

THE LUTHERAN 

JUNE 2013

# AMBASSADOR



EVANGELISM IS



# Blessed Trinity

BY PASTOR KEN MOLAND

Recently in our congregation we have begun and concluded our worship service with chimes rung from the balcony. We use two bells from our English handbell set, and in the silence of the sanctuary we hear three sets of three chimes, a time for focus, reflection and meditation.

The concluding chimes follow right after the benediction, when we have just heard that we are blessed “in the name of God the Father, and God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19). These few moments have provided yet another opportunity to worship the Holy Trinity and to meditate on what it means to believe what we confess in our three ecumenical creeds: Apostles’, Nicene and Athanasian.

As a Christian Church we celebrate Trinity Sunday just following Pentecost Sunday, this year on May 26, but the doctrine of the Trinity permeates our worship each Sunday throughout the year. Indeed, we worship “God in three persons, blessed Trinity” (*Holy, Holy, Holy*, by Reginald Heber).

Perhaps you will find it helpful, as I have, to reflect on the individual persons of the Trinity, giving thanks for what is thought of as the primary work of each one. Very simply, we think of God the Father as Creator, God the Son as Redeemer, and God the Holy Spirit as Sanctifier. If you have been fortunate to have also studied the meaning of each of the three articles of the creed (thank your confirmation teacher!), your meditation may expand to even more aspects of God’s remarkable work in your life.

Recently a young adult from our congregation was asked to write about what she believed for a college class assignment. She told me that after pondering how to approach the subject of belief, she remembered that she had heard from me some years ago that



the Apostles’ Creed is truly a testimony of what we believe. I had shared with our congregation that everyone who has memorized the Apostles’ Creed, and of course internalized it, has a ready testimony to share with the world, giving a reason for the hope that is within us.

While it is probably not a good idea to quote it verbatim to our unbelieving neighbor or co-worker, it does provide a remarkable and time-tested synopsis of our faith. And it will be all the more valuable if we have meditated on its truths and allowed the Holy Spirit to apply them to our lives.

Let me suggest how this focus can aid in our worship and in our witness. Recently, this is how I respond to the chimes during worship service.

Chime, chime, chime—“I praise You God, my Father, for creating me and all that exists, and for revealing your glory in Your creation.”

Chime, chime, chime—“I praise You Jesus, God in the flesh, for coming to save me.”

Chime, chime, chime—“I praise You Holy Spirit for bringing me to repentance and faith in Jesus and sustaining me by Your power.”

This is not a prescribed litany, just spontaneous thoughts of reflection and worship of the Triune God.

Our organist is cued to begin the introduction to the recessional hymn just as soon as the resonance of the chimes has subsided. And we are sent forth to proclaim the truths that have transformed us in our worship of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, blessed Trinity.

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The following are excerpts from an essay by Dr. Francis Monseth, entitled, *Principles and Practices of Lutheran Evangelism* (1988).

To understand our evangelistic mission, it is vital to understand the Gospel. The careful definition of the Gospel is the precise task of theology. It follows, therefore, that there can be no true evangelism without sound theology.

It is important to remember that our study of theology is intended to equip us to become more fervent and effective evangelists. We are prone to forget this. There are men in the ministry who become so interested in the discussion of ideas that they forget that their primary calling is the salvation of souls.

Evangelism is not viewed as an occasional ministry of a Christian congregation. It is expected that wherever the Holy Spirit is at work through the Word, there will be constant concern for evangelism and revival.

True evangelism is not founded upon psychological tricks or gimmicks but upon the very truths by which the Church lives.

All that we need to be empowered, motivated, and effectively engaged in evangelism is contained in God's Word. We are not lacking a thing! There's nothing more we need to know about evangelism that is not treated adequately in the Scriptures! ... Thus, the truly confessional Lutheran is drawn to the Scriptures where he finds all he really needs to follow Christ as a "fisher of men."





THE AROMA

EVANGELISM IS

OF CHRIST

“But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is adequate for these things?” (II Corinthians 2:14-16).

BY PASTOR TIM JOHNSON

**A**romas have a way of capturing your attention, such as popcorn or grilled meat or fried chicken or ... Sorry, my mind is obviously on food. How about that certain perfume or cologne or flower? Sometimes certain odors will jar your memory about something in your past.

If only there was a way to package these aromas and use them in a sermon. No one would forget that message.

In a sense, Paul is using the above Scripture to incite certain pictures, smells, and memories for the believers in Corinth. In Roman times, the emperor would celebrate a victorious commander and his generals with a triumphal procession. These processions included garlands of flowers, vessels of burning incense, followed by the victorious commander, generals, and soldiers and their defeated prisoners. The sweet odor signaled great victory for everyone except the defeated captives. To them, the sweet aroma signaled a bitter execution.

Now, go back and read the text with Paul's imagery and aromatic comparisons.

Notice that the sweet aroma is the knowledge of Christ. Notice, also, that this aroma is to be in every place. How does the aroma get into every place?

The image that God wants you to see is that all Christ-followers have been granted, by Christ Himself, a triumphal procession. Christ has given you victory over sin, death, and the devil. He is in essence saying, “March in the victory parade.”

The sweet aroma is the knowledge of Christ that you share along the way. Those who are open to the work of the Spirit through the gospel message of Christ will receive the Word you speak and, as a result, will be saved or continue in the process of being saved. They will find the Word of Christ to be life-giving. Those who are not open to the work of the Spirit through the gospel message will, by their active rejection, smell words of judgment and death.

Who is adequate for these things? In other words, who will enter the triumphal procession? How will they proceed?

Verse 17 of II Corinthians 2 says, “For we are not like many,

peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God.” Notice that those of the triumphal procession are to speak in Christ as from God. They are to look upon people with the eyes of God who so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. The ones who are to enter into the triumphal procession are those who will proclaim the gospel of Christ from a sincere heart of love.

Second Corinthians 5:20 says, “We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”

The sweet aroma is to go into every place. Dear churches, that means we have to take this message outside the walls of our church buildings and have a triumphal procession at work, in school, in stores, at practice, etc. How will people smell the sweet aroma if we don't march?

Years ago, I remember walking the streets of Lake Stevens, Wash., with a friend, Darwin Jackson, and attempting to share the sweet aroma of Christ with people. Four older teenagers came up and started harassing us. As we began sharing the message of Christ with them, one of the young men really took interest. Two of the others took several steps back and had nothing more to do with the conversation. The other one listened from a distance. We ended up giving the interested young man a gospel tract and Gospel of John booklet. He asked for three more of each, and then handed a tract and Gospel of John to each of his friends. You could almost smell the sweet aroma. What a parade!

The triumphal procession does not have to be so elaborate. It could include a verse of Scripture to someone worried or hurting. It could include a note of encouragement with a few words from Jesus. It could include helping someone with a short story of how Jesus has helped you. Just march and let the world smell the sweet aroma of Jesus.

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“But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest is truly plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest’” (Matthew 9:36-38).

BY GALE BERRY

**N**early every week I am challenged by the Sunday worship service. Most times it's from the reading of the Word, the praise and worship music, or my pastor's message. But recently the challenge came from a fellow church member. Standing before the congregation, clearly and simply he asked each member to pray that our church would become the friendliest church in the community. He concluded from the book of Acts 2:42-47, “devoting themselves to the Apostles teaching, the breaking of bread, fellowship, and prayer.”

The challenge was not to *be* the friendliest church, nor was there an outline given highlighting the *how to's* involved in achieving the friendliest church goal. Instead, he challenged each member to pray. He understood prayer to be the fundamental step to reaching out to the community with the love and hope of Christ. Loosely translated, to be the friendliest church in the community, we need to seek and ask for the compassion of Christ in prayer.

In so far as we are compassionate we will be prayerful for the souls of others. Compassion does not expend its force in simply saying, “Be ye warmed; be ye clothed” (James 2:16), but drives us to our knees in prayer for those who need Christ and His grace.

The compassion of God was the compassion that moved Jesus Christ to fulfill the Father's purpose—to seek and save the lost. The Old and New Testaments contain more than 277 verses pertaining to the mercy and compassion of God. These examples from Scripture should spur us on to pray for the compassion of Christ. The compassion of Christ in our hearts is a powerful force that compels us to offer the only real hope there is. As we allow, the Holy Spirit guides us, provides tools, and equips us to offer that compassion to those around us. It is that compassion which offers hope and freedom to people broken by life, beaten down from sorrows, cares, and sin. We see them. We work alongside them. We interact daily with people left empty, weary or angry from pursuing the wealth and treasures this world offers.

The Apostle Paul challenged the church at Colosse, “continue earnestly in prayer ... meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word ... let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt that you may know how you ought to answer each one” (Colossians 4:2-6).

Paul felt the compassion of Christ for the Church and those left outside. He tells us in Colossians 1:9 that this compassion comes from prayer.

We have all heard messages on the importance of prayer and the need to witness. Yet most of us struggle. We know that prayer makes a difference, that we have access to the God of the universe, that we can have peace as we pray, and that without prayer we are powerless. We know that evangelism is not a request we can choose or not choose, but a command of God that we are to obey. So we begin in earnest to pray. But after a while this person is busy. That person moved. And the prayer ceases or changes focus. What seemed so urgent at one time later seems rather irrelevant.

We know it is important to pray, and yet we lack that all-driving motivation to get us up to attend those early morning prayer meetings. We think, “I'll be better. I'll take some time when things quiet down.”

We know that if it were not for the evangelistic effort of a parent or teacher, a pastor or friend, we would still be lost in our sins. Because we seek to pray in our own power, we miss the point that it is God who calls out and draws us to pray. When we fully rely on God for His will and purpose, He will make our hearts' desire one with His, “who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (I Timothy 2:4).

Jesus opens and shuts doors for us as we seek Him in prayer (Revelation 3:8). Through the centuries God has opened doors all over the world in answer to the prayers of His people, according to His will. Prayers are to evangelism as roots are to plants. The roots that are unseen are vital. They provide nourishment, growth, an anchor and support. Roots store up the reserves needed for continued growth. Without prayer for the compassion of Christ, lost souls will mean little to us and evangelism will not be a priority for us or our Church. Evangelism grows up from the roots of compassion supplied and given through the Holy Spirit in times of prayer.

So, what is the challenge to me? To us? Pray for Christ's heart of compassion as described in Matthew 25:35-36, where Jesus defines compassion according to who our neighbor is. Then becoming the friendliest church in the community won't come as a challenge, but as a result of Christ's work in people who, on their knees, seek compassion in their hearts for dying men and needy souls. And your church will meet the wants of earth and the purposes of heaven.

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





ROOTED IN

EVANGELISM IS



PRAYER





FISHING

EVANGELISM IS



FOR PERSONS



“For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty” (II Peter 1:16).

“When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God” (I Corinthians 2:1).

## BY PASTOR WADE MOBLEY

I am not a fisherman, nor have I even been known to “wet a line.” But “I will make you fishers of men” is etched on my vacation Bible school mind. The lyric refers to the account in Matthew 4 where Jesus called Peter and Andrew out of their careers as fishermen and into their lives as disciples of Christ. The visual was apt for Peter and Andrew but carries with it a certain amount of baggage that hinders our application today. Namely, the manner of fishing with which most of us are familiar depends on deception and conquest of an adversary.

Evangelism is no such thing.

An angler identifies his desired prey. Accordingly, he selects a proper location, bait, and manner of delivery. The bait itself makes a promise it can't keep (nourishment) to entice a bite (hook) that will capture or kill. If the hook is set and the fish landed, the angler wins. Otherwise, score one for the fish.

An evangelist takes a much different approach.

As other articles in this issue explain, evangelism is:

- Rooted in prayer—recognizing the work of God in the proclamation of His finished work.
- Making disciples—the goal of presenting the gospel is that a soul would become a follower of Christ.
- A ministry of reconciliation—having been reconciled to God through Christ, the Christian possesses a ministry of reconciliation.
- The aroma of Christ

This last characterization epitomizes the distinction between our concept of fishing and the point of Jesus' illustration. Evangelism is the outpouring of who we *are in Christ* (gospel) more than something that we *do for Christ* (law).

This in no way minimizes “doing.” Indeed, evangelism involves “doing,” and there are times in your Christian life when you need a gentle nudge (or swift kick) to put into practice the love for souls God has placed in your heart. But the point is not to mollify our consciences by lobbing a cursory, “Yet forty days and Nineveh will be destroyed!” (Jonah 3:4) into the masses. God wants His Word to be proclaimed in a way that both the message and the manner present the aroma of Christ.

**In Love.** Love for precious, eternal human souls, created by God in His image swallows our fears and moves us to action in word and deed.

**By gospel, not law.** Both the law and the gospel are part of the overall message we preach to the world, but the right motivation for evangelism is gospel—an outgrowth of what God has done for us in Christ. If it is satisfaction of a law (“Thou shalt witness to thy neigh-

bor”), the targets of our evangelism will feel like targets, indeed.

**Using sound tactics.** We do not win souls with cleverly devised tales (II Peter 1:16) or superiority of speech (I Corinthians 2:1), but sound tactics are helpful, not only granting us confidence in our message, but putting us in a position to portray the message of Christ accurately. Notice how effectively Paul used the Pharisee/Sadducee controversy in metaphysics (Acts 23) and the polytheism of the Athenians (Acts 17). Tactics can be taught and learned.

**God's Word.** Whether implicitly (by quoting or referring to) or explicitly (citing chapter and verse or asking someone to read certain passages), God's Word is essential in evangelism. It is not information given to us to help us decide well, but the “power of God unto salvation” (Romans 1:16) by which God creates and sustains faith in the human heart.

**Moving the needle.** Salvation is not incremental, but people do consider the claims of the gospel incrementally. For example, someone who does not believe in objective reality will not countenance the objective claims of truth, guilt and atonement easily. If you can “put a stone in their shoe” by giving them something sound about which to think, perhaps the next encounter they have with a Christian will end up in an even better place—hopefully their salvation.

I've been a bit hard on the illustration, but Jesus used fishing for a reason. Fishermen in biblical times didn't angle—they used a net, similar to the one the disciples were mending when Jesus called them. The net brought in everything within its grasp, making no distinctions and asking no questions. The fishermen then cast the undesired organisms back into the sea, keeping those they chose. The process was swift, forceful and effective. Where there were fish there was a catch.

Thus, “The kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathering fish of every kind ...” (Matthew 13:47).

Human souls are precious to God. He loves them. He uses us to bring them to Him, then He does the rest. Evangelism is a sometimes-difficult—yet always important—work, a first-hand, front-line, potentially unsanitary occupation. And it is a beautiful calling for every follower of Christ.

Even a smelly fisherman can be the aroma of Christ from life unto life.

*Mobley serves with his wife, Michele, daughter, Hannah (4), and son, Benjamin (3), at Living Word Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D. He has never talked to more people about Jesus since surrendering the need to “seal the deal” in every personal evangelism opportunity.*

“Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God” (II Corinthians 5:20).

BY PASTOR JIM RASMUSSEN

Several years ago I met a couple who was very happy and committed to each other. He was a successful farmer and she was employed in a town nearby. As I got to know them, they shared with me that they had gone through a time of unfaithfulness in their marriage. During that time, they needed to decide if their marriage and family were worth fighting for. They had to face the facts, decide if they would repent of their sin, and be reconciled to God and each other. They realized that they needed the forgiveness of God and one another. The only other option was to go their separate ways.

*Webster's Dictionary* defines “reconciled” as a “call back into union.” This would suggest that there is a division or separation between two individuals or two groups of people. In order to be reconciled, this rift needs to be settled, the chasm somehow bridged. The Gospel of Matthew echoes that thought, “Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering” (5:23-24, NASB).

We often hear that a marriage is dissolving because of irreconcilable differences. The world says there are differences that cannot be forgotten or forgiven. The reason many give when there is a marital impasse is that they were hurt deeply. They just cannot forgive. Actually, they are really saying that they will not forgive.

Think about this in light of Jesus reconciling us to God. God sent Jesus to die on the cross so that no sin, no failure, no hurt would be exempt from Christ's ultimate sacrifice for us. This same Jesus who died for us was spit upon, laughed at, mocked, and physically beaten beyond recognition. Isaiah prophesied, “Just as there were many who were appalled at him, his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any human being and his form marred beyond human likeness” (52:14). Merrill F. Unger, in his *Bible Handbook*, writes of Jesus, “His disfigurement was inhumane; He no longer looked like a man.” Yet Jesus, even as He hung on the cross, said, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34).

This perfect, sinless Jesus was willing to forgive us even though He was hurt deeply by the actions, wickedness, and sin of those He lived with. He endured torment and death in order to reconcile us

to His Father. He did it because He was the only perfect One—the perfect sacrifice for all sin. “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (II Corinthians 5:21).

You may think that this sounds good, but are wondering how it applies to you. Those who have a living relationship with Jesus should be affected in two ways. First, we need to daily come to Jesus in repentance, acknowledging our sin and need for forgiveness. The Holy Spirit will work in our lives to show us our faults and help us walk away from sin. Second, it is God's desire for everyone to be saved and to be reconciled to Him. We need to tell others about Jesus' love for them, His death, and the forgiveness of sins that He offers. “Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God” (II Corinthians 5:20).

The couple I mentioned earlier is a great example of reconciliation. I have known them for many years and they continue to exemplify the power of forgiveness. They struggled through tears and sleepless nights during a painful time in their lives, but they chose to reconcile and to forgive each other. Remember, the definition of being reconciled is “to call back into union.” This couple has a beautiful relationship today as husband and wife because they repented of their sin and are growing in the Lord daily. They love Jesus and thank Him daily for the gift of reconciliation, both with Him and with each other.

We who have a living relationship with Jesus are called to be ambassadors for Christ. He wants to use us to make an appeal to those who have no relationship with Jesus. He wants us to beg people to consider Jesus and be reconciled to Christ.

There are hundreds of people around you—whether family members, friends, or co-workers—who are in need of hearing about Jesus. You may need to plead with some to consider Jesus. Are you willing to obey God's Word and let your mind, heart, and soul be used by God? Are you willing to be an ambassador for Jesus? Jesus wants to use you to share the same message of reconciliation that He accomplished for you on the cross. Will you allow Jesus to equip you to be a reconciler for Him?

*Rasmussen, a member of Grace Free Lutheran, Maple Grove, Minn., is the director of the AFLC Commission on Evangelism.*



A MINISTRY OF

EVANGELISM IS

RECONCILIATION





MAKING

EVANGELISM IS



DISCIPLES



“These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates” (Deuteronomy 6:6-9).

BY KEITH BOE

Look son, I'm not going to be around forever ...

“Someday, when you're older like me, you'll most likely come to a great time of questioning in your own life. Where did you come from? What is the purpose of your life? When was the beginning of life and the world? What does it all mean?”

“Someday you will remember this conversation. I am your link to the past. It's my job to point you to the source of ultimate truth. As God directed Adam, and Adam passed this truth to his offspring, and as our ancestors and forefathers passed this truth to me, I now give you that same truth.

“Of all things, it's important to have a relationship established between you and God. The relationship I have with God ends with me. I cannot bring you with me. You cannot acquire eternal life unless you personally have your own covenant with God. You must have a personal covenant with Him, and He must also have a personal covenant with you to save your soul. It is a two-party thing. Desiring or wishing and hoping to have eternal life is not enough.

“Your most noble, best intentions will not free you from your record of sin and guilt. You have a debt of sin to God you cannot pay.

“But Jesus has a credit of total righteousness. And He advocates on our behalf with the Father.”

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These are excerpts of a conversation that I recently had with my son. It was a very special time for me. Sometimes I had to say hard things. Lots of times I was able to say wonderful things about how he is the sum total value of my whole life. Some things were difficult and hard for me to even want to say, but I said them. One thing is sure, I left it all on the table.

I have spoken about these things to other men within the church, people I call my friends. I remember clearly the discussions we've had about our children. We talked about when our children grow up and leave the home. Will they have a spiritual life of their own? Is it possible that they will just thrive within a religious system—doing well, some even being leaders within the youth—but once they embark, will turn away because they never had a living relationship of their own? Yes, it is entirely possible and, sadly, all too common.

There are true converts. There are short-term converts. And

then there are those who simply live well, enjoying the system of the Christian life for many years. But they never experience a real transformation from dead sinner to a life of freedom given them by the living Son of God.

I am willing to fight with all that is within my power to make my children understand and own a relationship with Christ that is fully based on acquiring His covenant.

I am not a Christian because I live up to biblical standards. I am a Christian because of Christ's work at the cross. I pled guilty at that cross. I pled loud and desperate. I pled in Jesus' name, and you know what? He gave me life, He set me free, and He filled me with His love.

The lost and dying world pleads innocent before God. They assume they will be accepted by God. But they will ultimately die in sin. The sinner trying to justify himself with the Almighty will try to plead his case that he's really not that bad. He will argue that the good he has done outweighs the bad. He will say that he “tries” to do right and be a good person, and he hopes God will accept his hopeful intentions as a substitution for righteousness. Unfortunately, that soul will not be absolved of guilt by the Giver of Life (John 6:33).

But as we still have breath and know the ultimate truth that God so cared for a lost and dying world, “that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16), we need to share it. We need to share with those most dear to us—our families—that we receive life by faith in God, throwing all our hope and trust on the Son of God who sets us free.

During that conversation with my son, I didn't hold anything back. I love my son very deeply. As my life fades, his life will grow. I am fortunate enough that he is still young, a teenager. He's a good boy and will respectfully listen to me, his father, and will ponder my words. That day he did listen to everything I had to say. I believe we'll both remember that talk for the rest of our lives.

If you feel you're not quite sure how to articulate your faith or communicate the gospel clearly to a child or family member, then I strongly suggest attending a Red Thread Retreat or an Evangelism Explosion training session. Or read some of the works by Ray Comfort at [www.LivingWaters.com](http://www.LivingWaters.com).

*Boe is a member of Atonement Free Lutheran, Arlington, Wash.*





# IN MEMORIAM

BY DAVID KJOS

Dr. Francis Monseth (1941–2013) was the subject of the following story, written as an illustration of Questions 46–48 of the *Westminster Larger Catechism*. He passed away [on] Good Friday.

“Christ Jesus, ... although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself ...” (Philippians 2:6–8).

Once upon a time, a seminary professor, soon to be dean, spent part of his summer teaching VBS in a small town in South Dakota. This man’s normal station was professor of Systematic Theology. It was his privilege to spend his days in his office and classroom in suburban Minneapolis, studying Scripture and theology, teaching aspiring young pastors, and preaching as the opportunity arose. His was an ivory tower vocation, and he needed never to get his hands dirty. Yet there he was, in a town so small you could view it *in toto* on Google Maps large enough to recognize your old house and the trees you used to climb, had you lived there.

From teaching seminary-level theology to teaching children in vacation Bible school—quite a descent, that was. But the children loved it, particularly when he brought out a dummy and engaged it in elementary-level theological discussions. I imagine that would have been quite a sight, had the deans of other seminaries, particularly the larger, more prestigious ones, gathered to watch. It certainly wasn’t his most dignified moment. But he wasn’t thinking about them, or even himself. For the sake of those children, he humbled himself.

That was only one of many personal encounters I was to have with Dr. Monseth over the next 20-or-so years. On each occasion, the gospel and his concern for my soul was foremost on his mind.

It is customary, I suppose, to offer exaggerated praise for departed friends, but I will, without hyperbole, repeat the words written by Izaak Walton of the puritan Richard Sibbes:

Of this blest man, let this just praise be given,  
Heaven was in him, before he was in heaven.  
(Walton, *The Works of Richard Sibbes*)

His descent didn’t end there. There was no fancy hotel for this distinguished guest. He was given a room in a house where lived a boy who, I’m afraid, was something of a nuisance. With the boy’s coaxing, the professor found himself in the dirt in the back yard, driving trucks and bulldozers, building roads and digging holes. Of course I don’t know for sure, but I don’t think that was his preferred recreation. But he had something else in mind. While driving and digging, he talked to the boy about Jesus. He spoke of sin and the need for a savior. He asked the boy if *he* knew Jesus, and pressed him to look after the state of his soul. That was the one thing on his mind, and he was willing to bring his diplomas down into the dirt for the sake of the gospel.

It would be blasphemous to try to make a one-to-one correlation between any man and our Lord, but surely you can see the shadow of Christ in his humble service. Since I was that boy, I’ve often thought of it in the decades since, when I read “‘they shall call his name Immanuel,’ which translated means, ‘God with us.’” God with us: God in the dirt, God on our level. *God on my level.*

Reprinted with permission from the March 30, 2013, post on *The Thirsty Theologian*, a blog written by Kjos, from Hazen, N.D., son of Yvonne and the late Pastor Edwin Kjos.



JUNE 11

# WATERS IN THE WILDERNESS

“I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety nine just persons, which need no repentance” (John 12:25).

**N**one of us can help but rejoice when we hear of a new little arrival in someone’s home. With the birth of a child comes such bright hopes and anticipations for the future. The happy parents have plans and dreams in their minds for their little one. What a wonderful thing transpires in a human birth—a new life has begun, filled with expectation and promise; a family has been given a new member; earth has received a new citizen.

Also when the news comes of a new spiritual birth in God’s family, there is real gladness in the heart of a Christian. Think of the real significance of someone being born from above. He has been

delivered from the slavery of the devil. He has been forgiven for his sins through the blood of Christ. The Holy Spirit has come to dwell in his life. His name is added to the Lamb’s Book of Life in heaven. Hell has lost another candidate. How can we help but rejoice and praise God?

The halls of heaven echo with a far greater joy in the news of a spiritual birth than we experience on earth. The reality and meaning of such a transaction is realized perfectly in heaven alone.

*Dr. Francis Monseth served as dean of the Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary from 1981 to 2013. He taught systematic theology courses at the seminary beginning in 1971.*

*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.



# Witnessing disciple

BY PASTOR JONATHAN ABEL

**T**wo words stand out to me as I contemplate two central mission verses, which read, “But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations” (Act 1:8; Matthew 28:19, ASV).

The first word is *witness*. Recently we were at our national women’s conference in Southern Brazil. As I walked along the beach one evening I noticed some unusual holes in the sand. They looked about the size of a paint can. But when I looked in them, about a foot down, they opened up in to much larger holes. I found out later that they were sinkholes, and that the beach had many of them. Sink holes form when the tide comes in. As the tide goes out, the retreating water causes a strong suction in the holes. The locals are witnesses to the danger of these sinkholes. They warn visitors who swim there that they should not wade in water deeper than their waists. The week before we attended the conference, a father and two of his sons were sucked into one of these holes and drowned because they did not heed the warning.

A witness who knows the truth will do everything in his or her power to convey that truth, even putting their own life in danger if it means saving another life. We are to be that kind of witness, which is synonymous with evangelism—sharing the way

of salvation though the world may chose to reject it.

As defined in the English dictionary, to *witness* means to be a declarer of, attest to, or viewer of a situation, event, or happening. In the Greek, the word is (μαρτυς) *martus*, which is where the word *martyr* comes from. The idea this word portrays is going up to the witness stand and being ready to tell the truth and nothing but the truth, or being willing to suffer the consequences. In the case of a Christian, to be a witness means to be ready to die for a belief that he or she knows is true.

The second word that stands out to me is *disciple*. We are to disciple those who accept our witness. This means to walk alongside them and show them that we live out the truths we are witness to. In our walk we illustrate what we are trying to say to our hearers. I do a fair amount of preaching and teaching, but it is the discipling that makes it all so meaningful to me. As I work with our staff, students, church members and many others whom I meet day-to-day while doing the mundane things of life, these people are watching me to see if my walk matches my talk. This is challenging yet exciting, because it makes me want to walk like Jesus all the more.

*Abel and his family are AFLC missionaries serving in Brazil since 1993, currently planting a new work in Maringa.*



# OKC church opens Century Chest

Congregation uses event to reach out to local community with the gospel message

One hundred years ago, Virginia Sohlberg had an idea. On April 22, 2013, that idea had the eyes of a city and state focused on First Lutheran Church, Oklahoma City.

On that Monday a packed congregation watched as chest that had been buried in the basement of the church 100 years earlier was opened by the Oklahoma History Center. Television crews were present and video of the event was streamed live to area classrooms, where students watched history in the making. Among the dignitaries present were Governor Mary Fallin, Mayor Nick Cornett, and president of 1889er's Association, Billy Fogarty.

"It wasn't just opening a chest," said Pastor Jerry Peterson, who serves First Lutheran, "It was spiritual. We had an opportunity to share the gospel."

Opening the Century Chest was a mirror image of an event that took place 100 years earlier when Governor Lee Cruce, Mayor Whit Grant, church members and local citizens gathered to bury a copper vault under 12 inches of concrete in the basement of what was then known as First English Lutheran Church. In the vault citizens placed items they hoped would be of interest to Oklahoma City residents 100 years later. A brand new pair of ladies leather shoes. A 1913 Pioneer telephone. A Kodak camera. A phonograph with three voice recordings. A plate with the seal of the Chickasaw Nation. A pen used by President William McKinley. A quilt hand-stitched with the names of local residents. Photos, artwork, poems, and messages written to the future.

"The messages are so filled with hope for future generations," said Peterson. "Their hope was that what they had done would move the city and state forward to a great future."

When Sohlberg, who was a member of First English Lutheran, came up with the idea of burying a Century Chest, it was originally intended as a fund-raiser for a



TOP: The sanctuary at First Lutheran Church, Oklahoma City, is filled to capacity as Pastor Jerry Peterson reads an invocation written by Pastor Newton Royer 100 years earlier. ABOVE RIGHT: Virginia Eason (Sohlberg) Weinmann (granddaughter of Virginia Sohlberg who was the originator of the Century Chest), hands the first item to Pastor Jerry Peterson. ABOVE LEFT: Items from the Century Chest are displayed at the front of the sanctuary.

Mueller pipe organ, which is still in use today. But Peterson was able to transcend the secular with the spiritual to a crowd of mostly unknown quantities.

"I was able to explain that it wasn't about the building or the organ. It was [that] our worship and our focus was on Jesus Christ," he said.

First Lutheran Church, located in the heart of downtown Oklahoma City, has been struggling of late to find ways to reach out to the local community. The event has given them an opportunity to connect with

a cross-section of their community. Their hope, according to Peterson, is to continue their relationship with the History Center by burying another Century Chest in 2014, the 125th anniversary of the Oklahoma land run. Until then, the community looks forward to a display of the current Century Chest contents, planned for this fall at the History Center.

"I still believe God is not through with this by any means," said Peterson.

Visit First Lutheran's Web site ([www.firstlutheranokc.org](http://www.firstlutheranokc.org)) for more information.



# With thanks

BY LIZ MCCARLSON

**D**ear members of the WMF, Thank you for all of your support for the Association Free Lutheran Bible School over the years: for praying for our students, faculty, and staff; for giving gifts (scholarships, furniture, kitchenette equipment, etc.) to our campus; and for coming to eat, drink coffee, worship, and share God's Word with our women. Thank you.

Many WMF women ask if there is more they can be doing for AFLBS. There is more, but it is really more of what you are already doing.

Please continue to pray for our students, staff and faculty. There are too many joys and challenges that we each face to mention here, but we always appreciate prayers that God's will would be done and that He would use our school for His glory.

Please continue to financially support AFLBS students. Give scholarships to students from your church. If you don't have a student from your congregation attending AFLBS, donate money to AFLBS to be used for scholarships or other needs.

Please continue to encourage students from your congregation and/or family to attend AFLBS. You can even do this by promoting or bringing students to any of our campus events.

Please continue to support the young women and men in your congregation. Ask them to be involved in your congregation's ministry, give them opportunities to use the gifts God has given them, personally invite them to church events that they don't normally attend, and encourage an attitude of mentoring in your congregation. As you support the teens in your congregation, God may be using you to plant a seed of desire in their hearts to devote

a year or two to the intense study of God's Word. As you support the young adults of your congregation, you may be allowing AFLBS alumni to apply what God has taught them in their time at AFLBS.

Most importantly, whether it is in Bible studies or rallies, church dinners, or every day conversations, let the gospel permeate everything that the WMF does. As humans, we tend to be "doers," forgetting that we can do nothing on our own. Even if we know that God has forgiven our sins and we are clean in His sight, we still try to become better Christians by ourselves. The truth is, we can do nothing to earn God's favor and forgiveness. God has done and continues to do everything through Jesus and for Jesus' sake. However, in using our "Christian-ese," we can at times gloss over important distinctions between the law and gospel, which can leave people—even Christians—unsure in their faith, thinking they need to do something to earn forgiveness or that there's no hope because they know they cannot improve their status before God. Instead, we need to point them away from themselves and toward Jesus—to the cross.

In the end, our lives need to be wrapped up in Him, in the blood He shed on our behalf, in the price He paid to redeem us and save us from ourselves, and in the strength and desire He places within in us to do the will of the Father. Everyone always needs Jesus, even the students, staff, and faculty of AFLBS.

*McCarlson, whose hometown is Webster, S.D., serves as the dean of Women for the Association Free Lutheran Bible School.*





Members of the Covenant Summer Team serving AFLC congregations in 2013 include (from left) Carissa Quanbeck, Joseph Frech, Steven Peterson and Danielle Thompson.

## AFLBS names summer teams

Members of the AFLBS summer teams serving AFLC congregations in 2013 have been announced.

Members of **North Barnabas** include Krista Heylens, Marcus Goodfellow, Melody Nash, and Aaron Ocker.

Members of **South Barnabas** include Andrew Kneeland, Rachael Ballmann, Sam Nelson, and Megan Schierkolk.

Members of **Cornerstone** include Micah Klemme, Michelle Alverson, Cassie Maier, and Ben Franz.

Member of the **Ambassadors** include Abbie Carlson, Andrew Strand, Laura Hedstrom, Kyle Arneson, and Julia Erickson.

Members of **Foundation** include Brady Arneson, Andrew Quanbeck, Kari Knudson and Emalynn Dahl.

Members of **Covenant** include Steven Peterson, Joseph Frech, Carissa Quanbeck and Danielle Thompson.

Members of **Zion** include Timothy Larson, Zach Gann, Christine Tallman and Heather Hansen.

## AFLTS grad Martin Hlavenka

On Dec. 19, 1986, I was born as the third child to Miroslav and Anna Hlavenka in Trinec, Czech Republic. When I was finishing up high school I had to decide what I was going to do next in my life. There were many options I could choose from. As I was praying, I felt called to go to the Theological Seminary in Slovakia. I studied there for three years and got my bachelor's degree. I wanted to pursue a master's degree, but since the school did not offer



it that year I had to decide what to do next. I started working and after being encouraged by my pastor, I decided to apply to go to the AFLC Seminary.

Before my last year of seminary I married Anezka, who returned to the United States with me last fall to attend AFLBS. Thanks to that we could spend my last year of seminary together. During my three years of seminary I have learned to concentrate on the Word of God more thoroughly and I understand how important it is to focus on the gospel in my life and ministry. Lord willing, after I wrap up my studies at seminary, we are planning on going back to the Czech Republic to serve in youth ministry.

Please pray for us as we are getting ready for what the Lord has prepared for us.

## AFLC Home Missions offers ministry opportunities

### The NET Coffee/Rest House

Naknek, Alaska, is known as the salmon fishing capital of the world. Every summer fishermen and cannery workers from all over the world descend upon this tiny village, adding nearly 10,000 temporary residents to the community. These workers have no vehicles, so they walk to get from place to place. Pastor Jeff and Jane Swanson dreamed of offering these visitors a place to rest with a coffee shop atmosphere, stocking it with Bibles, tracts, and a warm Christian welcome. The Lord confirmed this dream when they were able to rent a building at a great location for very few dollars. Next, He provided workers to paint and freshen up this building. Now volunteers coming forward to staff this little shop, which is called The Net. Pray that the Word and His light will be shared this summer.

### VBS in the Villages

As weather allows, Home Missions pilots have been flying out to some of the villages near Naknek, Alaska, to hold worship services. There is a real need to share the gospel in the villages of Ekwo, Levelock, Igiugig, Kokhanok and Egegik this summer. After much prayer, plans are in place to send a VBS team into

these five villages this summer, June 9–July 10. This team will be dropped off by plane on Sunday, teach VBS for four or five days, and then be picked up on Wednesday or Thursday. They will stay in the little chapels in each village, which means bringing in food, bedding, etc. It is Home Missions' desire to bring the gospel to these children and begin to build relationships with the villagers. Volunteers have come forward to help with this work in Alaska. VBS will also be held in Naknek and South Naknek the weeks of July 15–26.

### AFLC Gatherings

Home Missions define an AFLC Gathering as a group of seekers (unbelievers or Christians) who gather for the purpose of seeking the Lord through the study of the Word to become disciplinarians. The intent is to enable these believers to mature in the Lord so that they can lay a foundation for the beginnings of a free and living AFLC congregation. Home Missions has Gatherings meeting in the following areas: Hastings and Waconia, Minn.; the Black Hills area of South Dakota; and Lisbon, N.D.

For more information on any of these Gatherings, please contact our office at [homemis@afcl.org](mailto:homemis@afcl.org) or call 763-545-5631.



# Christians & competition

BY PASTOR MARK JOHNSON

**T**he tag board tournament bracket hangs on the wall in my office. It was a great moment for our youth group, although ESPN was not there to report on our victory. Our youth group had won the “competitive” championship volleyball tournament at the 2009 FLY Convention. With good sportsmanship we graciously defeated creatively named teams such as the “Ligers,” the “Puppies,” “Team Zion,” and “Go Jesus.” And in a hard-fought game we beat a tough, talented Lake Stevens, Wash., team in the last match for the championship.

This was not the highlight of the FLY Convention for our youth that year. Rather, we relished the time spent in fellowship with Jesus Christ and each other, times of worship, prayer, and teaching, and letting God’s Word feed our souls. In July hundreds of youth and adults will converge on Estes Park to be “Broken,” built up and blessed in ways that only God knows. There will be tournaments, games, and competitions. But what does God’s Word say about being a Christian who likes to compete?

God’s Word speaks to us as we live our lives for Christ, whether we enjoy competition or not. We compete not for a “perishable wreath,” but for an “imperishable wreath,” that will never pass away ( I Corinthians 9:25). Are you a competitive person? What drives you? Better yet, who drives you? I have to admit I have some competitive juices my veins, and I pray that under the Holy Spirit’s control they can still be used for God’s glory.

In Paul’s day athletes were highly honored and esteemed by the Greek culture—though they didn’t earn multi-million dollar salaries. They had their egotistical challenges like we see in today’s

sporting world. Paul uses their examples to teach truths from God’s Word. Here are some questions to help flesh this out.

Are you in race? I mean God’s race, the race of living in Him, for Him, and through Him. Paul ran for the prize, “I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14). Paul’s life was all about honoring Jesus, and he considered himself crucified with Christ, “it is not I who live, but Christ who lives in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me” (Galatians 2:20).

If you are in the race, are you running for the prize? “Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win” ( I Corinthians 9:24). You often hear people say, “That was a good loss,” or, “I think the team needed that.” I would say there is no such thing as a good loss. If you compete, you do so to win. The same is true in our Christian lives. There is no need to settle for simply good enough, or to say, “That’s just the way that I am.” God desires for us to live victorious lives through the grace of God by the power of His Holy Spirit as He feeds us through His Word. “And anyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable” ( I Corinthians 9:25). May God give us grace in order that we may lay hold of eternal life and not be disqualified in the race of life.

*Johnson, who serves the Dalton Parish, Dalton, Minn., is the chairman of the AFLC Youth Board.*

## AFLC memorials: April

### AFLBS

Dr. Francis Monseth (7)  
Don Hansen, Ruth Claus

### AFLTS

Dr. Francis Monseth (31)  
James Hanson  
Janet Norr (2)

### Ambassador Institute

Dr. Francis Monseth

### Evangelism

Eileen Iverson

### FLAPS

Clarence Ahlberg

### General Fund

Dr. Francis Monseth

### Home Missions

Dr. Francis Monseth  
Selma Anderson

### Parish Education

Dr. Francis Monseth

### World Missions

Dr. Francis Monseth

## People and Places

**Pastor Robert L. Lee** has accepted a request from the AFLC Schools Board of Trustees to serve as interim dean of the seminary for one year beginning in June. Currently professor of historical and practical theology, his new duties will mean a reduction of his teaching load to approximately half-time. Lee is also the editor of *The Lutheran Ambassador*.

**Pastor Wayne Olson** is retiring this summer from the Faith-Eagle Butte, S.D., parish. He plans to return to his family farm near Edinburg, N.D., and be available for interim service in the area.

**Licensed Pastor Brad Putnam**, Cloquet, Minn., has accepted a call to serve Redeemer Free Lutheran, Ontonagon, Mich. Putnam has served Our Savior's Free Lutheran, rural Mason, Wis., for the past five years.

**Pastor David Keippela**, Wyoming, Minn., will be honored by a retirement party on Sunday, June 30, at Sunnyside Free Lutheran Church, Stacy, Minn., where he has served since 1993.

**Pastor Wayne Hjermsstad** has resigned from Grace Lutheran, Bruce, S.D., and accepted a call to serve Grace Free Lutheran, Bagley, Minn., beginning on Aug. 1.

**Pastor Jan Horne** has retired from service at Zion Lutheran, Ashkum, Ill. He has moved to Cedar Rapids, Iowa. **Licensed Pastor Don Gillespie** will serve the congregation.

**Pastor Steve Carlson** has accepted a call to serve as senior pastor of Ruthfred Evangelical Lutheran Church, Bethel Park, Pa., where he has served as associate pastor since 2009.

## Check out Wilderness Bible Camp

Wilderness Bible Camp, located near Lake Park, Minn., can be reserved for retreats, family gatherings, and individuals looking to spend time outdoors. The camp has RV sites (electrical, water, and sewer hookups), tent sites, and dorm rooms. A chapel, meeting area, bath house and kitchen are also available. The camp is open from June through October. There is no charge for stays, but free will offerings are appreciated. Contact the Maranatha Church office at 218-498-2808 for reservations.

## Reception to honor outgoing president

The Coordinating Committee is hosting a reception in honor of Pastor Elden and Faith Nelson and Pastor Richard and Clara Gunderson at the Annual Conference on Thursday, June 13, following the evening service. The reception will take place in the Tabernacle at the ARC. The Nelsons and the Gundersons will be recognized for their faithful service to the AFLC. Nelson has announced that he will not run for reelection as president this year and Gunderson will step down as assistant to the president. Committee members invite the our church family to be a blessing to these faithful servants with a card shower to honor and thank them.

## EPA chooses new executive director

The Evangelical Press Association (EPA) announced that longtime EPA member and former board member D'Arcy Maher, Colorado Springs, has been chosen to serve the organization as executive director. *The Lutheran Ambassador* is a member of the EPA.

Maher has served in leadership roles with such organizations as the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI). She takes over from Doug Trouten, Minneapolis, the outgoing executive director, who is passing the leadership baton after 11 years in that role.

## Alumni and friends day

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

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

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

The barbecue for alumni and friends will be held from 5 to 8 p.m. at Heritage Hall on the AFLBS campus in Plymouth. Donations of any amount will be accepted for the event, which will also include a silent auction. Reservations are required by July 15. For more information and to register, visit [aflbs.org/bbq](http://aflbs.org/bbq).

### AFLC BENEVOLENCES Jan. 1-April 30, 2013

FUND	REC'D IN APRIL	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$31,106	\$120,023	\$92,160
Evangelism	19,309	56,655	50,543
Youth Ministries	12,908	43,306	29,838
Parish Education	11,522	39,400	31,988
Seminary	33,001	95,202	81,505
Bible School	69,317	162,599	140,554
Home Missions	46,856	151,083	176,134
World Missions	51,734	160,262	124,745
Personal Support	39,945	153,854	173,542
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$315,698</b>	<b>\$982,384</b>	<b>\$901,009</b>

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

# World evangelism at home

“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation,” Jesus commissioned His disciples (Mark 16:15). And today, in one of the most incredible developments



Pastor Robert Lee

in mission history, the world has come to us. A 2007 book entitled *Mission and Migration* lists 52 African and Asian congregations in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area, and

it would be surprising if the list has not grown during the past six years. Some of our Bible school students and staff were privileged to see several of these places of worship during a City Vision tour last year in one part of the city. Cambodians, Koreans, Hmong, Chinese, Sudanese, Ethiopians/Oromo, Liberians, Eritreans, Kenyans ... and this is just a sampling of the international complexion that this community bears and is not even counting the large Mexican, Central and South American population here.

It is encouraging to know that many African and Asian immigrants were Christians when they arrived or have come to Christ here in America, and are reaching out to their fellow country-people with the good news of life in Jesus Christ. Yet the statistics also reveal that the majority of our new international neighbors are unreached and unevangelized.

How is it in your community? Has the world come to you yet? What will our response be? A pastor of another denomination commended his congregation for

the warm heart that they had for missions in other lands, but he grieved over the cold hearts toward the mission field that had come to their doors.

The theme of this issue is evangelism, and the various articles highlight the many facets of this vital ministry. How would the Lord have us respond to the world that has come to us? What are our congregations doing? What am I doing?

The Word of Jesus still stands: Go into all the world and preach the gospel. The door is still open. The Spirit still calls, gathers, and enlightens. The journey is not a long one. Go forth with joy.

## A tribute

The AFLC lost a choice servant on Good Friday, and I lost a special friend. It would be hard to think of anyone who was more a part of the life and history of our church family than Francis Monseth. Faithful to the Free Church heritage of his grandparents and parents, he stood with the little flock more than 50 years ago that sought to continue to strive for a fellowship of free and living Lutheran congregations.

His preparation was always to serve the Savior, whom he loved, within this fellowship. As a college student he traveled with the first two AFLC gospel teams during the summers of 1963 and 1964, ministering to congregations and Bible camps. A member of the first class of our seminary, after ordination and parish ministry he would become the first graduate to join the faculty. After several years of balancing teaching and a growing family with the de-

mands of graduate study, he would become the seminary dean, a post that he continued to fill until his death. His relationship with the seminary as student and professor spanned all but five years of the school's 49-year history ... truly a remarkable record. He laughed when I called him our Number One STAR faculty member: Still Teaching After Retirement.

We met during our col-

lege years, and I thought he might become a traveling evangelist some day. His evangelism ministry took a different turn from what I once expected, but just as concerned for the salvation of souls, centered in the classroom and literally touching the lives of thousands at home and around the world. Students will remember his unswerving confidence in the Holy Scriptures, his clear explanation of Lutheran fundamentals, his stand for an orthodox piety ... and his prayerful concern for them as individuals. He was revered and respected by all who knew him.

The first song that I recall him singing was “My Wonderful Lord,” and it is hard for us to imagine what it means now for him to see His wonderful Lord face to face. Christmas Eve will not seem the same without him singing “O Holy Night,” yet now the closing words, “His power and glory ever more proclaim,” will take on powerful new meaning.

I will miss my friend very much, but am comforted by the hope that our earthly “good-byes” are only for a while. I wish that he had written more, and that he were here to help with the history of the AFLC that needs to be written.

Blessed be his memory.

*How is it in your community? Has the world come to you yet? What will our response be?*



*something to share*

# The old nature, like a virus

BY MOLLY WIESEN

**I**t was just one little click of the computer mouse, followed by another click. I was naively seeking to download a program for my camera. Suddenly, the computer screen was filled with a foreign-looking page saying unfamiliar things. With dread, I quickly closed all the programs, and shut down my computer. What had I done? A trip to a technology expert revealed that my computer had been taken over by a tyrannical virus. The end result—he painstakingly retrieved and reinstalled everything (at a price), but my “documents” folder was empty! My heart sank. All my professional consultant work had been in there. Everything I wrote in the past three years was gone.

As I grieved my loss on the drive home, the Holy Spirit brought to mind how sin can be that way. Even as a Christian, I know my old nature (like a virus) shows up, faster than a mouse click. In most cases, there is no pre-conceived plot before my words or thoughts come forth in a sinful way. Like the click of the mouse, how quickly and easily words slip off the tongue that can hurt, discourage, or alienate someone. At times, it could be sharing with your neighbor that little “piece of information” you heard about someone. Perhaps a tone of sarcasm, a ridicule, or loud volume (yelling) is used. Like the computer virus, severe damage to feelings and relationships can follow. James 3 describes the tongue as a fire and a restless evil, full of deadly poison. How can I do so much damage when I claim to be Christ’s follower?

Then there are the quick “clicks” of the brain. What demeaning and disrespectful thoughts come to my mind when I don’t even willfully try to create them? Have you stood in a store, at your workplace, or even in church, and suddenly you are thinking, “He isn’t very smart,” or, “too bad she smokes,” or, “I get so tired of hearing the same thing from her”? Not a big sin, most people would say. But what does God and His Word say? “You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. ... you perceive my thoughts from afar” (Psalm 139:1-2b).

Paul, writing in Galatians 5, describes the conflict between the sinful nature and the Spirit. Can’t we all identify with this thought, “the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit” (vs. 17)? He also proclaims the wonderful Truth, “So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature” (vs. 16). We have a choice. God’s Word exhorts us, “humble yourselves” (James 4:10), “repent” (Mark 1:15), “choose this day whom you will serve” (Joshua 24:15), “offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life” (Romans 6:13), and “take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (II Corinthians 10:5b).

Jesus is our great Redeemer. He offers us His Spirit each day. He forgives and restores—He even led me to locate my documents. Praise Him, He is growing me in His likeness.

*Wiesen is a member of Bethel Lutheran Church, Grafton, N.D.*