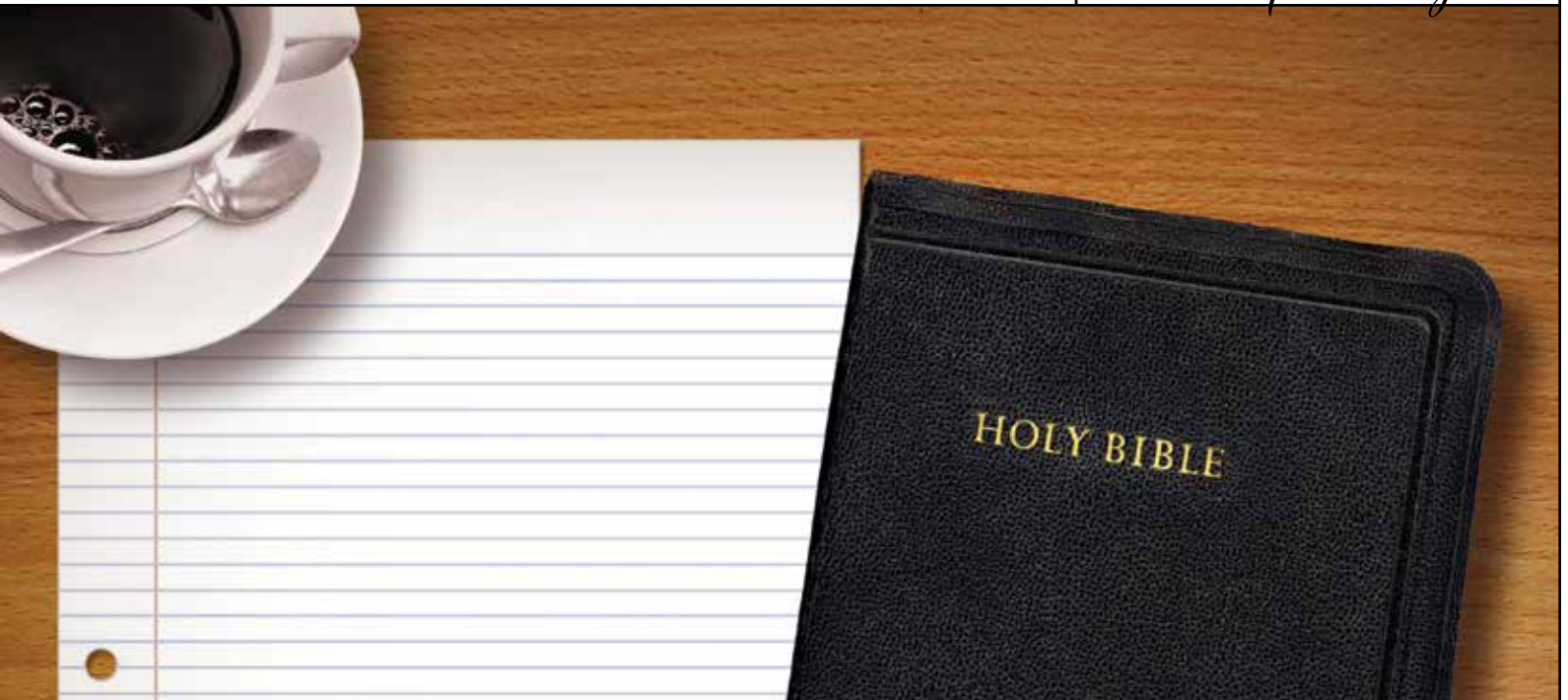
Camping/RV Stations

Municipal Tourist park

Business Loop I-94
All hook-ups. Showers and water available.
701-845-3294

Wagon Wheel RV Park

I-94 exit 292, right on Winter Show Road
24 drive through sites with full hook-ups
701-845-5333 or 1-800-319-5333



The chaplain as student

BY PASTOR MARLIN HARRIS

Having served as an Air Force chaplain and a hospice chaplain, I have had wonderful opportunities to be an educator and fulfill the Great Commission of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Jesus said to His followers, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20).

As an educator, the chaplain serves in many different settings and must be moved by the Holy Spirit to present the Word, whether it is at a bed side or in the pulpit. All fruitful Christian faith and activity is based upon the Word. When preaching the Word, the chaplain is a teacher of biblical inerrant truth, as seen in its biblical-historical context. The teaching is always related to the present situation of man.

At the day of His ascension, Jesus said to the eleven disciples, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Inspired by the Holy Spirit, the eleven disciples built the Church and instructed its followers. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, the chaplain must follow this path. He must teach God’s people so that they might witness and fulfill the Great Commission.

The chaplain is both a shepherd and a pastor-director. The parish pastor is usually responsible only for the present and prospective members of his congregation. However, the typical chaplain administratively carries out the responsibility of provid-

ing ministry for a number of faith groups in nursing homes and hospitals as well as hospice settings.

Continuing education is vital to the growth of the chaplain. For the chaplain to function in the vital role as preacher-teacher by virtue of the calling, training, and ordination, he must also continue to grow in knowledge, wisdom, and grace in order to be effective. Discipline and the study of Scripture are essential for continued spiritual and intellectual growth.

Continuing education is available through the AFLC Chaplaincy’s annual meeting. Last year, the chaplains gathered together to look at the theme, “God Knows the Plan,” based on Jeremiah 29:11. We had great topics to discuss using the book, *The Dream Manager*, by Matthew Kelly, which served as the basis for some lively discussion and challenged us to look and dream about our future in serving God as a chaplain or in our churches. I would encourage other pastors and chaplains to read this book. I would also encourage pastors and chaplains to take advantage of other opportunities to grow and enhance their ministry through the AFLC, such as the Pastors and Missions Conferences in January and the Summer Institute of Theology in August.

“May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (II Corinthians 13:14).

Harris, a member of AFLC Institutional Chaplaincy, serves True Vine Lutheran, Mora, Minn.

AFLC memorials: December

All Ministries

Dave Van Hoveln

AFLBS

Ruth Claus

Edwin Preitauer

AFLTS

Kay Bauman

Leo Oseby

Dr. Francis Monseth (2)

Eleanor Aaberg

Evangelism

Joe Sletten

Ida Marie Benson

FLAPS

Robert A. Olson

Harvey Hoops

Home Missions

Lennie & Mildred Bothun

General Fund

Dr. Francis Monseth

Parish Education

Pastor Dale Mellgren

World Missions

Edith Gudim

Lennie & Mildred Bothun

... in honor of

AFLBS

Pastor Brent Olson

AFLTS

Bernice & Victor Ness

Evangelism

Gene Quist

Ovidie Dyrud was WWII veteran, missionary, assistant to president

Ovidie Dyrud, 95, of New Hope, died Jan. 4. Born Feb. 26, 1918, in Colfax, Wis., she was the daughter of Elvin and Selma Evenson. She married Amos Dyrud June 15, 1948. He preceded her in death.

She taught school in a one-room rural school house for three years before training as a nurse at Lutheran Deaconess Nursing School and Augsburg College, as well as the University of Minnesota. She graduated in 1942. She worked as head nurse on the surgical floor and was an instructor of orthopedic and surgical nursing in Minneapolis. She served the United States as a nurse in WWII, serving as first lieutenant on a U.S. Army hospital ship in the Philippines.

Following her marriage, they spent one year of language study at L'alliance Francaise, Paris, prior to serving on the mission field in Madagascar until 1969. When they returned to the States, she worked as secretary to the president of the AFLC.

Surviving are four children, Peter (Judy) Dyrud, Naomi (Paul) Hanson, Rebecca Dyrud, Samuel (Mary Jo) Dyrud; 12 grandchildren; and 20 great-grandchildren.

The service was held Jan. 12 at the AFLC Schools Chapel, Plymouth, Minn. A private burial was held at Fort Snelling National Cemetery. If so desired, memorials may be directed to AFLC Bible School and Seminary or Global Health Ministries—Madagascar.

People and Places

Pastor Scott Guhl has submitted his resignation to St. Olaf Lutheran Church, Montgomery, Ill., where he has served since 2007.

Senior seminarian **Rob Edwards** begins his one-year internship in February at Bethel Free Lutheran Church, Grafton, N.D., with Pastor Tim Carlson as his supervisor.

On Nov. 24, 2013, members of **Resurrection Free Lutheran Church** of Beltrami, Minn., celebrated the congregation's 25th anniversary with a program of thanksgiving and praise, followed by a traditional Thanksgiving dinner. The five pastors who have served the congregation were in attendance, including Anders Macy (lay pastor), Pastor Tim Johnson from Pipestone, Minn., Pastor Rolf Heng from Moorhead, Minn., Pastor Dale Finstrom (present pastor) and Donavan Edlund, (lay pastor and former youth pastor of Resurrection).

Pastor Les Galland has announced his retirement effective Feb. 28. Galland has served King of Glory Lutheran, Shakopee, Minn. He is available for pulpit supply.

Grace Covenant Lutheran, Aberdeen, S.D., has been approved for membership in the AFLC.

Pastor Michael Johnson has accepted a call to serve Abundant Life Church, Thief River Falls, Minn. He was installed Jan. 26, with Pastor Lyndon Korhonen, AFLC president, officiating. Johnson previously served Chippewa Lutheran, Brandon, Minn.

AFLC Home Missions is hosting a **Leadership Retreat** Feb. 24-27 at Calvary Free Lutheran, Mesa, Ariz. Visit www.afllchomemissions.org for more information.

Men's conference in Northwood, N.D.

The men of Ebenezer Free Lutheran, Northwood, N.D., are hosting a men's conference on Saturday March 1. Meeting under the theme, "The Slippery Grip of Headship," the event will feature four sessions led by Pastor Jason Holt, director of AFLC Youth Ministries.

The sessions, based on the book of Ephesians, include: "Headship and Me: Am I in Charge?"; "Headship and My Marriage: Who's in Charge?"; "Headship and My Parenting: I'm in Charge, Right?"; "Headship and My Work: I'm Not in Charge"

The cost for the event is \$20, which includes lunch. Registrations must be sent in by Feb. 22. For more information, contact Ebenezer Free Lutheran at (701) 587-6105.

AFLC BENEVOLENCES Jan. 1-Dec. 31, 2013

FUND	REC'D IN DECEMBER	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$59,234	\$364,489	\$339,711
Evangelism	14,334	133,975	134,338
Youth Ministries	10,752	105,159	101,007
Parish Education	27,525	163,662	122,918
Seminary	34,233	294,479	252,119
Bible School	74,934	505,643	449,251
Home Missions	58,848	469,416	494,647
World Missions	49,594	417,043	424,521
Personal Support	53,323	465,690	508,622
TOTALS	\$328,777	\$2,919,554	\$2,827,134

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

Our seminary

To think that we should have a part in founding a Lutheran seminary! Yes, who would have thought it a possibility 10 or 15 years ago. But today we stand on the threshold of that reality." These words introduced the lead editorial in the September 8, 1964, issue of *The Lutheran Ambassador*. "We began with nothing except the loyal constituency, now grown larger, a vision and faith. Today we have property, teachers, and students.

Some will dispute this, but to us it is the Lord's doing."

"We begin on September 19, God willing," the editorial further announced. "We trust that many friends of the school will come



Pastor Robert Lee

for the opening rally week-end. Those will be great days for our work."

The next issue of the magazine reported on the opening rally of the new seminary, during which a panel together with the audience addressed the question, "What kind of pastors do we want to produce?" It is interesting 50 years later to note the answers that grew from the discussion:

- Pastors with a personal experience of salvation
- Pastors with a definite call from God
- Pastors with strong convictions on the Word
- Pastors who share the Association ideal of the congregation and the church
- Pastors with a love for people
- Pastors who desire to serve, not to lord it over congregations
- Pastors with the mental qualifications to master the course of study.

Your current editor was one of the 300-plus people present for the opening

rally in 1964 (on the program, too, according to the report, which I had forgotten), was enrolled in the second class of the seminary one year later, and today serves as the interim dean. This provides a unique perspective that embraces both the past and the present, giving my comments a certain weight. Those early years were not easy ones, my classmates and I would confess, and there were times when we wondered if the seminary would survive. But we were upheld in prayer, and our relationship to the congregations where we worshiped and preached during our school years encouraged us to press on.

This former student and current professor at our seminary can state without fear of contradiction that students today are receiving a far superior education to the one that we received, and yet so much is still the same. We continue to meet in the chapel building, which has been remodeled so many times that one forgets some of the changes made over the years. It has been wondrously adaptable, serving us so very well. The opening session at the beginning of each school year still touches my heart as much as it did decades ago when new students tell how God has led them to respond to His call and prepare for kingdom service. The commitment to God's inerrant Word and the desire to know it better are the same. The struggles as well as the peace following surrender sound the same; some of the names are even the same, as sons and grandsons of our pioneers obey the same call.

A quote from a long-ago statement described the vision that motivated the new beginning 50 years ago, declaring that the goal of the seminary is:

... to educate students to become theologians, that is, ministers, mature, authoritative and independent spokesmen for the truth they have found and have been grounded in through an earnest and personal study of the origin and preparation of Christianity, of the church's life and life-development. By theological education we do not mean a learned scholasticism or an encyclopedic memory filled with sentences,

... a personal, living conviction of the truth as a result of the penetration of the mind and heart into God's Word, its essence and inner meaning ...

quotations and interpretations, but a personal, living conviction of the truth as a result of the penetration of the mind and heart into God's Word, its essence and inner meaning; into God's world-government and the nature and work of God's household of grace. Only a theologian thus educated can be a real pastor with full responsibility, a witness for the truth, a defense against falsehood." (*Augsburg Seminary and the Lutheran Free Church*, ed. by Lars Lillehei, pp. 41-42)

May our seminary still be found faithful to this vision that inspired and empowered our Free Lutheran forefathers!

The golden anniversary of our seminary will be celebrated during the opening service of the 2014 Annual Conference of the AFLC, meeting in Valley City, N.D., June 10-13. Plan to attend and join in thanking God for His gift to our fellowship.

building the base

What is your base?

BY TIM LARSON

If I don't see you here, I'll see you in heaven." One by one, each of my family members approached my grandmother to give her a hug before she went into surgery on Dec. 10, 2013. Even though we could tell she was nervous, we heard her say that she was ready to leave this earth should something go wrong. Those are comforting words to hear as a believer, even though it is always difficult to say goodbye to a loved one. To know with certainty that your family members are walking with Christ is something that should make all of us rejoice and give thanks.

When you hear the word "base," what comes to your mind? Many of us may think of synonyms such as "foundation," "support," or "basis." If you are thinking in concrete or tangible terms, a firm foundation that is built before erecting a building of some kind would aptly illustrate this term.

Christ uses this illustration in Matthew 7:24-27:

Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and *yet* it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall.

Hebrews 12:2 describes Christ as "the author and perfecter of faith." An author could be used to describe the base or beginning of a story, but Christ's illustration goes much further.

Friend, where is your faith based? Who do you trust in for your daily provisions? Why do you do what you do? Sadly, many people today don't even know how to answer these questions. As followers of Christ we can use the seemingly simple answer that many Sunday school or vacation Bible school kids use to numerous questions. Jesus! No matter if we are having a perfectly normal day or going through a very difficult trial we can hold firm to the truth in Philippians 4:13: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Christ should be the basis for our faith.

Now you may be wondering, how did grandma's surgery go? Well, with great thankfulness and praise to God she made it through the surgery just fine. As of this writing she is continuing to recover and regain her strength. I would like to take this opportunity to thank many of you readers for uplifting her in prayer.

So now I must ask again, where is your faith based? It is my prayer that all of you, as readers, can say with unwavering certainty, "In Jesus!" I would encourage you to share this good news with someone you may know or meet today who is desperately in need of hearing this important truth.

Larson, a 2009 graduate of AFLBS, lives in Osakis, Minn.