

THE LUTHERAN 

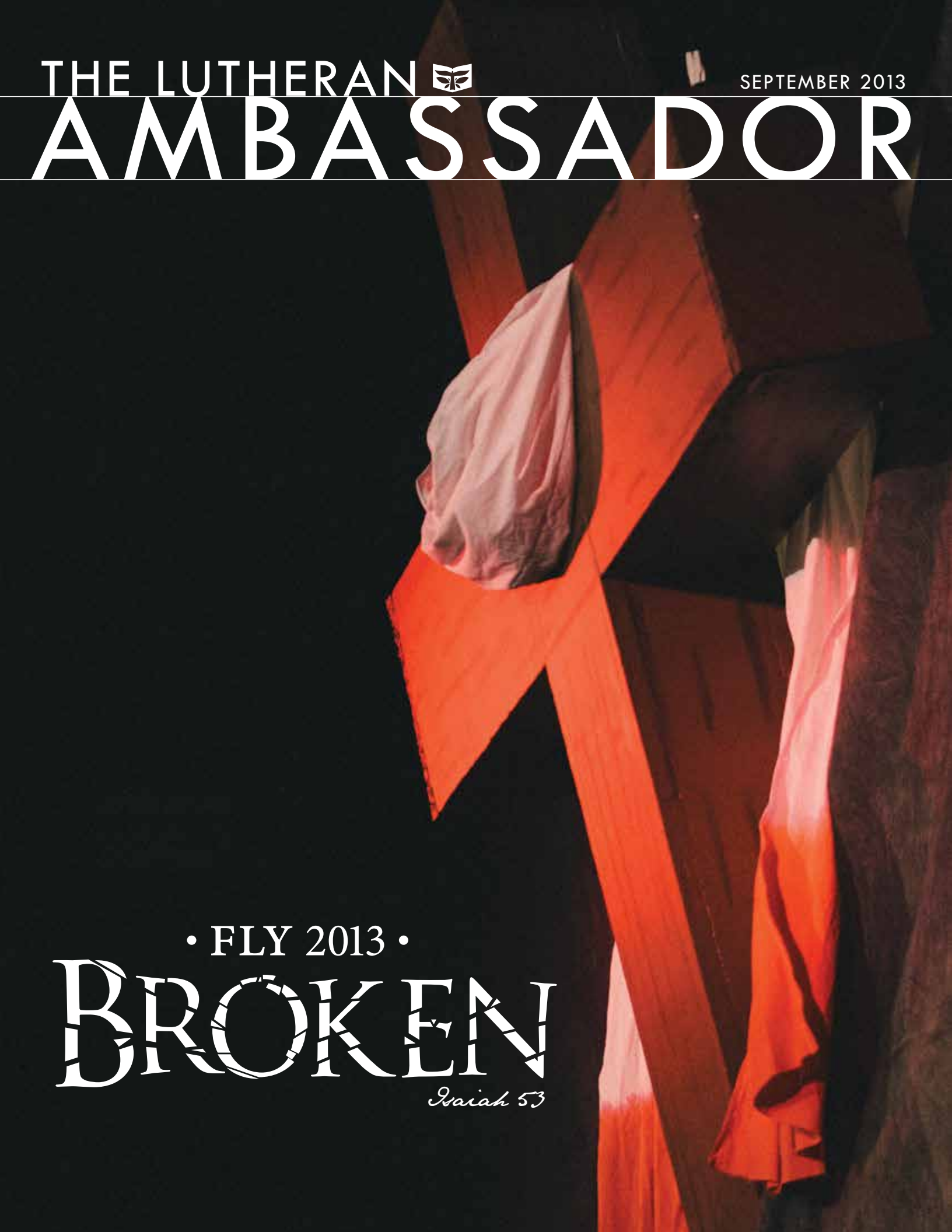
SEPTEMBER 2013

AMBASSADOR

• FLY 2013 •

BROKEN

Isaiah 53



A Midwestern movement

BY JONATHAN ANDERSON

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness," said Jesus, "for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6). Times of revival have often borne witness to the truth of those words. People, many of them no strangers to God's Word and the church, become suddenly hungry for spiritual life or a greater experience of it. It is God who causes this hunger, and it is God who then satisfies it through Jesus.

It was that spiritual hunger which Paul Lindell witnessed at Rev. Evald Conrad's Minneapolis church, Trinity Lutheran of Minnehaha Falls, in the early 1930s. Men and women, broken of self by the Depression, flocked there seeking spiritual help. One by one, souls were saved in a continuous revival which swelled membership from about 200 in 1931 to 1,000 in 1938.

Evald Conrad had a passion for evangelism, and he was not alone. In January 1937, he and four Lutheran evangelists hosted a leadership conference so stirring that it gave birth to the Lutheran Evangelistic Movement, an inter-synodical organization for the promotion of evangelism and revival within the whole Lutheran church. Ministering especially through evangelistic services and Bible conferences in the upper Midwest, the LEM soon began seeing God bless its work with local revivals.

The LEM's first of many annual Bible conferences was held in Eagle Grove, Iowa, at the County Fairgrounds in late summer 1938. Eight days of five- to seven-hour Bible teaching and evangelistic preaching attracted so many people that the next year necessitated an overflow tent and police direction. By 1944, general hunger to hear God's Word by saved and unsaved alike was bringing attendees from 40 towns and a 100-mile radius. Crowds, such as 1,500 one Sunday, forced many to stand outside the tent or



listen from cars parked on surrounding streets. People of all ages were regularly saved during and after conferences, and revival permeated the region. For example, in Badger, Iowa, a bar owner heard a distinct inner voice telling him to lock his establishment forever. He did so and, before reaching home, received Christ who transformed him from drinking to providing for his family.

God also regularly sent revival to the LEM's family-oriented Deeper Life Conference, held each July at Mission Farms on Medicine Lake, Plymouth, Minn. (present site of Missions Inc. and French Park), with an emphasis on sanctification, Christian living, and service. Regarding Deeper Life's heavy schedule, Paul Lindell observed in 1944, "The people came to everything and asked for more. This kind of hunger and thirst after the things of God only God can give." In 1947, extra chapel seating still proved insufficient for morning adult sessions. Evening Tabernacle attendances pushed 2,000. Among Christians, the Spirit lovingly softened hard hearts and produced joy. Fellowship was heavenly. The harvest of souls was significant. Youth, especially, felt sin's seriousness; and nearly 30 percent of the 125 received Christ as Savior.

By the mid 1940s, spiritual hunger was, in fact, growing nationwide. Hundreds were being saved weekly at Youth for Christ rallies, and the radio broadcast with the largest national audience was *The Lutheran Hour* with Walter Maier's bold law and gospel preaching. The spiritual tide was turning, and events about to transpire would make revival the focal point of the whole country.

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

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If you see your kids or grandkids playing on-line fantasy games, take the opportunity to discuss the right use of imagination and stories. Then you can explain the greatest narrative of all—the one that has, as C.S. Lewis put it, the great advantage of being true.

—Charles Colson

The biggest lie about grace that Satan wants Christian parents to buy is the idea that grace is dangerous and therefore needs to be “kept in check.” By believing this, we not only prove we don’t understand grace, but we violate gospel advancement in the lives of our children. A “yes, grace, but …” disposition is the kind of fearful posture that keeps moralism swirling around in their hearts. And if there’s anything God hates, it’s moralism!

—Tullian Tchividjian

In every generation, God has been faithful to bring revival to His people and spiritual awakening to nations. In almost all cases, those movements of the Spirit were most evident among young people.

—Wendell Smith

Our generation has been programmed to pursue happiness, wholeness, good feelings about ourselves, positive self-image, affirmation, and cures for our hurt feelings and damaged psyches. But God is not as interested in these ends as we are. He is more committed to making us holy than making us happy. And there is only one pathway to holiness—one road to genuine revival—and that is the pathway of humility or brokenness.

—Nancy DeMoss



FLY 2013

By Pastor Robert Lee

The mirror of God's law shows us the depth of our sin—what we are, as well as what we've done. Broken is our condition, and broken in spirit we stand before a holy God. The message of the gospel points us to Jesus Christ, God's beloved Son, who suffered and died because of our sin. He was broken for us.

This life-changing proclamation of law and gospel was powerfully preached and taught last month at the YMCA campgrounds near Estes Park, Colo., as nearly 1900 AFLC teens, adult advisors, and staff gathered for the biennial FLY (Free Lutheran Youth) convention. The theme of the convention, *Broken* (Isaiah 53), was clearly developed during the evening services and morning Bible studies in an impressive unity of theme and sessions.

The packed buses, vans, cars and shuttles converged on the campgrounds on Monday, July 1, and the staff guided the groups through registration and housing assignments. The opening evening service in the Longhouse auditorium featured Pastor Jason Holt, St. Michael, Minn., director of AFLC Youth Ministries, as the preacher, who introduced the theme for the week.





Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? ¶ He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. ¶ He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. ¶ He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. ¶ Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. ¶ Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, ¶ yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. ¶ But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; ¶ the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. ¶ We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; ¶ and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. ¶ He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; ¶ he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. ¶ By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? ¶ For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken. ¶ He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, ¶ though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. ¶ Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life a guilt offering, ¶ he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand. ¶ After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light [of life] and be satisfied; ¶ by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. ¶ Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, ¶ because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. ¶ For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Isaiah 53

Other evening speakers were Pastor Michael Brandt, Rapid City, S.D.; Pastor Brian Wolfmueller (LCMS), Aurora, Colo.; Pastor Adam Osier, Wadena, Minn.; and seminary intern Joshua and his wife Amy Skogerboe, Bethel Park, Pa., who spoke on Thursday evening when the guys and the girls met separately. Offerings were received each evening: for AFLBS, AFLC World and Student Missions, AFLC Home Missions, and AFLC Youth Ministries. Services were followed at 9 p.m. by “Night LYF,” led by the inimitable Pastor Jonathan Unverzagt, Sparta, Wis., as master of ceremonies.

The first sessions of the mornings were the Bible studies, led for the junior high youth by Pastor Phill Hooper, St. John's Free Lutheran Church, Duluth, Minn.; and for the senior high youth by Pastor Brent Olson, Robbinsdale, Minn., newest member of the AFLC Schools faculty. Following these session a great variety of workshops were offered—48 in all—with intriguing titles such as “Life in a Broken World: Casting Light on Discouragement and Despair” (Jen Erickson), “Arming Our Teens (and Ourselves) Against Pornography” (Jeff Berryhill), “A Young Adult's Guide to Finding a Church” (Pastor Micah Hjermstad), “The Queen of the Universe, Beyonce Knowles, C.S. Lewis, and Absolute Truth” (Pastor Jim L. Johnson), “Healing Homes for Hurting Children” (Erl and Nancy Langness), “The Impact of Social Networking for our Lives and Relationships” (Daniel Keinanen), “Creeds, Confessions, and Continuity” (Pastor Dennis Norby), “Tearing the Roof Off Boring Christianity” (Owen Parsley), “Following Jesus in a Gay-Friendly Culture” (Wendy Westlake), etc. The evening speakers also conducted well-attended “Talk Back” workshops, where teens could ask questions and discuss the messages.

The afternoons provided time for mountain climbing and sports tournaments—Ultimate Frisbee, basketball, volleyball—as well as organized opportunities such “Articulate” (learning how God's Word and various art forms can intersect our lives); auditions and a talent show; a mission presentation, “From Complacency to Compassion” by Becky Abel; a concert by the AFLBS Ambassadors; and the movie, *October Baby*.

Teens were asked about the highlights of the FLY convention, and several mentioned the Thursday service and the youth group gatherings that followed. Others spoke of the incredible scenery, the thrill of being a part of such a large gathering, making new friends, and the work of God in their lives during the week.

One can hardly say enough words of appreciation to the 2013 FLY Committee (Pastor Brett Boe, David Olson, Nathan Olson, Jon Langness, Christina Osthus, Jon Nelson, Pastor Jason Holt, Chris Rasmussen, and Sharon Rykhus) for their long hours of planning and hard work in making the convention a smooth-running (at least to this observer) reality. Working together with two dozen point people who served in such areas as music, housing, video production, security, crisis control, recreation, first aid, etc., the entire team of volunteers did a great job of coordinating this largest of all AFLC gatherings.

Music continues to be a major part of the FLY experience. Thanks to Adam McCarlson, Sioux Falls, S.D., Katy Dahl, Plymouth, Minn., and members of their teams for leading the convention in worship. One of the unique features of FLY 2013 was the use for the first time in many years of traditional forms of worship such as the confession of sin and the creeds.

The YMCA facility and staff continue to provide an excellent venue for the FLY conventions. The use of two large dining areas meant manageable lines at mealtimes, there were sufficient and more than adequate sites for the workshops, and the housing accommodations were exceptional. Continued development of the campgrounds means that we should have no fears of their ability to meet our needs in the coming years as FLY attendance continues to grow.

The newly elected FLY Committee members for 2015 include Pastor Eric Rasmussen, Fergus Falls, Minn. (president); Pastor Adam Osier, Wadena, Minn. (first vice president); Daniel Hurner, Plymouth, Minn. (second vice president); Stephanie Nelson, San Antonio, Texas (secretary); Heidi Anenson, Plymouth, (devotional life secretary).

Lee, editor, is the interim dean of AFLTS.

THE BROKEN ONE

By Pastor Phil Hooper

Broken. Not exactly a word that we like to hear. In fact, whether it's describing a computer, a transmission, a fingernail, or a new birthday present, *broken* is seldom a word that we appreciate, or even tolerate. When it happens to something we own, we fix it, replace it, or bury it in the garage, hoping to do something about it (but knowing that it will likely molder there until judgment day).

Knowing this, it can seem somewhat strange that *Broken* would be the theme of a conference—especially a youth conference. Marriage conference? Fine. Parenting conference? Sure. Financial conference? Depressingly appropriate. Youth conference? With all of the vitality and energy of youth, why even begin to talk about brokenness?

In reality, *broken* describes and defines nearly every part of life as we know it. There has been an increase of so-called broken homes, and people often complain and write songs about broken dreams. But I am not referring to what life's hard knocks bring. I am referring to life itself. We were meant to live happily, walking with God in close fellowship, living at peace with the earth and its animals, in a paradise with mild enough conditions (and wholesome enough people) as to make clothing unnecessary. We were meant to live forever. Eden had no locks, no fences, and only one rule. This is hardly the case now; the vast majority of our work, technology, laws, and even recreation tie into or reflect that brokenness. We forget how entirely broken our lives are—how saturated in habits and patterns that were never meant to be. God has to continually remind us of this, by His Spirit and through His Word. The sooner and more often we talk to our youths about this, the better.

Broken also describes how we best know God. He is not broken like we are broken. He has no sin, selfishness, bitterness, or brokenness in His nature or actions. He is completely good, and entirely loving.

Nevertheless, we know Him best by His brokenness: Jesus, who never sinned, “was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him” (Isaiah 53:5, NIV). He was crushed in the separation and wrath that our sin deserves, which He took upon His cross. Because He did this, we now have hope. We stand, by faith in Him,

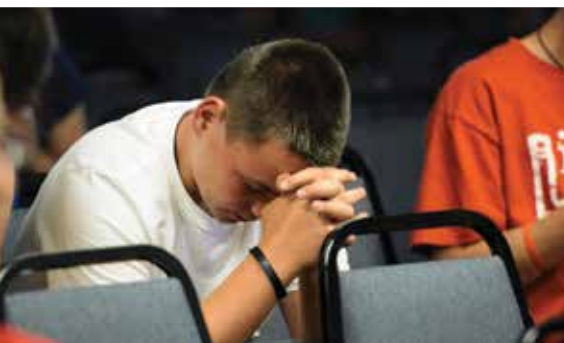
righteous in the eyes of God's justice, able to live a new life by faith and His Spirit, and to look forward to a day when we join Him in an eternity where all our brokenness is fixed: “by His wounds, we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5). This is the good news of God; this is the ultimate example and demonstration of the love that God has for us, and for all people. Any description of the love of God that does not contain this at the forefront is a pale, insufficient glimmer, and a sad diminishing of who God has shown Himself to be.

The world we live in is full of people who are looking for supernatural experiences, wise sayings, or intense rules to fanatically follow, or else it wants religions that will vaguely give a few rules (but not enforce them), and kindly tell people to smile, and look for the good in all people. It has little interest in hearing that “All of us, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way ...” (Isaiah 53:6, NAS). It has no real problem with hearing about a loving Jesus, but would just as soon we not talk about His cross too much (too depressing!) and certainly not talk about everyone's sin (too negative, and possibly convicting!). Even within some branches of Christianity, there is a tendency to want to focus on bland platitudes and optimistic, pithy teachings, and skirt these two points.

I can say that it was a very good convention. I was blessed and encouraged, my own youths were challenged and encouraged, the mountains were beautiful, and the various studies and electives seem to have been well presented and received. There were a number of practical topics that were presented, which were all a part of healthy discipleship.

Most important of all, however, was that Jesus' brokenness—to cover our brokenness—stood front and center throughout the whole conference. This is the truth that youths of all ages need to see and live in: “to us who are being saved, it is the power of God” (I Corinthians 1:18, NAS). May we continue to acknowledge our brokenness, letting it point us, and those around us, to Jesus. May we rejoice at home, like we did in Colorado, for how great a salvation, and how great and loving a Savior we have. By His scourging—His brokenness—our brokenness is healed.

Hooper, Duluth, Minn., serves St. John's Lutheran, Duluth. He was the junior high Bible study leader at FLY.





THE BEST KIND OF

By Hannah Asfeldt



When I was first approached to write a testimony from FLY 2013 my initial thought was that it would be a very easy and fun testimony to write. FLY is a youth camp—how much easier could it get? However, once I actually sat down to begin writing I became overwhelmed with the task at hand. It was only a few days after the convention and I had to once again begin the process of admitting to myself the disgusting magnitude of my sin. It is a painful thing to put into words, the depth at which I don't deserve Christ's love.

The theme of FLY 2013 was *Broken* and was based upon Isaiah 53. Throughout the course of the week, the speakers opened our eyes to the gravity of our sin. I remember Pastor Bryan Wolfmueller stating, "If you knew how bad you were, you couldn't even stand to be in a room with yourself."

I have always known that I am a sinful person, I am human after all, but I had never realized how offensive sin truly is. The senior high Bible study teacher, Pastor Brent Olson, told us our sin was more disgusting than a 50 pound bucket of dirty diapers.

Imagine getting this message drilled into your head for an entire week: a message solely based on how revolting your

BROKEN

sinful existence is. It doesn't sound like a very uplifting week and, to be honest, it wouldn't have been had the speakers stopped there. At one point I didn't want to hear any more, but as the speakers began pointing us in the direction of the cross, I knew I had to listen.

Instead of being left with the guilt of my sin, I was violently lifted up and thrown at the foot of the cross. As we were taught about the physical, emotional, and spiritual brokenness of Jesus at Golgotha, I opened my heart and allowed the message of the cross to enter in.

Physically, Jesus was mangled beyond human recognition, suffered massive blood loss, was stripped naked, and hung with nails to suffocate upon a wooden cross. We were shown videos and images from *The Passion of the Christ* to fully understand His physical turmoil.

Emotionally, Christ Jesus was charged with crimes of which He was not guilty, ridiculed in front of thousands, spit upon, and mocked in front of His mother and followers. He bore human shame, and was hated more than even the murderer Barabbas.

Ultimately and most painfully, Christ was spiritually broken. Jesus Christ, the son of the Most High God, was literally abandoned by His Father as He hung upon the

cross. Jesus Christ, the sinless One, was rejected and willed to suffer by the Creator of the universe. Jesus Christ, the only One with the power to rescue us from eternal damnation, was crushed as an ant is crushed under the heel of a man.

While this picture may seem gruesome and appalling, it is truly a beautiful image. A beautiful image that is meant to break your heart. It was here, where we put all of the pieces of Christ's brokenness together, that I finally broke. All of my life I had been a Christian but had never understood this: Jesus' love for me could not have been anything less than infinite in order to suffer as fully as He did. He was broken for me. Not for glory, not for fame, not for riches, not for a good story, not even for the rest of the world—but for me.

This realization caused me to understand why we had been shown with such harsh words our sinfulness. Until we are able to understand how undeserving, how disgusting, and how sinful we are, we can't understand how much love it took for Christ to be broken and destroyed as He was.

On Thursday night we were split up into boys and girls. The girls were blessed with a message from Amy Skogerboe. Amy spoke about the brokenness in her life: the death of



Jeremy Erickson and her lifelong struggle with depression and anxiety. She presented us with I Corinthians 4:7-11. Verse 10 struck me at the heart. It states, "[We are] always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies."

Finally everything made sense. Every ounce of brokenness I had ever felt had a purpose. Yes, God willed it, but He willed it

for a reason. My suffering, my hard times, my brokenness was a way for Christ's eternal sacrifice to be shown to the rest of the world in a way to which others could relate. If I allow Yahweh to reign in my heart regardless of my worldly circumstances, than the love of Jesus Christ would manifest in my body. We suffer because Christ suffered. We are broken because Christ was broken. We die to sin because Christ died for us.

And thus, we came to the end of an amazing FLY 2013. Every one of us left a little bit more shattered and broken than when we had come. However, we weren't broken on the devil's terms of tearing us down, we were broken on God's terms: magnifying His ultimate sacrifice and the love by which He made that sacrifice.

Asfeldt, Sioux Falls, S.D., is a member of Living Word Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls.

FOR YOUR TEE


By Jeff Berryhill & Angela Sabates



Many teenagers face difficult emotional, relational, and spiritual challenges, even if they are committed Christians who are active in solid churches. The number of teens who sought help at the FLY Convention from peers, dorm leaders, and staff (including the Conquering Challenges Team) was a reminder that teens who are believers may be especially reluctant to acknowledge their struggles.

Students shared difficulties ranging from temporary and minor frustrations to long-term and serious struggles, some even life-threatening, and often for the first time. And in many ways God ministered through His Word and His people to these teens. Such issues are widespread, and often teens don't talk about them.

NS, A HEALER



Thus a crucial question is: how can we create a safe environment for teens to express problems and experience directly the truth that the wounded God is our Healer (Isaiah 53:5)? We can help create that safety by approaching with acceptance, by listening well, by asking the right kinds of questions, and by offering helpful input.

First, a teen is more likely to be open or honest about struggles when an adult shows acceptance, openness, and empathy. Acceptance is just that—accepting teens where they are rather than insisting that they already be in a better place. Jesus modeled this repeatedly, often with people who were considered less acceptable: women, people with illnesses, people with obvious sins (e.g., Luke 8:43-48). If Jesus could meet people where they were even when they were in a bad or sinful state or being less than truthful, we can afford to do that, too.

By openness we mean being willing to share something of our own struggles and show that it is okay to be vulnerable. Often at FLY a teen shared a personal struggle after a leader or speaker talked about his or her own struggles in some area. And empathy is being willing to communicate caring for someone's struggles, even if we think he or she shouldn't have that struggle or should be handling it differently. Jesus' grief over Lazarus' death (John 11:35), even though he was going to raise Lazarus from the dead, is a good example of empathy first and intervention second.

Keep in mind that many youths who have emotional struggles feel fear and shame about opening up. Many young people don't understand that openness about one's struggles is a good thing and not a sign of spiritual weakness. Males, especially, often have difficulty reconciling their manhood with their vulnerability as a child of Christ. For this reason, it is essential that adults be intentional about conveying the message in words and actions that we are meant to rely on one another, and that acknowledging one's vulnerability and receiving honest feedback is a crucial part of God's healing work (e.g. Ephesians 4:11-15).

Effective listening also helps teens to share their struggles. Much has been written about techniques for

listening, but we want to mention just two items for listening with teens—being attentive in a casual or relaxed way at first can help put a teen at ease, and letting the teen finish speaking before offering your response helps show that you value what he or she is saying. Teens will often avoid telling us things if they think we will respond too quickly or strongly, so we may need to hold back at first and let them speak even if we think we know what to say. The Scriptures admonish us to “be quick to hear, slow to speak” (James 1:19) and to avoid the foolishness that comes with giving an answer before one hears (Proverbs 18:13). Each child is different, as we know, and thus their responses to the same event are often very different, as well.

The important things we must listen to are sometimes verbal and sometimes nonverbal (as in cues such as posture, amount of eye contact, and tone of voice). If we don't listen with our eyes as well as our ears, we may miss important nonverbal language that helps us discern what they are feeling. And of course those who work and interact with youths must also prayerfully listen to the Holy Spirit, who helps us discern relevant issues, including spiritual issues, that may be present but not obvious as we listen to the teen (I Corinthians 2:12-14).

We can also create safety in the way we ask questions. A more general or open-ended question (“How are you doing this week?”) creates safety by allowing more response options than a more specific question (“Are you feeling sad about your parents' divorce?” or “Are you thinking about hurting yourself?”). So it is best to start with general questions and move to specific ones as the teen shows comfort and as we better understand what we need to know. Teens are more likely to answer a difficult question openly and honestly (e.g. about abuse or about suicidal thoughts) if you work your way up to that question.

Once a teen has opened up about a struggle, acknowledge that as an essential step and respond in a way that maintains the safety you have built. Ask God for guidance, offer your input with humility, be willing to admit if you don't have a good answer, and demonstrate that seeking additional help if needed is an acceptable and wise thing to do. Above all, offer continued support and follow through with that support. And rejoice in being a part of God's redemptive work.

Jeff Berryhill, PhD, is a therapist with the Minnesota Renewal Center, St. Paul, Minn. Angela Sabates, PhD, is a graduate of Bethel University, St. Paul. Together, they headed up the Conquering Challenges counseling team at FLY.

IN TWO YEARS

By Marquelle Dahl

Are you coming? Hearing this question for the third time, I hesitated. Being one of the last campers to board the bus, I wasn't ready to leave. It was the first time I had attended FLY, the summer of 2011. My two older siblings and my parents had been to FLY multiple times, and I had heard so many great things about it, but actually experiencing it was much different than expected. Over the course of that week, I had gotten a "spiritual high," and I didn't want it to leave me. I clearly remember standing outside of the bus, soaking in the beauty of the mountains around me and the stars above me. I was overwhelmed! Already starting to be anxious for FLY 2013, one thought entered my mind, "What will it be like, the next two years, life between FLY?"

FLY, Free Lutheran Youth, is a youth convention where approximately 2000 people attend a week-long camp in Estes Park, Colo. The week is filled with fellowship, worship, different sessions, games, and much more. The scenery is beautiful. Mountains are everywhere you look. You can start off your morning with a prayer walk or an early morning hike to watch the sunrise. Your day is filled with different sessions, fellowship, games, worship, and other activities. Throughout the week, there is a very small amount of students who don't reach a spiritual high and/or grow in their faith. Many campers leave the event asking themselves how they are going to keep their faith alive until the next FLY convention.

Teenagers today are commonly pushed toward joining different sports, groups, clubs, etc. For the last couple of years I had been a volleyball player, but competition for a spot on the team had caused the sport to become unenjoyable to me. Looking for something new, I joined cross country. In this sport, teams run competitive races of 2.5 miles for girls, and 3.1 miles for guys. Running up to 10 miles for practice was not exactly an easy task for me. Having been brought up in a Christian home, my parents were always telling me to be a Christian example to my classmates, teammates, and friends. I had always been afraid that if I talked about God, or prayed in front of other people, I wouldn't fit in. But at my

very first cross country meet, I was proven wrong. I was honestly terrified for my race; I had no idea what to expect. The jerseys were uncomfortable, the competition around me unfamiliar. I thought for sure I was going to be sick. Right before the race, as I was beginning to warm up, a friend of mine grabbed my hand and without explanation ran back with me to our camp. My team was huddled in a circle, and when I approached, I started to realize what was happening. Everyone was praying. My first reaction was confusion. We're allowed to do this? My teammates were praying? I pushed the questions away and focused on the prayer. With every word I was flooded with encouragement and all my worries about the race faded away. I ran the race knowing that we were giving the glory to God, and it was a great feeling. At every single meet, we pray as a team. With every single race, we give the glory to God.

I know what it's like to be a Christian in a public school. It's tough standing up for your faith and what you believe in. However, we know that good will always come from it. First Timothy 4:12 says, "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity." This verse has been a great encouragement to me, and with every situation I am in, it always comes to mind. Age really doesn't matter when you're leading others to Christ. When we're encouraged to be Christian examples to the people around us, some of us say, "I'm too young! I'm not mature enough!" But as Christians we always need to be a witness and an example. My cross country teammates proved that to me.

The theme of FLY 2013 was *Broken*. Jesus breaks us so that we can be used by Him. I cannot be more excited to be broken by Jesus. The focus of the week was on Isaiah 53. Jesus was broken physically, mentally, and spiritually for us, "... and by his wounds we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5).

Going to FLY is an experience that cannot be just described, but needs to be experienced. I cannot wait for what FLY 2015 has in store for me!

Dahl is a member of Our Saviour's Lutheran, Thief River Falls, Minn.







The week's activities at FLY 2013 included a variety of morning workshops, afternoon recreation, and evening services followed by Night LYF.



FLY 2013 offered students many opportunities to interact, including organized basketball (top left), volleyball and Ultimate Frisbee tournaments.

In many workshops (middle left, above) students were asked to interact with each other as facilitators illustrated different concepts.

On Tuesday, camp attendees gathered for the traditional group picture (left). Each day was capped off with Night LYF, modeled after popular late-night talk shows (above).



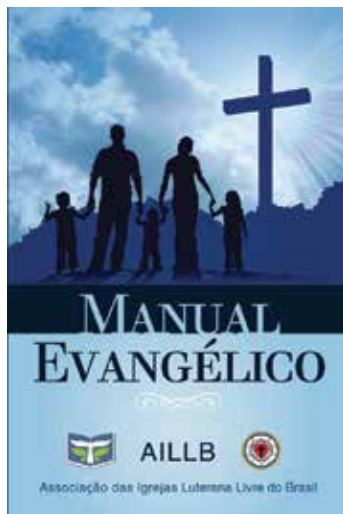
Tools for evangelism

BY BECKY ABEL

*“You are good and what you do is good; teach me your decrees”
(Psalm 119:68).*

Missionaries and Christian workers around the world declare the gospel message that God and His Word are good and true. As people repent of their sins and accept the free gifts of salvation and life in Jesus, they respond with a desire to learn, understand, and obey His ways. We have had the pleasure and responsibility of instructing new Brazilian believers in the ways of the Lord for many years.

Retired missionary Pastor John Abel compiled an instruction manual in Portuguese more than 50 years ago that has been used successfully in our Free Lutheran churches for years. We are happy to announce that after some revision and additions we recently published a 224-page manual to use for instructing new Christians and preparing people for membership in our churches. Our son, Matthew Abel, a short-term missionary assistant, is the third generation of teachers using this material. He teaches a group of 13 teenagers and another group of three young couples who meet together weekly to study the Bible. It's been exciting for Matthew



to motivate his students to know God and grow in Him. They are learning to have a personal devotional time every day, and each of the students prays at each class. They are sensing the joy of living for Jesus and walking in His ways.

Matthew writes, “These classes have given me a real sense of responsibility as I have the opportunity of helping from perspectives, opinions, and convictions. I believe that our worldview and theology completely define how we make decisions and live our lives. So, I approach the task of teaching God’s Word with the sobering knowledge of James 3:1: ‘Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers; for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.’ Basically, I am trying by the power of the Spirit to help people to grow in faith, to develop an eternal perspective, to live for God’s glory, to comprehend and interact with grace, and to love God with an entire heart of gratitude, letting that guide all their actions and decisions. Pray that the students at church will persevere to the end. Pray that their minds be active and their hearts open. Pray for lasting transformation and that they would be equipped to transform others.”

Thank you for your support of missionaries and short-term assistants to help evangelize and teach the truths of God’s Word. Together we are being used by God to build His kingdom.

Consider being a part of world missions by contributing financially and prayerfully. Those who are interested in contributing to this worthwhile publication project can send gifts to AFLC World Missions designated to the “Free Lutheran Handbook” project. For more information and updated mission news check out www.aflcworldmissions.org.

Abel and her husband, Pastor Paul Abel, serve as AFLC missionaries in Campo Largo, near Curitiba, Brazil.



Answered prayer at FLY

BY CHRISTINA OSTHUS

As I look back on FLY 2013, I am led to focus on one of our biggest goals as a committee: that students would come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. The moment this is expected to happen at a Christian event is often called the “altar call,” but we as a committee rarely used this term. As Bryan Wolfmueller said in his sermon Wednesday evening, the vision that many of us have of an altar call consists of dimmed lights and soft piano music, a gentle pleading from the speaker to come forward to the altar, and a cheer from the congregation celebrating with the angels in Heaven for each person who has been saved that night.

There are so many reasons for us to unpack this picture. What is your first reaction? You might think immediately about the pieces that can be used to manipulate the congregation. You might think of the beauty of the celebration that should be taking place when someone has “crossed over from death to life” (John 5:24). You might worry about the lack of follow-up that you have seen at some evangelistic events.

While I do believe that our Lutheran understanding of law and gospel and of bondage of the will is very beneficial to both new Christians and evangelists, there are many more facets to this conversation. Part of the reason I say this is because of my friend Amanda, who has attended Baptist churches her whole life. When she was preparing to speak at a teen camp a few years ago, she was led to the preaching of Paul Washer, who speaks passionately against the manipulation and the cold focus on numbers often inherent in altar calls. Amanda was so convicted by this that she did not include an altar call at the end of her message, but instead

gave the students time after the message to spend alone with God, and then had them gather with their cabin groups for discussion and prayer.

What we did each evening of FLY 2013 was similar to what Amanda did: after the message, our FLY president, Pastor Brett Boe, came forward to say that there were adults and a counseling team available to talk and to pray in Longhouse South, a room behind the stage. The worship team led two more songs, and during this time students who needed prayer went out to the other room.

As committee liaison to the spiritual care team, I saw that a common issue being dealt with was *assurance*. Though we had some students respond to the gospel for the first time, so many of them had committed before but were still not sure that they were saved. I do think that a dramatic altar call often focuses on the decision being made by the human being, which is contrary to the words of John 15:16: “You did not choose me, but I chose you.” When the focus is on the human acts of confession, prayer, and even baptism, an insecure Christian may worry that he didn’t do something right. However, when the focus is on God’s redemptive power and His own work at the cross, we can simply rest in our faith and know the blessedness that Paul speaks of when he reminds us that our righteousness is a free gift of God (Romans 4:5, Ephesians 2:8-9). If anyone realized this gift and received healing from his brokenness during FLY 2013, God worked through us in just the way we had prayed! Glory to God!

Osthus, Eagle Butte, S.D., was the secretary for the 2013 FLY Board.



Student Missions-Uganda takes part in Ambassador Institute classes

Members of the Student Missions-Uganda team (pictured above) were privileged to be a part of Ambassador Institute classes in Uganda. The teams distributed MegaVoice players to students who had completed the first term. Members of the team included (from left) Brandon Marschner, Amanda Flechsig, Taylor Groby, Kirstie Schierkolk, Hannah Lautner, Madi Carley, Trinity Williams and Ruth Gunderson. They spent two weeks in Jinja, Uganda, working under AFLC missionary Pastor Nate Jore.





Stronger together

BY LORI WILLARD

Giggling girls, quietly talking young moms, and smiling grandmothers greeted me in Stover, Mo., as I joined them for a mother/daughter banquet and Vision Seminar. The ladies had prepared beautiful tables and a delightful luncheon. After our delicious meal, we moved on to the program.

After everyone settled into their chairs, a Jenga game became an illustration. Some in attendance were familiar with the game and had played it before. Others had no clue what was ahead for them, but were excited to try. The tower of wooden blocks was up front. Each one present had a turn pulling out a block from anywhere on the tower. The object was to keep the tower from falling. Toward the end of the game, as the tower became more unstable, ladies became nervous and chose from the top of the tower. Others more daring chose a block from precarious, wobbly positions. “Whoa” and snickers were heard by all.

After each person present had participated in the game, the group wrote “Nehemiah 1-13” on her own block of wood. The question was asked, “If your block is missing, what does that do to the tower?” Various answers came from the crowd, but collectively they answered, “The tower became weaker and unsteady.”

Isn't this true for many aspects of our lives?

- In our personal life: when we don't spend time with the Lord, when we fail to follow the Holy Spirit's leading, or when we don't memorize Bible verses or pray to God.
- In our family life: when we don't minister to family mem-

bers' physical and spiritual needs.

- In our church family: when we don't minister in our churches as the Lord directs us to do something.

We discussed Nehemiah, who remains a superb example to follow as we tend to our relationship with the Lord, our families and our church families. He prayed, sought the Lord's leading, and proceeded to gather God's people together to work side by side in getting God's Kingdom work accomplished.

Following the study, the group joined hands in one line. As our hands were joined together, we agreed that we were stronger as a team. Then we interlocked arms and agreed that we were stronger still. The clincher to our collective strength came when we placed our arms behind each other's backs and continued to squeeze together. We became strong! What an appropriate representation of the importance of spending time with each other, ministering to each other, and praying with each other. We need each other. God created us for fellowship.

Hebrews 10:24-25 says, “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”

Thank you, Jesus, for giving us direction in our lives to move forward in what You want for us.

Willard, Everett, Wash., is the second vice president of the Women's Missionary Federation.

AFLC memorials: July

AFLBS

Ruth Claus
Phyllis Peterson (10)
Gordon Gunderson
Sandra Rieschl (2)
Marj Neilson

AFLTS

Dr. Francis Monseth (3)
Leroy Carlson
Howard Hokkanen
Betty Roark
Marj Neilson
Melvin Hovland
Sandra Rieschl
Georgia Romp
Pastor Michael Burke

ARC

Allen Anderson

Evangelism

Elda Watt

General Fund

Leona Smith

Home Missions

Palmer Tverdahl

Parish Education

Pastor John Strand

Youth Ministry

Marj Neilson

... in honor of

AFLBS

Oryen Benrud

People and Places

Shane Remington, a recent graduate of the MTI program at AFLBS, has accepted a youth ministry position with Emmanuel Free Lutheran Church, Williston, N.D.

Dr. Mark Olson, Farmington, Minn., has been appointed by the AFLC Schools Board of Trustees to be the interim CAO (Chief Academic Officer). He will continue his ministry as pastor of Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran Church, Lakeville, Minn.

New adjunct instructors at AFLC Schools for the fall semester are: **Pastor Jason Gudim**, Golden Valley, Minn.; **Dr. Fred Hall**, St. Paul, Minn.; and **Pastor Lloyd Quanbeck**, Moorhead, Minn.

Pastor Michael Peterson, Alexandria, Minn., has accepted a position as hospice chaplain at the Knute Nelson Nursing Home/Health Care Complex, Alexandria. Peterson continues to serve St. Paul's Lutheran Church, rural Kensington, an independent congregation.

Pastor Jerome Nikunen, Richfield, Minn., has accepted a call from St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Cloquet, Minn., where he has been providing part-time interim service for the past eight months.

Missionaries John and Ruby Abel, Hitterdal, Minn., spent six weeks in Brazil during February and March. Pastor Abel, 87, who has made 19 trips back to Brazil since his retirement 20 years ago to assist the AFLC work in evangelistic outreach, writes that this will probably be their last trip there.

Correction: In the August issue's report from the Annual Conference, it was noted that if a resolution was ratified at the 2014 conference "the vice-president would begin serving a four-year term in 2015." The term would actually begin in 2014.



Seminary hosts Summer Institute of Theology

The annual Summer Institute of Theology was held Aug. 5-9 at Heritage Hall on the campus of the AFLC Schools in Plymouth, Minn. Classes offered this year included "Biblical Education in the Congregation," "Studies in Romans," "History of the Reformation," and "Introduction to Christian Theology."

In memoriam: Pastor Michael Burke

Pastor Michael Burke, 73, of Humboldt, Tenn., was called home to Jesus on July 15.

Born in Chicago on Nov. 23, 1939, he was the son of John and Dorothy Burke. He graduated from Lane Tech High School and attended Wright Junior College, both in Chicago. He worked in the insurance industry until he was called to serve the Lord in parish ministry in 1986. He attended Lutheran Brethren Seminary, Fergus Falls, Minn., and served churches in Tacoma, Wash., Cooperstown, N.D., Ottawa, Ill., and Ishpeming, Mich. He most recently served Ebenezer Free Lutheran, Humboldt.

Surviving are his wife, Beverly; three sons, Sean (Julia) Burke, St. Paul, Minn., Bret Burke, Perham, Minn., and Tim (Christie) Burke, Sioux Falls, S.D.; two daughters, Maureen, Tampa, Fla., and Heather (Jon), Roseville, Ill.; and seven grandchildren.

The service was held July 19 at Ebenezer Free Lutheran, Humboldt, with Pastor Roger David officiating.

AFLC BENEVOLENCES Jan. 1-July 31, 2013

FUND	REC'D IN JULY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$30,225	\$200,395	\$170,598
Evangelism	7,567	80,741	81,006
Youth Ministries	6,097	61,675	48,774
Parish Education	16,282	71,174	64,913
Seminary	29,842	172,489	132,163
Bible School	57,896	317,159	264,478
Home Missions	40,931	261,313	279,746
World Missions	28,328	235,974	232,031
Personal Support	44,670	259,110	275,873
TOTALS	\$261,838	\$1,660,031	\$1,549,582

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

Absolution and the AFLC

The doctrine and practice of absolution have been a topic of discussion among some of us since the FLY convention, when one of the evening speakers closed his message by declaring, as a “called and ordained” pastor, the full forgiveness of all our sins. A good Lutheran question to ask is: What does this mean? The following might seem a bit technical for some readers, but please stick with it until the end.



Pastor Robert Lee

Martin Luther defined absolution as nothing else than the preaching and proclaiming of the forgiveness of sins. *The Ambassador Hymnal* includes an absolution (called the

Declaration of Grace) in both forms of the communion service as well as in the common service, but only after the confession of sin, with several options suggested (page 51), so the practice in some form may often be used among us. One even hears it used occasionally in some blended worship settings. The old *Concordia Hymnal*, used by most AFLC congregations 50 years ago, listed an absolution as part of the first order of service, but not in the second, which was our common service.

The small catechism states: “Confession consists of two parts: the one is that we confess our sins; the other, that we receive absolution or forgiveness from the pastor as from God Himself, in no way doubting, but firmly believing that our sins are thereby forgiven before God in heaven.”

It was more than 100 years ago that some of our theological forefathers debated this issue, struggling to reconcile the objective gospel with the subjective appropriation of truth. At its core, the controversy may have been mostly a matter of emphasis, and yet the opponents

were convinced that the fruit of a wrong emphasis was harmful to the faith.

Dr. James Hamre, in his 1986 biography of Georg Sverdrup, clarifies the Norwegian-American theologian’s position on the issue. Sverdrup believed that the central issue was the forgiveness of sins, and held that the Lutheran Church had never distinguished between justification and forgiveness. The basic issue at stake, then, was this: to *whom* does God give the forgiveness of sin, and *when* does He do it? The response of Sverdrup’s opponents was that all are justified through Christ’s death and resurrection, whether they believe it or not, but also insisting that this is only effective for those who believe.

Sverdrup maintained that this separates justification from faith, and “tended to make the forgiveness of sins an automatic, mechanistic occurrence, dependent only on the pastor pronouncing certain words, rather than creating a personal transaction between the merciful God and a poor, lost sinner” (p. 65). He sought to emphasize that penitent and believing sinners are justified and forgiven.

Our confessions speak of absolution as “a great and precious thing” (AC XXV), but seem to promote its use in a private and personal context rather than a public service. Luther explained that the difference between preaching the gospel and absolution is that the first publishes forgiveness everywhere, while the second tells it specifically to one or more desiring it. Thus, he places it in a private rather than public context, too. Most pastors have probably found occasions to pronounce a declaration of grace or absolution to troubled sinners in private soul care.

What about the use of a declaration of grace in public worship, as many of our congregations do? Surely we should agree that they are most fitting when following a confession of sin, even though there is al-

ways the concern (as Sverdrup expressed) that it would be an automatic, mechanistic occurrence, instead of a personal transaction between our heavenly Father and a poor, repentant sinner. Also, most of the declarations of grace that would be used in AFLC worship setting are conditional, for example, “The Almighty and merciful God grant unto you, being penitent, pardon and remission for all your sins, time for amendment of life, and the grace and comfort of His Holy Spirit.”

It is good for the soul to hear that the price for its sins has been paid in full by the Savior.

Our Free Lutheran heritage emphasizes the need for a personal meeting between God and the sinner, resulting in a personal relationship between the Father and His children. There are many times and seasons in our spiritual journeys when the objective truth foundational to this relationship provides solid comfort for troubled souls, as it has for this writer. Yet this should never detract from the present reality of life in Christ.

Don’t take the words of absolution lightly, if your congregation includes one in the Sunday services. It is good for the soul to hear that the price for its sins has been paid in full by the Savior. Pray for each part of the worship service, too, not only the declaration of grace, that the familiar words might not become merely mechanical for you and others. Finally, pastors, do not neglect declaring God’s forgiveness unconditionally to the penitent sinner who may lack assurance. It’s a gospel word, and there is power in the gospel.

Now let the discussion continue, in mutual respect and with understanding.

something to share

In memoriam

BY MOLLY WIESEN

The teacup was surrounded with pastel flowers and the phrase “Tea Time.” The decorated shirt was the perfect birthday gift for my friend who cherishes her morning tea. I had to buy it, even though it was pricier than my usual budget. Do you have those connections when a certain sports team, song, fashion style, food, or other activity reminds you of a specific person in your life?

As odd as it may seem, birthday gifts and funerals have shared an important similarity to me in recent months. The sequential deaths of a long-time close friend, an immediate family member, and some respected people within my congregation and our AFLC prompted a similar reaction to finding that perfect gift. To help us process our losses, we remember with fondness the traits, hobbies, and loves of that person. Picture boards are full of the people, places, activities, and passions associated with that person. Stories of remembrance are told of his/her life histories that include the foods cooked best, the favorite team, the funniest incident, etc.

As a believer, I am convicted by the important influence these daily living things imprint in the minds and spirits of those around me. Am I recognizing that the habits, personality traits, and intentions observed (and sometimes experienced) by those around me are all part of my witness? Perhaps more significant are the effects of my actions, words, and attitudes in day-to-day encounters. God’s Word is full of instruction on how we are to live, and that should be the cornerstone on which my life is based. Considering this, I soon realize how far short I fall.

The Lord Jesus didn’t give us an out when He said, “... and you

will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). He intended for us to start within our own home, extend to our community and region, and eventually impact people whom we will never physically meet. Perhaps the Jerusalem (home) part is the most challenging. Just try spending the day with a 3-year-old grandchild, or an aging parent, or an irritable spouse. Then there is the inefficient store clerk, the neighbor with his unleashed dog, or the unprincipled public official. Charitable giving and praying for the unbelievers in a foreign country are a piece of cake compared to “Jerusalem and Samaria.”

At a funeral some years back, the pastor recounted stories of the deceased witnessing to people and “telling his story of salvation.” Before her passing, a woman in our church left a Bible verse to remind us of Christ’s coming. A friend of mine loves that one of her grandchildren describes her as “my Jesus-Grandma.” Some of us may have a harder time telling our story in words and actions. But the life-impacting influence we can have must be our impetus to seek change with God’s help. Colossians 3:17 exhorts us, “And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus ...”

What do I want family, friends, and acquaintances to remember about me when I am gone? I shudder to think about the possibilities. May we all strive to share by our words and deeds, “Come and listen, all you who fear God; let me tell you what He has done for me” (Psalm 66:16).

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