



2024 • Issue 1

News

The Association of Free Lutheran Congregations



Who We Are

THE OPEN BIBLE

God's Word is the foundation of faith and life.

•

THE ASCENDING DOVE

The Holy Spirit ascending is symbolic of the freedom of the congregation and the power and guidance of the Spirit.

•

THE GREEN VINE

The vine is the emblem of the living congregation bearing fruit for the Lord.





A movement of the **WORD & THE SPIRIT**

Whether you are new to the AFLC or have been a part of this movement for most of your life, thank you for taking the time to read about all the wonderful things that our ministries are doing to share the gospel and encourage our congregations. Thank you for investing in the work of the AFLC and for partnering with one another in this beautiful experiment that is our association.

As I visit with people and explain the AFLC to them, I love to tell them that what we have here is a treasure. We are a movement that relies entirely on the Word and Spirit. In other words, what we have is a gift of God, and that is precious indeed. We embrace the life we find in Christ and the freedom that brings, both to the individual and to the congregation. We stand on the firm foundation of God’s inerrant and authoritative Word, and we care deeply for souls. We love our neighbor and seek to serve others as the Spirit leads.

Above all, we know and love Jesus. Paul says this is of “surpassing worth” (Philippians 3:8). Jesus is our priceless treasure. Certainly this treasure is not unique to the AFLC, but without Jesus, we would be nothing. In him, we have all we need, and not just for this life, but for eternity.

Praise God for his extravagant love and provision. I pray that our congregations, and the cooperative ventures highlighted in the following pages, would be marked by the joy and peace that comes from knowing Jesus, our treasure.

~ **Pastor Micah Hjermstad**

The AFLC is a fellowship of independent congregations, who have chosen to be interdependent for the purpose of accomplishing service in the Kingdom of God that cannot best be done alone. The Association of Free Lutheran Congregations (AFLC) was organized in 1962 by 40–50 congregations of the former Lutheran Free Church (LFC), and has grown to become a Lutheran church body in the United States with more than 265 member congregations.

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Prepping for **ALASKA SUMMER MINISTRY**



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pring is upon us, and the Alaska Mission is prepared for an exciting summer of ministry. We will again be reaching out to the people of southwest Alaska with the good news of God's grace and salvation.

The Alaska vacation Bible school team will be flying to remote villages to hold summer VBS for young people who are excited to learn about God and enjoy having visitors from outside their villages. The Net will be open to welcome and serve those away from home working in the salmon fishing industry. KAKN Christian radio station will be sending out God's good news over the airwaves as the only station that can be heard in Naknek, Alaska, and the surrounding villages.

During the winter months we have weekly worship services and Bible studies as flying weather permits in three locations, but the long sunshine-filled days of summer are when the most people come to Alaska. Ministry opportunities abound.

Over the years there has been a great response from AFLC volunteers to help serve the Alaska Mission in many ways. Some have helped bake treats to serve and witness in our Naknek coffeehouse, The Net, for the thousands of commercial salmon fishing workers who come every summer. Others come as work teams to complete needed construction or maintenance projects. In the past two years volunteer lay leaders and pastors have helped with preaching the Word and leading Bible studies.

To prepare for the full summer schedule of flying, yearly

inspections and maintenance projects on our three FLAPS airplanes are completed during the winter months. Over the years, many have volunteered to help with these aircraft maintenance tasks. The Mission Aviation Training Academy (MATA) in Arlington, Wash., was founded by Pastor Jeremy Crowell's father, Pastor Mike Crowell. Their goal is to train pilots and aircraft mechanics for service in Christian mission fields all across the world. For many years they have had teams fly up to Naknek to help do annual inspections and other required maintenance to keep our planes ready for service. It is truly a blessing to see God at work in his kingdom. The MATA helps get real world experience in a mission field setting, and FLAPS gets some welcome company and much needed help on the aircraft maintenance. This year MATA sent teams up twice during the winter to finish some larger projects on our six-seat Cherokee Six airplane. These trips were truly answers to prayer and further evidence that God will provide what's needed and more as we seek to follow him.

Hebrews 10:24 says, "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works."

Maybe God is calling you to help serve him in some way up in Alaska this year. Please allow yourself to be open to the blessings and opportunities God has waiting for you.

~Kevin Lee

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REJOICE *in the* LORD ALWAYS

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you (Philippians 4:4–9, NIV).

The 2024 theme for the Women’s Missionary Federation is “Rejoice in the Lord, Always!” Our WMF Day will focus on this theme and our 2024 Bible study, “Exuberant Joy,” written by Angi Lombardo, digs into the Book of Philippians. Here are a few ways that the WMF is working to rejoice in the Lord this year:

- **Resources for you:** Please check our website (aflc.org/women) for tools to help your local women’s group. We also send out helpful email updates. Sign up for the *Helping Hand* newsletter, or check out our Facebook and Instagram accounts.
- **Encouragement:** It has been our joy to send some care packages to our Home Mission congregations this past year.
- **Joy, the exuberant kind:** Consider ordering copies of our 2024 Bible study in Philippians and join women across the US in studying it together.
- **Opportunities:** Across the US, in local congregations, women are working together to help us as we fund specific projects. Thank you for the generous gifts to these projects.
- **Intercession:** Praying women across the AFLC join in this crucial ministry as we work to support missionaries and mission fields. And God answers prayer!
- **Challenges:** The WMF is creating new ways to connect with all women to work together to experience God’s blessings.
- **Events:** From local to district and national events, our women gather to grow in faith and give to support mission work. Our mission is the Great Commission. The harvest is plentiful, and the laborers are few.

~Lavonne West



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Ministry Program CHANGES & UPDATES



New Hire

Home Missions is excited to announce the hiring of Pastor Del Palmer to serve as our communications coordinator. This quarter-time role will oversee the recruitment, formation, resourcing, and scheduling of our Home Missions field representative team. Field representatives will be able to travel and share about the work of Home Missions in local congregations. This will foster greater prayer, awareness, and support for new and existing congregations.



“I am thrilled with this hire and the possibilities for the furthering of our ministry. The AFLC is a family of congregations that does best when it’s connected on mission. Pastor Palmer brings a wealth of experience and knowledge from his years as World Mission director, especially with sharing AFLC ministries in our congregations,” said Pastor Andy Coyle, director.

Pastor Palmer will begin by building his team of representatives who are hopefully geographically spaced out for greater efficiency and coverage.

Pastor Palmer, no stranger to our congregations, is excited about this new role. He said, “Statistics and experience show that new congregations are very effective at reaching new people for Christ. The Lord has provided me with the opportunity to use my gifts and talents to reach these individuals through AFLC Home Missions. As the communications coordinator, I will maintain communication with the church plants and share the exciting news of this ministry with AFLC congregations, both in person and through a team of volunteers. Let us pray that the Lord will use the Home Missions ministry to reach many for Christ.”

Relaunching Parish Builder Program

Our heart is to grow the next generation of church planters in the AFLC. This pipeline is extremely important as we look ahead. We believe the Parish Builder program is a key part of that pipeline. The relaunched Parish Building program will have a three-pronged goal for each student: mentorship, training, and service. While serving within the congregation is a vital component of the Parish Builder program, the relaunching will prioritize the personal formation and maturation of the student.

Our Parish Building program will have a formal mentorship curriculum to ensure all students have the opportunity to learn and grow spiritually, theologically, in relationships, and emotionally. With this goal, our Parish Builders will be placed in congregations that have three necessary qualities and systems: mature leadership, a healthy environment, and a care team. We look forward with anticipation to how the Lord will grow our students through this program.

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A hunger for the WORD OF GOD

I can't wait to start studying the Bible with Ambassador Institute!" said the uncle of one of the first Gulu graduates. I was pleased to hear his excitement about learning the Scriptures, but I was especially thrilled when he told me he is a pastor! Such is the situation in the villages where men are appointed spiritual leaders without formal training. The Ambassador Institute is still needed.

It was a special day for Pastor Brent Raan, AFLC missionary to Uganda, to graduate the first three students from the program in the Northern Uganda city of Gulu. This class has caught the vision of the Ambassador Institute theme verse from II Timothy 2:2, "And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also."

Our Ambassador Institute curriculum is a mobile Bible school to bring the gospel wherever a volunteer teacher can travel. Since 2009, the AFLC World Mission's Ambassador Institute continues to be the core of our mission work in Uganda. And attending the Ambassador Institute is affordable.

Beyond the small registration fee, the expenses of the teacher's transportation are usually shared among the students in the class. Where this is beyond their means, many of the teachers themselves cover the cost to travel to villages—often deep into the bush—hours from paved roads. Our Ugandan teachers and leaders know the importance of the training.

We just celebrated the 11th graduation season of the Ambassador Institute in Uganda. During this last season, the Ambassador Institute conducted seven graduation ceremonies, awarding two-year Bible certificates to 70 students. Two developments are affecting what the next season of the Ambassador Institute will look like. First, Pastor Nate and Rhoda Jore's decision to end their call with AFLC World Missions in July 2024 will impact the leadership training. Second, Pastor Brent and Emily Raan's work permit has been denied, so it is uncertain if the Raan family will return to Uganda for another missionary term. Thankfully, God has provided capable Ugandans to carry on the ministry. Please join me in praying for the ministry of the Ambassador Institute and how our AFLC World Missions department can best continue the ministry even with the possibility of no full-time missionaries in Uganda.

During this past year, some of the Ambassador Institute students have started meeting for Sunday worship in the city of Jinja. While not yet fully organized, they have chosen the name "Ambassador Church," and those attending are finding the sweet fellowship of like-minded believers who hunger to hear the Word of God preached in purity. Brent Raan and I recently met with the Ambassador Institute leadership to explain our AFLC Fundamental Principles, to provide some core AFLC resources for the group to consider adopting into their doctrinal statements, and to present some Bible study gifts from the Women's Missionary Federation for the ladies. Please join us in prayer for Ambassador Church Jinja and the ongoing ministry of the Ambassador Institute.



Top: Graduates from the 2024 Gulu class pose with Pastor Brent Raan.

Above: Ambassador Institute leadership.

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~Pastor Earl Korhonen



Continued growth IN LOCAL CONGREGATIONS



You can invest in the outreach in Brazil that continues to grow. To donate to the Abels or any of our AFLC missionaries, you can send your check to:

AFLC World Missions
3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.,
Plymouth, MN 55441

Designate your gift to the AFLC missionary of your choice. Or you can give online at aflcworldmissions.org/online-giving/.

Jonathan and Tamba Abel have been AFLC missionaries in Brazil since 1992. Jonathan continues to pastor their church Maringá and he travels to the SETELL campus in Campo Mourão to teach night classes. Tamba coordinates women's ministry and discipleship.

Even after years in the field, they are still witnessing new ways the body of believers in Brazil are encouraging one another and building each other up as an association. Jonathan stated, "I think this has probably been the one of the most connected times and we ever had."

Much of this might be because of increased communication between the churches with social media. "With social media, everybody's following everybody else." Jonathan said, "They're sharing the programs that they're doing in their churches; we're sharing what we're doing. It's getting to be a bigger family—more united."

At Jonathan and Tamba's church, for example, the outreach opportunities just continue to grow. What is so encouraging to the Abels is that most of the ideas are coming from individuals in the congregation. In the past, when bringing an idea forward for a new program, worries about needing volunteers or funding have wavered confidence in starting something new. "[But our laypeople] are learning to step out in faith," Jonathan said. Now, many in their congregation are involved in three or four programs a week.

This year, congregation members in Maringá filled their calendar. Throughout the Brazil summer, they put together vacation Bible schools (VBS), camps, women's teas, and Easter celebrations. Describing the VBS at Maringá, Jonathan and Tamba wrote:

"VBS this year was about putting on the whole Armor of God, with some 30 plus kids of which some eight had never come to our kids' programs before ... One week later some of these kids attended our kids' Bible camp in Campo Mourão. How satisfying to see non-churched kids participating enthusiastically and learning Bible verses."

Jonathan and Tamba are motivated by stories like Gilce and her sons, Joal and Antonio, who are new to the church. She first was inspired to attend church when her son came to her after attending kids club and declared, "Mom, we need to go to church." After hearing the Word at Maringá, Gilce has come to faith and is growing while being discipled by Jonathan and Tamba. Her boys are also on fire for Christ and hungry to learn more.

Whether for the individual or for the whole AFLC of Brazil, the power of God is working through his Word and motivating service for one another. The gospel continues to go forth in Brazil and individuals are being transformed.

~**Madison Greven**
Communications Coordinator

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Opportunities to serve on THE MISSION FIELD

We rejoice in the Lord for the many opportunities we've had this year and are looking forward to having in years to come. It's been truly a pleasure to be involved with our local congregations, missionaries, and of course our ministry team members and missionary assistants.

Journey Missions is an avenue to see and experience an AFLC foreign field that has been prayed for and supported over the years, while personally participating in the work in a hands-on and tangible way. Whether on a short-term ministry trip or serving as a missionary assistant, the vision for this ministry is for people to serve our Lord Jesus cross-culturally.

As we look at 2024, we have trips scheduled again for churches and congregation members to join. This coming spring, Journey Missions led the FLBC team to Mexico through the cross-cultural mission's program. This has been an ongoing blessing to see young adults plugging into international ministry and seeing how they have a place in missions. Looking toward summer and later 2024, Journey Missions is planning a Brazil trip in June, and we are finalizing a schedule for an Israel opportunity in November, Lord willing.

We also work with congregations on planning and coordinating trips so if there's an additional trip that you would like to take to one of our fields, we are very happy to have those discussions, too. We are here to serve our congregations and help our church members see the mission field.

In 2023 Journey Missions was blessed through our missionary assistants who are seeking to serve internationally for a longer period of time under our missionaries and ministries. The missionary assistant program gives opportunities for people to serve on a foreign field for a time frame longer than a typical ministry trip and is suitable for college students through retirees. The hope is to give opportunities for people to invest in our fields in a way they wouldn't be able to on a short-term team.

So far in 2024 we have had four missionary assistants on the field. Zach and Carey Ritland along with Logan and Trevor Blom served in Brazil and Paraguay from January to February. We also had Jared Trost along with sons Josiah and Micah, traveling to Uganda in March. We are thankful for their service this spring.

As I think about the people who are serving, and who have served, with and through Journey Missions, I praise the Lord for those who "go," fulfilling the call the Lord has placed on their lives for this time. People are excited to travel and see the work the Lord has done and we're thankful that they have chosen to utilize Journey Missions.

I also rejoice as the Lord calls and sends out others through your finances and prayers. You have provided, and continue to provide, fellow believers an opportunity to serve the Lord in a new and powerful way. We give glory to God and praise Him for you senders; you are having a great impact on the world for Jesus!

~Jon Nelson

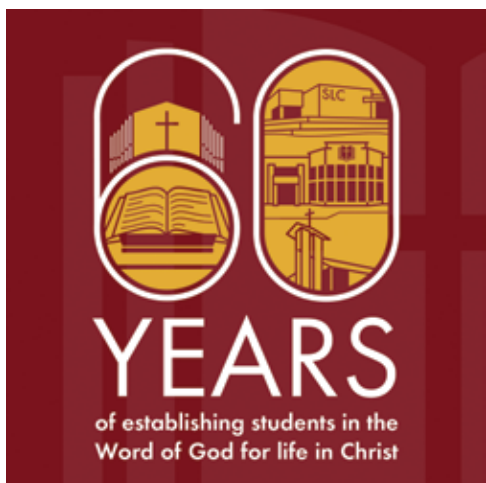


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Celebrating 60 years of ESTABLISHING STUDENTS



I saw a quote recently from an “education expert” claiming that “everything we teach students today will be irrelevant 20 years from now.” He probably said that to shock or to sell, but I have heard similar statements from others. As an educator, this is appalling: You need a substandard philosophy of education for that statement to be true. As a *Christian* educator it makes me think: “What could I teach now that will still be relevant twenty years from now...”



Students start at the Free Lutheran Bible College, then go anywhere, grounded in God’s Word. Free Lutheran Seminary students are trained as students of God’s Word, most of whom go on to become servant pastors in free and living Lutheran congregations. With souls transformed by the Word of God, our graduates go on to shape families, congregations, and communities around the world.

The year 2024 marks 60 years since the founding of FLBCS. Our mission continues: *Establishing students in the eternal and inerrant Word of God for a life of faith in Jesus Christ and faithful service in His kingdom.* Thank you for your support through the years. Others look at what we do as a miracle: One area of study, full-time, in-person, on a beautiful campus, affordably, with no federal or state aid. This is a miracle. For more information go to our web site at flbc.edu, and check out our annually updated strategic plan at flbc.edu/strategicplan.

~Dr. Wade Mobley, FLBCS President

What does FLBC teach?

Read this sampling of course descriptions and find the full list of Bible classes at FLBC.edu/academics.

History and Geography of the Biblical World

This course offers students a foundational framework for future study of the Bible. Particular attention will be given to the social, political, geographical, and historical background of the ancient biblical world. (Freshman Core)

Apologetics, Ethics, and Christian Thought

Students will apply prior exegetical study to life in the family, congregation, and society. Students will learn the benefits/limitations of giving reasons and answers to simplify and explain the Christian worldview, while learning various frameworks for apologetics and ethics. (Sophomore Core)

Philosophy of Worship

This course offers an in-depth study of Biblical components of worship and of Christian music. It traces our musical lineage and elements of corporate worship through the Scriptures, the early church, the Reformation, to today. (Worship Ministry Elective)

Bible College Student Testimony



Jakob Rolf
Second-year

The Lord has used both the classes and community to grow me closer to Him. I have been made more and more aware of God’s constant faithfulness, reminding me to trust in Him always and serve Him faithfully with every aspect of my life.

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Whole life DISCIPLESHIP

Over the past five years at the Free Lutheran Bible College, we have chosen themes for the academic year. This year's theme was "Refined by Fire" based on Zechariah 13:9. This theme reminds us that a believer's life is not always marked by ease or linear growth. Growth in Christ is a challenging thing. It's a painful thing. But it is also a good thing. Being a disciple of Christ is exactly where God wants us.



This year has brought exciting change to the student life aspect of FLBC's ministry. Last summer we hired seminarian and lay pastor, Jeremy Larson, to serve as the Director of Discipleship. During his time serving as pastor at St. Paul's Free Lutheran in Fargo, ND, Jeremy saw the benefit of discipling small groups who are simultaneously trained to disciple others. This multiplicative approach models the discipleship of Christ with the Twelve.

This year, each FLBC student was assigned to a two or three-person discipleship group. Each of these groups were led by staff, faculty, or local congregation members. While small groups have formed throughout the history of the schools, the goal of these groups was to intentionally pair each student with a mentor with whom they could share and grow during their time on campus. Implementing new opportunities always has challenges. Balancing schedules and pairing groups proved difficult. However, many students appreciated the opportunity to grow in this way, and the goal is that such a method may be effectively employed by these students as they go to serve in congregations after graduation.

~Pastor Adam Osier, Free Lutheran Bible College Dean



Know a potential student?
Connect them to the
resources at
flbc.edu/admissions
or email
admissions@flbc.edu.



Equipping for future vocation

At the Free Lutheran Seminary, we continue to train men for ministry. There is an interesting diversity within our student body. The men range in age from 23 to 50. They come from seven different states, and we have one man from another country and language studying with us. Some of the men are single, some recently married and some with several children. Five of our seminary wives will have or had newborn babies this school year. But all our men have a passion to study God's Word and learn to apply it to Pastoral ministry. The study of God's Word is still the primary function of our seminary as we prepare men for ministry. Of the ninety credits our men will need to complete the Master of Divinity degree offered at the Free Lutheran Seminary, about half are in the field of Old and New Testament studies. The men are immersed in the ancient languages in which the original manuscripts were written, and they study the texts carefully, allowing the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth – John 16:13, "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth...".



Please pray for the 17 men who are currently studying for Pastoral ministry and pray the Lord of the harvest to send more men ready to answer the call to full-time ministry. "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." Matthew 9:38

~Dr. James Molstre, Free Lutheran Seminary Dean



Support the MISSION

If you could influence someone’s life to help them have a closer relationship with Jesus Christ, would that be a “game-changer” for you? When you support FLBCS through your prayers, encouragement, and financial resources, you DO make a difference in the individual lives of students. When a student realizes the investment someone has made to provide them the opportunity to study at FLBCS to become grounded in God’s Word, it’s a “game-changer” for them on a personal level. They understand the significance of generosity with appreciation. Thank you.



~**Sherry Mork**
Director of Donor Relations

What drew Dr. Jarrod Hylden back to campus to serve FLBCS students?

First, I wholeheartedly agree with the mission to establish students in the eternal and inerrant Word of God for a life of faith in Jesus Christ and faithful service in His kingdom. I am excited to be a part of this mission.



Second, I love the body of Christ. I have experienced the blessing of serving congregations with Bible College alumni, along with others who are spiritually mature. This maturity is necessary for the body of Christ to work properly and build itself up in love (Ephesians 4:13-16). As a teacher at FLBCS,

I hope to help students grow in spiritual maturity so they can make a positive impact in their congregations and, thus, in the kingdom of God.

Third, I love teaching God’s Word. Actually, I love reading and studying God’s Word the most. But once I’ve done that, I can’t help but want to share what I’ve learned with others. This is part of how God has created me anew in Christ Jesus. So, when I was called to teach at FLBCS, I didn’t hesitate. I believe this call is God’s way of helping me to walk in the good works that He has prepared for me to do.



Seminary Testimony

My time in seminary has given me a solid foundation to rely upon in ministry. It has grounded me in knowledge of God’s Word, in Lutheran Doctrine, and instilled upon me a great love for the congregation.



Scott Olson
2024 graduate

Attend an event

- July 26: FLBC Golf Scramble
- Aug. 5–9: Summer Institute of Theology
- Oct. 17–18: UpClose Campus Preview
- Oct. 18–19: Alumni Tournaments
- Nov. 14: 60th Anniversary Gala
- Dec. 6–8: Christmas at FLBC
- Jan. 15–16: Seminary Symposium

More info and registration at FLBC.edu/events

Giving

To see ways you can support the mission of FLBCS financially, visit flbc.edu/donate. Or use the QR code to direct you to our website.



Providing resources for YOUTH WORKERS

How can you care for the youth workers in your congregation—whether they are paid or volunteers? One way is to give them an opportunity to connect with others who are in a similar ministry context for encouragement, support, and prayer.

Starting in September, AFLC Youth Ministries will launch Youth Leader Small Groups. Our hope is to create a monthly, online setting for three to five youth workers to mutually encourage and support one another and to assist one another with various ministry questions that come up through a life of service in the congregation. While these monthly meetings do not emphasize any sort of formal training—like the Apprenticeship Program does—these groups will provide a time for each group to engage in meaningful and encouraging conversations that spur participants onward both in their personal lives and ministry endeavors.

Along with the Youth Board, Adam McCarlson (director), Jordan Langness (training coordinator), and Dan Hurner (networking coordinator) worked together to plan the logistics and content for Youth Leader Small Groups. A booklet was developed to give groups a guide to work through for each meeting, which included a Scripture passage with a “Gospel for you” application and discussion questions related to the group participants’ personal lives and ministry contexts.

In a trial run, we invited attendees from the 2024 Youth Workers Weekends to help us smooth out wrinkles and give feedback on how to make Youth Leader Small Groups valuable to participants. Moriah Graham was one of the trial run participants. When asked what she finds valuable about this program she said:

“I find Youth Leader Small Groups valuable because it connects me with leaders who are interested in more than just how many students I have on any given Wednesday. They come around me to encourage me, not only in ministry, but also in my everyday life. Having Christ-centered people give unbiased advice, tips, and examples has been very helpful to me. What a blessing this opportunity has been, even though it has just started.”

Members of the AFLC Youth Board are excited for the way Youth Leader Small Groups can help our congregations better care for their youth workers. Board member Michelle Olson said:

“I personally hope Youth Leader Small Groups will serve AFLC youth leaders by providing places of encouragement and refreshment, a chance to learn together and pray together, and an opportunity to journey through life and ministry with others who love Jesus and love teens. I know I love my Youth Leader Small Group! May these groups continue to welcome new youth leaders. And then let’s grow old together, living out his calling for our lives.”

To view a sample of the booklet that was used in the spring 2024 trial run, and to see how to be involved in this exciting opportunity, head to the AFLC Youth Ministries’ website under the “Resources” tab. Do you know someone who helps with teens in an AFLC congregation? We hope you will encourage them to be part of AFLC Youth Ministries’ Youth Leaders Small Groups.



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Networking Coordinator
Jordan Langness,
Training Coordinator

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Pastor Matthew Nelson

~Adam McCarlson

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The mission of **MAKING DISCIPLES**



What is AFLC Evangelism and Discipleship and what does it do?

That's a question I was asked recently. I'd like to answer, especially for those who are new to the AFLC. I think it will clarify why we have this department. Rooted in the revivals in Norway and founded through Georg Sverdrup's vision of free and living congregations, the AFLC has sought to live out our unique convictions concerning the congregation by direct, fearless, Spirit-filled preaching of the gospel that would set the congregation free by leading some to an experience of salvation and by causing the unrepentant to withdraw. This would then lead to a fellowship of believers in which every gift of grace was encouraged and given the fullest possible chance for expression. A local congregation exists as Christ's body, a living organism with many members, each having its own function to perform, using their gifts in the service of Christ.

AFLC Evangelism and Discipleship (AED) is an intentional, continuing effort to help ensure that we hold fast to this vision of free and living congregations, which includes the need for evangelistic preaching within the congregation and the discipling and equipping of believers to use their Spirit-given gifts and talents to reach the lost through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Today, our mission remains the same, "to encourage, equip, and assist our AFLC congregations and pastors in making and equipping disciples who make and equip disciples." We do that in a number of ways, ranging from in-person visits and on-site disciple equipping workshops, to a website that features an online library with more than 100 resources such as articles and ministry testimonies. We also offer a free annual equipping event before the AFLC Annual Conference called Rekindle the Fire, where we present practical teaching and training for clergy and laity to rekindle the fire of evangelism and discipleship. In addition, we are excited about our newest project: transferring our Disciple Equipping Workshops into 30-minute videos and creating a leader's guide so that congregations can use them at their own pace.

We recognize that the local congregation is on the front line of ministry in this world that Jesus loves, and he has called us to join him in reaching it. If you would like to know more, please visit our website (aflc.org/evangelism) where you will find all of these resources and programs described in detail. You will also find contact information and an assistance form to request a Sunday morning visit to your congregation, a ministry consultation, or a presentation of a Disciple Equipping Workshop in your church. We are here to serve the congregation and we hope to hear from you soon.

~Pastor Randy Nelson

**MAKE & EQUIP
DISCIPLES**
— WHO —
**MAKE & EQUIP
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The Lutheran Ambassador is a monthly magazine published by the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations. Each month features a specific theme, carrying articles both practical and devotional. Our writers—all volunteer lay people and pastors from our local congregations—are a key feature in our publications. Our magazine also includes monthly columns geared toward building a strong devotional life, tackling the basics of our beliefs, and sharing life experiences in order to build up the Body of Christ. All of our articles and columns center around biblical, Lutheran doctrines and heritage.

Our magazine also features news and information from our local congregations, schools, and AFLC departments.

DEVELOPMENT

10 OBSERVATIONS OF GENEROUS GIVERS

Following are 10 observations of generous givers taken from Generous Giving (generousgiving.org). May you find them helpful and encouraging.

1. They believe ultimate authority in their lives is God's Word and make decisions based upon it (Psalm 119:45).
2. They have a stewardship mentality rather than an ownership mentality, easy to say, harder to truly live this way. In other words, they believe God owns it all (Psalm 24:1).
3. They approach giving as a "get to" rather than an "ought to". Delight is far more powerful than duty! Acts 20:35 "It is more blessed to give than to receive."
4. They have one or more people with whom they share transparently their financial dealings and receive encouragement to continue to live as stewards (James 5:16).
5. They have answered the question how much is enough for personal consumption ... with the understanding that stuff has mass which creates gravity and demands attention ... the more stuff, the more attention (Mark 4:19).
6. They have learned how to engage their spouse in a meaningful way ... leading each other without leaving the other behind (Genesis 2:18).

7. They realize that earthly success could equal spiritual failure and have built guardrails to protect themselves (I Timothy 6:9-10).

8. They think generationally and invest time, talent and treasure in cultivating stewardship in the next generation(s) (II Timothy 2:2).

9. They recognize that stewardship involves their whole LIFE (labor, influence, finances, and expertise) (I Timothy 6:18).

10. They live with eternity in view—live for the line, not the dot! (Philippians 3:20).

~Pastor Tonnes Pollestad



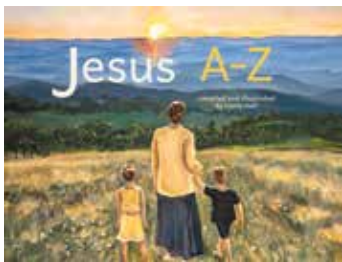
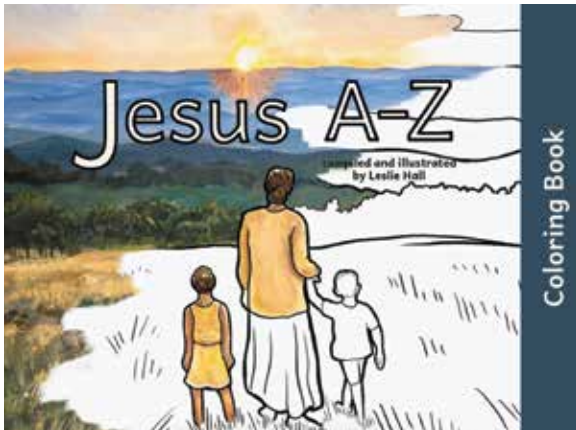
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JESUS A-Z

Helping children grow in faith



Come and meet artist Leslie Hall (above) at the AFLC Annual Conference. Leslie attends Peace Lutheran, our AFLC church in Canal Winchester, Ohio.

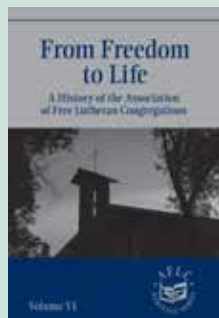
“Sometimes unbelievers think Christianity is all about morality,” says Leslie Hall. “That’s what I thought. But that isn’t what it’s about. It’s about Jesus.” To proclaim that truth to children, Leslie compiled and illustrated a beautiful book, *Jesus A-Z*, recently published by AFLC Ambassador Publications. *Jesus A-Z* journeys through all the letters of the alphabet, connecting each letter to Jesus in both the Old and New Testament through vivid illustrations and descriptive names. The goal of the book is to help children grow in their faith—to know Jesus, understand His love for them, and trust in His promises.

How the book came to be written is a beautiful story. When Leslie Hall couldn’t sleep at night, she would recite the names and titles of Jesus in alphabetical order, prompted by a sermon she couldn’t forget. Focusing on Jesus, she found the peace and rest of Isaiah 26:3: “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee” (KJV). Read the full story in a recent interview with Leslie posted in the Education Spotlight section on our website (see contact information below).

Jesus A-Z serves AFLC members and congregations by providing a teaching tool to help children and families grow in their faith in Jesus and see His presence woven throughout Scripture. The book can be used in the Sunday school classroom and for family devotions, placed in the church library and nursery, given to new member families or as a baptismal gift, and shared with your friends and neighbors. Watch for the companion coloring book coming soon. Free sample coloring pages are on our website and will be available at the annual conference.

Giving Opportunities

Funding is needed for reprinting *Luther’s Small Catechism and Explanation* and *Journey Through the New Testament* (Level 5 Sunday school curriculum) in 2024.



Special Annual Conference Event

Please join us at the AFLC Annual Conference Wednesday evening, June 12, to celebrate *From Freedom to Life: A History of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations*, Volume VI in the AFLC Heritage Series, written by Rev. Robert L. Lee. There will be a special presentation during the evening service followed by a Scandinavian dessert reception to honor Pastor Lee and his work. Pastor Lee, who has served the AFLC in numerous leadership roles, is well known as the unofficial historian of the AFLC and spent several years writing this book, which will be a blessing to our AFLC for generations to come. Plan now to attend and join us in celebrating with him!

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ASSOCIATION RETREAT CENTER

OUR AWESOME GOD



Have you ever had a moment of clarity that was impossible to ignore? I had a low moment recently and thought, “As I walk through the valley of the shadow of death ...” Kind of dark, right? But I look back at my life and realize ... God is totally awesome! The Association Retreat Center is celebrating 45 years of ministry, and as we look back, we see the truth that God is awesome.

It is hard to think of a place as unique as the ARC. This ministry provides a place where people can get away from the day-to-day grind and be presented with an opportunity to come to the same conclusion: God is awesome. The ARC in its uniqueness is not exactly a camp nor is it a convention center. It is the perfect blend of both, and this positions the ARC to accommodate a vast array of individuals and groups. This also enables the crew of the ARC to meet many different cultures. Being shoulder to shoulder with our brothers and sisters from different cities, states, and even countries is exciting and humbling. Knowing that we are a small part of something eternally huge gives us motivation to push forward.

Looking back, I realize one thing: we are blessed to be doing what we do. We may not be adding a plethora of new ARC camps or having nationally recognized speaker at our events, but we offer a place of rest where you can connect to God on a personal level like very few places I have been. It is amazing to witness individuals coming to personal faith in Christ, some of whom I ignorantly thought were already saved. Moments like that make it apparent that we need to be more diligent in our work to serve our Savior.

If you are looking for a place to retreat, volunteer, or even work, please reach out to the ARC. We would be honored to see you in whatever capacity God leads you here.

~**Kirk Rautio**
Executive director

ARC Events

We are excited for our ARC camps schedule this year and hope to see you at one or more of our events:

Fire UP:

June 23–27, grades 5–8
Pastor Aaron & Michelle Olson

Onward:

June 23–27, high school
Adam McCarlson, Pastors Eric Westlake, Micah Hjermstad, & Mike Brandt

Family Camp:

July 28–Aug. 3
Pastors Ben Sollie, Brent Olson, Jerry Moan, & Elden & Faith Nelson

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