

THE 

SEPTEMBER 2024

LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR



And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Transformed

FLY BEYOND



THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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Transformation.

The Bible has a lot to say about change. First Corinthians tells us that what we used to be and how we used to live is nothing like what we have become through the work of Christ (I Corinthians 6:11). We are told that believers are “new creations” and that “the old has passed away; behold, the new has come” (II Corinthians 5:17). God takes what is old and transforms it into something new.

Each of us who trust in Christ has changed from death to life. The same God who created the world—from the smallest creature to the stars and planets—does a work of recreation in our hearts when we hear and believe the promises of Christ.

Students and youth leaders gathered in Wisconsin earlier this summer to learn more about how God changes and transforms us. FLY Beyond, a week-long training and equipping opportunity for students in grades 7 through 12, was held in July at the Association Retreat Center, and this year focused on the theme of “Be Transformed” from Romans 12:1–2:



I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Morning Bible studies were led by Michelle Olson, Brandon Fouks, Pastor Dan Hurner, and Pastor Adam Osier. Pastor Aaron Olson shared in the evenings, and Tim Barnett from Stand to Reason spoke on apologetics. Several students and leaders who were at FLY Beyond this summer wrote articles in this issue on the theme of “Be Transformed.”

Jordan Langness, who helped organize the week of FLY Beyond, shares some of his thoughts on the theme verses in Romans. Summarizing the different areas covered over the week, he writes: “God, according to his grace, gives to us new hearts, new desires, a new understanding of the world we inhabit, and a new ability to live by the Spirit instead of living by the flesh.”

Michelle Olson helped students see the transformation Christ works in our souls. The students at FLY Beyond studied the account of Saul, who was transformed by Jesus from “the worst of sinners” into an apostle used mightily to spread the gospel. And Jesus is still in the business of transforming souls through the Spirit and Word of God.

Pastor Wade Mobley taught about the renewal of the mind, showing students that Christians shouldn't be afraid of thinking or reason. He writes in his article: “When Christians cultivate a robust intellectual life, they worship God as a living sacrifice.”

Evan Keranen and Isaiah Miller write about having transformed hearts in this issue, and Moriah Coyle and Pastor Jon Langness share about the transformation of our bodies that allows us to live out our faith by loving and serving our neighbors.

Also in this issue are brief excerpts from an interview with Pastor Bob Lee, author of *From Freedom to Life: A History of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations*, and a book review by Tim Larson. This new resource, available from Ambassador Publications, provides invaluable insight into the early days and guiding vision of our association.

God takes what is old and transforms it into something new. He transforms your heart, soul, mind, and bodies, but he will also make all things new when he comes again.

“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind” (Isaiah 65:17).

—Pastor Andrew Kneeland

The devil has two major tricks with people. One is,
“You’re so good you don’t need to be saved.”
The other is, “You’re so bad you can’t be saved.”
And he’s a liar on both counts. [Leonard Ravenhill]

“

If you learn nothing except Christ,
you learn everything.

[Bonaventure]

If but ten among us lead a holy life, we shall kindle
a fire which shall light up the entire city.
[John Chrysostom]

When good men do what is right the spines of others
are strengthened. [G.K. Chesterton]

You contribute nothing to your salvation except the sin
that made it necessary. [Jonathan Edwards]

The Christian life is a process of God breaking
our idols one by one. [Elisabeth Elliot]

Be transformed

YOUR HEART, SOUL, MIND, AND BODY

BY JORDAN LANGNESS

“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Romans 12:1-2

For the past several cycles of FLY Beyond, I have had a front-row seat to watching the week come together as a participant in the planning team. I can't say that I have a favorite theme from those years since each one has stood out in some special way. But the theme of this year's event is noteworthy to me because of how practical and applicable it is to every believer on a daily basis.

Our theme, “Be Transformed,” comes from Romans 12:1-2. As the planning team worked on developing the theme for the week, we wanted to dive into the process of transformation and explore areas of our lives where this transformation is evident. We landed on four core areas of our lives where this process occurs: the soul (our salvation), the heart (our desires), the mind (our thoughts), and the body (our actions). Every follower of Jesus experiences the Holy Spirit's influence in these areas of their lives, leading to visible change as we continue in

the process of sanctification.

Transformation in and of itself is no small thing. In fact, once the process of transformation is complete, the original “thing” no longer exists because it has changed into something entirely new. That is what we see in the word “transformed” in our theme verse. Paul, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, was led to write the word *metamorphoō* to help us understand that new life in Christ is just that: a whole new life. This idea is echoed in passages like Galatians 2:20 and II Corinthians 5:17, where Paul writes to believers about having an entirely new life in Christ, something totally different than whatever existed before. God, according to his grace, gives us new hearts, new desires, a new understanding of the world we inhabit, and a new ability to live by the Spirit instead of living by the flesh.

It is a wonderful thing to recognize that this gift of new life is available to us. But God's goodness doesn't stop there. It is realized by who does this work of transformation. Similar to a house that undergoes a massive renovation, our lives are the object undergoing the transformation, not the agent doing the transformation. Tirelessly pursuing self-improvement and self-actualization is not our task. Yes, as the Greek word implies, we are called to be continuously transformed. But the only role we play in this process is getting ourselves out of the way by not resisting the work that the Holy Spirit is doing in us. Instead, we rest in the fact that God is at work and will continue that work until its completion.

Background planning details are not the liveliest literature you could read, but what





we were wrestling through serves as the foundation on which the week of training and equipping teens was built. It was this idea of transformation that guided the formation of our morning Bible study content as we explored Bible characters whose lives clearly displayed these traits of transformation. This theme also focused our practical training on and exposure to topics such as identity, the significance of congregational life, the truth about truth, how the reality of Christ informs our understanding of the morality behind the issue of abortion, and ways we can prepare ourselves to faithfully engage with the world that surrounds us. It was a full week of wonderful content that challenged, encouraged, and inspired all who attended.

With FLY Beyond now in the rear-view mirror, it is possible to reflect on some of the things that the Lord did. I rejoice in the late-night conversations where teens wrestled with how God's Word informs our understanding of difficult cultural issues. I celebrate watching students and young leaders as they eagerly participated in opportunities that allowed them to try new areas of ministry, test their ability to lead, and be equipped and encouraged to serve in their home congregations. Most significantly, I rejoice in seeing God's hand prepare a new generation of believers that he will use to continue to grow his kingdom and transform the world as we seek to "Be Transformed."

Jordan Langness, the youth and family ministry director at Hope Free Evangelical Lutheran, Ishpeming Mich., is the FLY Beyond Planning Team chair and AFLC Youth Ministries training coordinator.

Nurturing young hearts

The awesome responsibility of leading youth in a local congregation

BY ISAIAH MILLER

A

As a youth leader, I know that understanding and guiding the hearts of youths today is important. The Bible offers insights into the nature of the heart and its significance in shaping our character and actions. Proverbs 4:23 reminds us, “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.” This verse highlights the importance of the heart as the wellspring of life, influencing thoughts, words, and deeds.

This past July I had the opportunity to bring some of the youth from our church to FLY Beyond, where we talked about the importance of letting God transform our hearts. The heart is not merely an organ but the seat of emotions, intentions, and moral choices. The heart, in biblical terms, represents the core of a person’s being. In Matthew 15:18–19, Jesus teaches, “But the things that come out of a person’s mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.” This passage highlights the heart’s role in determining our actions and behavior, emphasizing the need for God’s direction—not our own—over our hearts.

As a youth leader, I am tasked with nurturing young hearts to seek after God. Proverbs 3:5–6 advises, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.” I love encouraging young people to trust in God wholeheartedly, leaning on him and not their own strength, knowing

that he will transform their hearts. The theme of the week from Romans 12:1–2 teaches us that true transformation begins with offering ourselves entirely to God. By renewing our minds and not conforming to worldly patterns, God transforms our hearts, enabling us to discern and live out his perfect will. This transformation is



crucial for youth today and helps them to grow in their faith and live lives that reflect God’s love and truth.

In conclusion, the heart is a critical focus for youth leaders. By teaching and modeling biblical principles, we can point youths to Christ; only he can cultivate their hearts to be pure, trusting, and receptive to God’s transformative power.

Miller is the youth worker at St. Paul’s Free Lutheran, Fargo, N.D.



THE BENEFITS OF A TRANSFORMED HEART

■ BY EVAN KERANEN

What does it mean to have a transformed heart? Are we talking about that pumping muscle in our chest? Or is it something deeper than that? When the Bible talks about the heart, it is talking about the “core” of a believer. The heart of mankind is dirty and sinful. Thankfully, our good and gracious God has made a way for it to change. We must be transformed.

What does it mean to be transformed? Pastor Aaron Olson, our evening speaker, described transformation as being similar to metamorphosis. Take a caterpillar, for example. We all know that a caterpillar starts out in a certain form, then undergoes a radical transformation into a butterfly, a different form. Our hearts must undergo a similar transformation. Our sinful, selfish hearts must change to hearts that desire God above all things.

Jesus says in Matthew 22:37, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” God wants us to be fully committed to him. A transformed heart will show God’s love and devotion. Furthermore, our theme verses from Romans 12:1–2 show that transformed hearts have no room for the things of the world. Instead, our will becomes God’s will for us. We are to be vessels for his good and flawless will.

But how can we achieve this new heart? Ezekiel 36:26 says, “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.” In this verse, God is making a promise to the Israelites. A promise of transformation. It is evident that God does the work in us. We only need to be receptive to his work.

When our hearts are transformed, all of the sins and regrets of the past are washed away. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here” (II Corinthians 5:17). We are made new! The old hearts are gone. We no longer have hearts for the world but have hearts for Jesus—hearts so full of Christ, we can’t help but pour him out into the lives of those around us.

Transformed hearts allow us to think differently, speak differently, and do things differently. Jesus Christ died for all of us so that we might be redeemed and live for him. Surrender completely to him and allow him to change you in a way only a mighty God can. Be transformed.



Keranen is a member of Hope Free Evangelical Lutheran, Ishpeming, Mich.



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ame as many people as possible from the Bible whose souls were transformed by Jesus. You have one minute ...

Those attending FLY Beyond began their first morning session with this challenge. One minute later, a few teams got more than 20, and with more time, our lists could have been very long. Jesus transforms souls. It's what he does; it is what he has been doing since the beginning of time. We took that first morning session to look at one life that was transformed by Jesus: the life of Saul, later known as Paul.

The stoning of Stephen introduces us to Saul. Acts 8:1 says, "And Saul was there, giving approval to his death." Saul defines himself as "the worst of sinners." And yet it is this same man who later says in Philippians that "for to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." Saul's soul was indeed miraculously transformed!

During our time together, not only did we look at the transformation of Saul's soul, but we also started to learn one method for how to study our Bibles. We got into teams of three and began to explore three passages in Acts that discuss Saul's transformation (Acts 9:1–31, Acts 22:1–21, and Acts 26:1–29). We used the techniques of observation, interpretation, and application to examine these passages.

Beginning with observation, we first looked for God in these passages. Sometimes, in our



Jesus transforms our souls

BY MICHELLE OLSON



Once we encounter Christ, the big question becomes, “Lord, what do you want me to do?”

self-focused society, we forget that the Bible is primarily about God. Then we looked for people. We looked for significant repeated words such as the names of towns and the words “now” and “immediately.” We looked for verbs; in these passages, “go” is an often-repeated verb. We kept looking, reading, studying, and coloring. We made note of questions we had as we explored the Scriptures. For example, in Acts 26, what does it mean to “kick against the goads”?

And as we progressed into the interpretation stage, we attempted to answer some of those questions. For instance, a goad was a long, sharpened stick; to “kick against the goad” is an exercise in futility. So, to resist God’s will is foolish. We considered other Scriptures that might provide insight. We summarized these passages.

Eventually we asked, “How does God want me to respond?” We wanted to apply the Scriptures appropriately and specifically to our lives, to be not only hearers of the Word but also doers, to live out God’s calling in our lives.

As we progressed through our Bible study, a few details started to stand out to us. In our second Acts passage, Luke records the two questions that Saul asked: “Who are you, Lord?” and “What do you want me to do?” These are fantastic first questions. Our transformation of the soul often begins with an understanding of the Lord—who he is and what he has done. Once

we encounter Christ, the big question becomes, “Lord, what do you want me to do?”

Another important detail that emerged, particularly in our third passage, is summarized in a cross-reference verse we pulled into our discussion. We turned to I Peter 3:15, which says, “always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.” In Acts 26, we find Paul before King Agrippa; he states, “I consider myself fortunate that it is before you, King Agrippa, I am going to make my defense today ... I beg you to listen to me patiently.” Paul is ready, and Paul is respectful. He is ready to tell Agrippa how Jesus transformed his soul. And Paul proceeds to do so with respect.

Our time on Monday morning was brief. But we used every minute to study God’s Word together; to use the techniques of observation, interpretation, and application; to examine one life that was transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit; and to hopefully continue to build a lifetime of looking at God’s Word as the source to answer big questions like, “Who are you, Lord?” and, “What do you want me to do?” And then, prayerfully, we will also be prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks. Praise Jesus; he is still transforming souls!

Olson, a member of Living Hope, Rogers, Minn., serves on the AFLC Youth Board.

A mind transformed

BY DR. WADE MOBLEY

W

e tread on dangerous ground when we separate the various “parts” of the human experience. Our physical bodies, our immaterial aspects, and our intellect are far more connected than people realize. Humans are not machines, but the highest creative act of the all-powerful God. There is much to say about the philosophy and theology of the mind, but this presentation will focus on the right use of reason. God created humans in his image as distinct, exceptional beings with the ability to reason. Thus, when Christians cultivate a robust intellectual life, they worship God as a living sacrifice.

In Colossians 2:8, God warns us against a variety of ways one can be pulled away from faith in Christ: “See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deception, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.” In this warning, there is a vice to avoid and a virtue to pursue. We are taught to avoid an intellectual life based on human tradition (a mindless status quo) and the “elemental spirits of the world” (the “stuff of life” or “the spirits of the age”). But at the same time, we are called to pursue an intellectual life that orders itself *according to Christ*.

A thought life that is ordered according to Christ views reason as a gift from God rather than a tool of judgment against God. The former is called a “ministerial” use of reason, wherein God uses the reason he gave us to minister to and through us. The latter is the “magisterial” use

of reason, wherein one turns the gift against the giver; God is true and good if (and only if) my reason deems him to be so.

An improper use of philosophy does not mean that philosophy itself is bad. Properly speaking, “philosophy” means “love of wisdom.” To the follower of Christ, the “fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” (Psalm 111:10). Pursuing answers to life’s most important questions is a good and reasonable pursuit, even while we recognize a tendency to overthink matters. At some point, we must agree with Martin Luther in his explanation of the third article of the Apostle’s Creed: “I cannot, by my

own reason or strength, believe in Jesus my Lord or come to him ...”

If there are times to think less, there are also times to think more. One reason people don’t think about life’s most important questions is that we have been trained to not think. One author (Neil Postman) called it “amusing ourselves to death,” as “amuse” means to “not think.” We have no end of amusement in our society, and frequent

disdain for robust thinking “according to Christ.”

It is easy to find persuasive videos of former Christians who have “deconstructed” their faith. The implication of “deconstruction” is that one has to tear something down in order to build it back better. But such efforts inevitably fail, placing humans in judgment of God, ultimately leading only to destruction. Such a search for answers to questions leads only to a lack of answers. The soul ponders the existence of a loving, good, and powerful God in the face of pain

Our intellectual life does not exist in a vacuum or only for our personal use. We exercise our pursuit of truth, beauty, and goodness before both God and man.





and suffering, so he rejects God and is left only with pain and suffering. Satan laughs.

Many of life's questions are complex only because we reject God's answers. For instance, the existence of pain and suffering in the world is precisely what we would expect between the fall of man and the restoration of all things. A simple matter is thus made complex. If your car is in the garage, it is only hard to find it if you refuse to believe that it's your car that is in the garage.

Every human encounters questions of truth, beauty, and goodness. In much contemporary thought, each of these entities is purely a matter of preference. Beauty, it is said, is in the eye of the beholder, and goodness is a relative endeavor. For decades, philosophers rejected the correct view that truth is "that which corresponds with reality." But now they agree. The difference is that their definition of reality is deemed to be only a social construct. We don't determine our own truth anymore; we determine our own reality.

Truth matters, and there is no other possible definition than a correspondence with reality. Beauty is an aesthetic appeal to the reality of ordered goodness, and goodness itself is a concept that points to God. As C.S. Lewis observed in *Mere Christianity*, it is not that we all agree on what is right and wrong, but the very existence of those concepts necessitates the existence of a creative being with moral character.

Our intellectual life does not exist in a vacuum or only for our personal use. We exercise our pursuit of truth, beauty, and goodness before both God and man. We minister to one another in and through our congregation, families, and society. We ask and answer questions faithfully and according to Christ, and in so doing, magnify the living God for the benefit of ourselves and our fellow man.

Mobley serves as president of the Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary and may be reached at wade.mobley@flbc.edu.





Our bodies in this life

BY MORIAH COYLE

Contrary to the heart, soul, and mind, the body is not transformed in this life. Our bodies get sick, injured, and will eventually die. In light of this reality, Pastor Aaron Olson posed a question to those of us attending FLY Beyond. What do we do with our bodies *before* they are transformed for the kingdom of God? Romans 12:1 commands us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.

Pastor Olson described this sacrifice as the giving of ourselves—something of value—to God as an act of worship and devotion. Because Jesus died (past tense), we can actively live! God makes us holy because of Christ. As we are temples of Christ's holiness, we should consider: are we keeping our temples holy in response to this?

To round out the sacrificial aspect of our lives, God considers us well-pleasing. We, sinful beings, please God! Through the mercies of God, we are able to actively be living, holy, and pleasing sacrifices for him.

Pastor Olson gave us some encouragement for our transforming lives. Our bodies will not stay in the physical, deteriorating state that we see today. God promises to renew our bodies and to transform them without blemish, death, or sin!

Pastor Adam Osier also spoke on transforming the body in view of the Book of Ecclesiastes. From the first few chapters, he explained that the author pursued pleasure in relationships, intoxication, and entertainment

and had found his identity in his work, wealth, possessions, and fame. While these things are what the world pursues, they are futile, and the outcome of futility is death.

None of these pleasures and pursuits were working for the author. Why? He was working for himself and not living out his created purpose. Pastor Osier expounded on this from a different perspective: the body was never given to serve or glorify itself. Ecclesiastes 12:13 says that the duty of man is to fear God and keep his commandments. By walking in wisdom and actively serving the Lord, the body gains a new purpose: to love one another.

Jesus demonstrates a tangible and practical example of this service to each other by washing his disciples' feet. As living, holy, and pleasing sacrifices, we are to give ourselves up for our neighbors.

Additionally, Pastor Osier talked about the doctrine of vocation, which means that because of God's service through our bodies, we serve God by serving others. Serving vocationally doesn't mean it is going to be easy on our bodies; we will experience the wear and tear of life. However, we will pour out our lives for the hope of eternity because he lives.

Coyle, a member of Shiloh Free Lutheran, Black Hawk, S.D., will be a freshman at the Free Lutheran Bible College, Plymouth, Minn.



USING YOUR LIFE FOR YOUR NEIGHBOR

BY PASTOR JON LANGNESS

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Seemingly limitless time goes into transforming our earthly bodies, especially when it comes to athletic training. At FLY Beyond, Pastor Adam Osier shifted the audience's attention to the futility of this earthly pursuit based on the reflections from The Preacher in Ecclesiastes. "Everything under the sun is vanity," and much of this life could be explained in that way divorced from eternity: pursuing pleasure, wine, work, wealth, entertainment, and fame. However, our bodies have been created for more.

In the resurrection, Christians get to look forward to the transformed and glorified bodies Paul spoke of in I Corinthians 15. If we immediately jump to our eschatological hope (our ultimate destiny in heaven), we bypass any meaningful application of transformed bodies here and now. We are given a new hope, indeed, but we're also given new purpose. These earthly bodies are transformed into vessels of mission; in a sense, our bodies become the hands and feet of Jesus. Our bodies exist not to serve ourselves but as tools through which God serves our neighbors.

Christ hides behind these earthly bodies composed of flesh and blood. It's through flesh-and-blood bodies that new lives are brought into this world. Through our flesh-and-blood bodies, our material needs are met and our daily bread is provided. God uses our bodies to meet people's physical and spiritual needs. This idea of God "hiding" behind humanity, or working through the means of ordinary humans, is articulated in the doctrine of vocation.

Pastor Osier poignantly pointed out that this vocation will kill you. Everything inside of us is wrapped up in self-preservation or self-improvement, but the transformed body of the believer exists to glorify God through serving his neighbor. It may not always be pleasant, and it's certainly not always what we prefer to do, but it takes the statement of John the Baptist from intellectual assent to practical implementation: "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). It applies Christ's prayer of submission in the garden to our current situations: not my will but God's be done.

The Christian life isn't an abstract spiritual life separated from creation. Rather, our bodies are transformed into tangible expressions of God's love as he works through you and others to provide for our emotional, relational, physical, and spiritual needs. Our bodies are transformed into vessels of worship.

Langness serves Shiloh Free Lutheran, Black Hawk, S.D.

The AFLC's history: From Freedom to Life.

BY TIMOTHY LARSON

“Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (II Corinthians 3:17).

This is essentially the theme verse of our AFLC, so it is fitting to consider with a new volume from Ambassador Publications on the AFLC's history.

When I first heard that Pastor Robert Lee was in the process of writing a comprehensive history of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, I knew it would be an important book to add to my collection. Upon reading his perspective on our fellowship's history, I was not disappointed. As Lee remarks in the opening paragraphs of chapter one, “This is the story of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations (AFLC). This is also my story.” That statement proves itself to be true in the following chapters and throughout the entire book. In the pages of *From Freedom to Life*, we see how Lee was heavily involved from the very beginning, in the pre-merger years, and up to the very present. All who have been impacted by the AFLC owe him a debt of gratitude for taking on this momentous project and seeing it through to the completion of Volume 6 in the AFLC Heritage Series. Thank you, Pastor Lee, for sharing this history.

“Freedom” and “life” were two of Georg Sverdrup's favorite words, which make them very fitting choices for the title of this work. To give relevant historical context, Lee explains who Georg Sverdrup and Sven Oftedal were and how they came to teach at Augsburg Seminary in Minneapolis. Both had a vision to create a free church in a free land, ultimately starting the Free Lutheran movement in America. Many other fascinating details about this time period are included throughout Lee's writing.

Lee recounts details in the subsequent years of what took place in the Lutheran Free Church (LFC) and how things evolved after the deaths of Sverdrup in 1907 and Oftedal in 1911; the LFC had essentially lost its main leaders before it was even 15 years old.

While the LFC did not react favorably to merger discussions in its formative years, ultimately, the leadership was favoring it by the 1950s and early 1960s, when three referendum votes were taken. By the third vote in 1961, the LFC decided to merge into The American Lutheran Church (TALC). Providing a glimpse into this time period, Lee reveals what both the pro-merger group and anti-merger

group—which ultimately would form our AFLC—believed. Lee shares fascinating details from the October 1962 conference, held in Thief River Falls, Minn., walking readers through these days of meetings and how they ultimately resulted in the formation of the AFLC.

From a worldly standpoint, the AFLC should not have survived. But as we see throughout Lee's writing about the early years, God was present and guided our forefathers as they made significant decisions that have impacted our fellowship even to this day; they stood for what was right and true, and God honored that. The Spirit of the Lord was and still is present!

After the chapters about the early years of the AFLC, Lee uses different themes to describe the eras that followed as he shares about what took place. Having poured through back issues of *The Lutheran Ambassador* and Annual Conference reports, he provides readers with a snapshot of what took place year by year, up to 2022.

Lee also does not shy away from writing about the challenging times our fellowship has gone through. While readers may learn about things in this book that they never knew before, I believe this is an important approach to take. Lee experienced many of these challenging times as president of our AFLC; the way he writes about them is especially encouraging as he acknowledges that it was God who brought us through those times of difficulty.

In the closing pages of the final chapter, Lee notes his personal reflections on changes that have taken place over the past 60 years. I would encourage you to closely read this section and consider for yourself how those changes have impacted our fellowship.

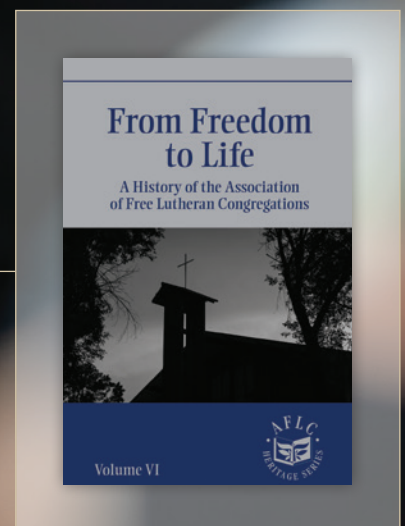
From Freedom to Life completes the incredible task of looking deeply at the AFLC's history and ultimately explains what it truly means to be a free and living congregation. I would encourage everyone to read through this book at least once—even the endnotes, which provide supporting information not included in the main text. Add it to your personal library, and make sure a copy is placed in the library of your local congregation, too!

May we all find encouragement in knowing that our Lord is always present and will guide our path. Praise God!

Larson lives in Osakis, Minn. For excerpts from an interview with Pastor Lee (pictured), see page 16.



From Freedom to Life: A History of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, by Pastor Robert Lee, can be purchased from Ambassador Publications.





Interview with Lee.

On Thursday afternoon at the Annual Conference, many gathered to hear Pastor Andrew Kneeland and Kirstie Skogerboe interview Pastor Robert Lee about his recently completed book on the history of the AFLC, *From Freedom to Life*. Excerpts from that interview are included here. A full transcript of the interview is available on the Ambassador Publications website.

Kneeland: You’ve long been regarded as the unofficial historian of the AFLC, and now, Pastor Lee, it’s official—you are the historian of the AFLC. This is the book we talked about last night. We’re so happy and thankful and grateful for this gift that you’ve given to us as a church body. So I just wanted to start by asking you, Pastor Lee, why was it important that this book be written?

Lee: There are a couple of quotes by different authors included in the book that maybe partially answer that question. “People won’t reach for the future unless they connect with the past,” one writer said. And someone else wrote, ... when a nation or a church ... goes backward, they forgot where they came from. ... And I think that there was a group of people, 60-plus years ago now, who hadn’t forgotten where they came from, and it was very important to them to continue on.

Skogerboe: What do you think might be current temptations for our church body as we pass on our heritage to new generations?

Lee: Forgetting who we are and not passing those convictions on to new generations. And that’s always going to be a temptation.

Kneeland: One thing that struck me looking through these early years of the AFLC was the ratio between pastors and lay people. I think you said in 1964 [the 1964 annual conference], 21 pastors and 435 lay people in attendance. More pastors came later, obviously, but why has lay representation, and really activity, why has that been so important to the AFLC?

Lee: Well, we wouldn’t have survived without it, that’s for sure. ... The lay representation was strong because people thought it made a difference that they were there. And they came. ... We need our lay people here, and that has weakened. That has weakened over the years, and that’s a concern—should be a concern of all of us.

Skogerboe: So as you reflect on the past 62 years—what you and others helped begin, what you’ve witnessed as a member and a pastor, a teacher and a leader, how would you tell the story of our association, and how would you encourage us to tell that story to others?

Lee: I think it’s important for us to remember that at heart we are a spiritual movement. We are a spiritual movement with deep roots in other spiritual movements. In our case, that spiritual movement has taken on a form and an organization, but that has to be seen as secondary to who we really are and how we see ourselves and present it to others. Praise God for opportunities to tell our story to others! ... Tell the story of a movement that God raised up and that he brought into existence through a series of miracles, and a beautiful heritage of life in Jesus Christ that we pass on to our families and that we pass on to generations to come. That’s our story. That’s what we want to pass on to others till Jesus returns.

Interview Transcript.

• ambassadorpublications.org



*During the opening service of the conference, there was a special presentation honoring Pastor Robert Lee on the completion of his book, *From Freedom to Life*. On behalf of the Board of Publications and Parish Education, Director Marian Christopherson presented Lee with a gift copy of the book, expressing appreciation for his work and for a lifetime of service with the AFLC.*

Chaplaincy 101.

BY PASTOR JON BENSON

Recently, a ministry-oriented email that I receive on a regular basis included a link to military chaplaincy. Clicking on the link, I was taken to the recruitment website for Army Chaplains, where I was informed, “As an Army Chaplain, you’ll be a commissioned officer who gives emotional guidance to soldiers and their families as a spiritual counselor. Army chaplains adopt innovative approaches to care by recognizing the physical, mental, and spiritual challenges soldiers face every day.”

If you remove the words “army,” “commissioned officer,” and “soldier” from that statement, what you have is a pretty accurate description of chaplain ministry in general.

The AFLC Department of Chaplaincy focuses on three avenues for pastors to be involved in ministering beyond the realm of the parish: institutional, military, and police/fire/emergency services.

In all three of these avenues of ministry, chaplains find themselves being called upon to give emotional and spiritual guidance to individuals and their families. Chaplains, regardless of the area of ministry they are involved in, adopt innovative approaches to care by recognizing the physical, mental, and spiritual challenges that the individuals they meet are dealing with every day.

As much as it is true for military chaplains, as stated in the U.S. Army’s recruitment material, it is also true for the institutional chaplain who is serving patients and staff in a hospital, nursing home, or hospice setting. Likewise, it is true for the emergency services chaplain who is called upon to assist the men and women of the department he serves as they interact with families in crisis situations.

To effectively serve as a chaplain, specialized training is helpful and often required.

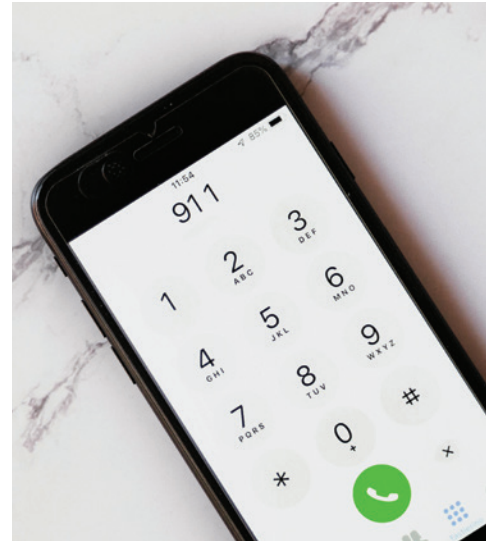
Military chaplains are required to have religious or spiritual training and meet the military’s standards for commissioning as officers.

Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) is a program of education, beyond seminary training, for spiritual care. Most hospitals, nursing homes, and hospice programs expect chaplains—especially if they are working as paid staff chaplains—to have completed CPE training. This training involves hands-on learning, clinical supervision, and academic study.

Police and fire departments vary in their training requirements for chaplains. My personal experience is that police and fire departments that are staffed with professional, paid firefighters often require their chaplains to be members of and trained by a chaplaincy agency, such as the International Conference of Police Chaplains, or the Federation of Fire Chaplains.

Rural and small town fire departments are often open to having a local pastor serve as a chaplain for their department, whether or not they have formal training from an agency like the Federation of Fire Chaplains. These departments are primarily looking for someone who has a heart for the community and a willingness to give emotional and spiritual guidance to members of the department and the individuals in crisis they encounter when they respond to calls for service in the community.

One of the things that the AFLC Department of Chaplaincy has offered in the past to help equip chaplains to effectively serve in their respective roles is a seminar on Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM). CISM training equips a chaplain to be able to support, in group and one-to-one settings, people who have experienced traumatic events in their lives. Our department is looking at offering CISM again in the future.



AFLC Chaplaincy

For more information on chaplain ministry and training, contact:

- **Institutional and Police/Fire:**

Pastor Jon Benson
jb6179@hotmail.com

- **Military:**

Pastor John Eidsmoe
eidsmoeja@juno.com

Benson, who serves Newark Lutheran, Newark, Ill., is the director of the AFLC’s Police and Fire Chaplaincy.



Protecting our children.

BY PASTOR MICAH HJERMSTAD

According to the polity of the AFLC, when we gather for the Annual Conference, the resolutions we adopt are not binding upon individual congregations. In other words, these resolutions are recommendations to congregations, individuals, AFLC departments, and so forth. This has led some to question whether it is necessary for us to take so much time developing and discussing items that don't really "matter."

It's true that we can always improve our practice, but it's also valuable to acknowledge that these resolutions are important. Even if they don't have the ability to dictate binding decisions to our congregations, they are intended to express the voice of the congregations represented. And the recommendations presented and approved are helpful for all of our congregations to consider.

For example, one of this year's approved resolutions that my office has received lots of questions about encourages each congregation to develop and implement child and youth safety policies and procedures. To better appreciate the value of this recommendation, consider the following:

- Children are precious gifts from the Lord. It's always good to consider how to best protect them.
- We must protect them. Our world has been broken by sin ever since the Fall. Civilizations have had seasons when sin is given greater freedom and is more widely accepted. We seem to be in a season like that, and sins against children are growing exponentially. As a relatively new parent, it breaks my heart to consider that, out of necessity, I almost have to have an inherent distrust of anybody I would ask to care for my children.

- It's naïve to think that the congregation is immune from this problem. It breaks my heart to say that, too, but it's true. Even our Fundamental Principles document acknowledges this fact when it says, "Members of the organized congregation are not, in every instance, believers." It goes on to acknowledge that at times, the congregation must expel "the openly sinful and perverse." We also know that even believers are not immune from falling into temptation.

- It's also naïve to believe that this is just a "big church" or "big city" problem. Technology has made this world a very small place, and the truth is that sin doesn't only live in those "big" places.

In reply to a social media post about an article alleging such sins being committed in one of our congregations, someone asked what the AFLC was doing to handle the situation. The question displayed some ignorance of our polity in that AFLC leadership doesn't dictate to congregations what to do in these scenarios. And the question also implied guilt, which has not been proven.

But the answer isn't for us to stay silent, either, because guilt has been proven in other cases in other congregations. On top of that, these are real concerns that are so important for us to talk about together.

We need to encourage each other, help each other, and pray for each other.

If your congregation does not have a child and youth safety policy, I would encourage you to advocate for developing one, even if you think "that will never happen to us." First, consider that a comment like that might display a bit of arrogance. But it's also just common-sense wisdom. I don't plan to die anytime in the next 20 years, but I still have life insurance because it's wise to protect and provide for my family.

Finally, I recognize this is a heavy and difficult subject. I don't really like talking about it, but I *really* don't like the message it sends to ignore it either. Our children are listening to us, and they need to know we care. They need to hear us say that. Children and youth who are victims need to know that we love them and that we are with them and for them. Congregations need to know what the dangers are and how to protect the people they serve.

When these terribly difficult situations arise, let's be quick to pray for truth and justice to win the day, healing for those who are hurt, and for God's mercy and grace to shine brightly.

Child & Youth Safety Policy

The President's office is not equipped to give appropriate counsel regarding child safety policies when state laws vary so widely. Check with your insurance company and other local congregations for samples and suggestions.

Hjermstad, a member of Grace Free Lutheran, Maple Grove, Minn., is the AFLC president.



Christ-centered history.

BY KIRK RAUTIO

Reflecting on the previous years of family camp at the ARC I have been a part of, I have noticed that this year's camp felt different. There is less stress about who will be here, about the expectations of fulfilling historical events, and about making sure I keep the mission of the ARC at the forefront of everything we do.

I took a quick inventory of events from just this season. We have experienced people coming to faith in Christ, baptisms, completed projects, generous donors, and many young people realizing their future callings. The history of AFLC camps at the ARC—and specifically family camp—is rich and full for so many individuals. Each year, as I listen to campers reflect on their memories from years past, I can see that this is something that brings them joy as they make new memories and look forward to more in years to come.

For a time, as I listened to these stories, I felt like I missed out on the good old days of AFLC history. Sometimes I even felt like there would never be a day as good as the ones others had been privileged to experience. I did not grow up in the AFLC like so many ARC supporters have, and it did feel at times like I had to earn my spot among them, especially when I had a position that set me in the middle of so many pillars of our organization.

It was in my second season at the ARC that I recalled a vivid memory of my grandfather and one of his pointed encouragements: “Boy, you get out what you put in.” He was correct then, and his point is definitely correct now. That was the day I remembered I am in control of how these things affect how I feel and how I interact with the people I get to represent and the history I get to preserve. I cannot and will not expect anyone to make me feel like I am part of a function or group. But I admit it is really nice when someone does take the time to come along side of me and bring me into the fold.

This reminds me of Christ and how he interacts with me. My sin against him should affect how he treats me. But he entered places where he was not wanted or accepted. He went there knowing that it was for an eternal purpose—our salvation. He gave everything so that the impact of his saving work for people would be great and eternal.

What do we put into life—relationships, congregations, or even camps? Do we put ourselves out there and intentionally engage with everyone we can? Or do we expect others to come along, take us by the hand, and help us feel like a part of the world going on around us? My brothers and sisters, I encourage you to be intentional, Christ-centered history makers so that in eternity we all can look back together and see what a beautiful salvation story Christ has made through us.



Upcoming events

- **Young Adults Retreat:**
September 23–25
- **Holiday Shop:**
November 2
- **2025 Annual Conference:**
June 11–14
Registration for lodging and meals are now available on the ARC website.
- **Website:** aflc.org/arc-camp

Rautio is the executive director of the Association Retreat Center, located near Osceola, Wis.

Senkbeil leads featured session at Summer Institute of Theology



TOP: Dr. Harold Senkbeil led the plenary session on "The Care of Souls." ABOVE: Pastor Brian Lunn led a session on "Lutheranism in Scandinavia." RIGHT: Students take part in a discussion time. CENTER: Pastor Tim and Emily Herset react to a comment. TOP RIGHT: A student listens in during a session. FAR RIGHT: Jordan Langness led a youth and family ministry workshop. OPPOSITE PAGE, LEFT: Doug and Lori Hertlein (top) and Jacob O'Flanagan attended the institute of theology.

The Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary hosted the annual Summer Institute of Theology Aug. 5–9 on the Plymouth, Minn., campus. Students registered for the event took classes from several professors as well as two guest instructors. Dr. Harold Senkbeil, author of *The Care of Souls: Cultivating a Pastor's Heart*, led the plenary session each morning. After taking in the day's lecture, students were able to ask questions and comment on the content.

During the second session, students chose between two lectures offered by FLBCS faculty: "The Means of Grace in the Congregation," taught by Dr. Steve Mundfrom, and "Romans," taught by Pastor Adam Osier.

Following a break for lunch, students could choose between two classes. One was "Lutheranism in Scandinavia," taught by Pastor Brian Lunn, an adjunct instructor at FLBCS. The second was "Youth and Family Ministry Workshop," taught by Jordan Langness, Ishpeming, Mich. Langness is the AFLC Youth Ministries training coordinator.



Leaders' Training Program enters second year

The AFLC's Leaders' Training Program (LTP) completed its inaugural cycle in July. A program from the Coordinating Committee, in conjunction with the President's Office, the LTP entered its second year with participants attending the Summer Institute of Theology, hosted by the Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary.

The LTP offers equipping with skills for servant leadership as well as mentoring with an AFLC pastor. Early participants have come from a wide range of ages and experiences. Some registered in LTP enjoy the spiritual enrichment the program offers so that they can more effectively serve in their local congregations on a volunteer basis. Other LTP members are seeking the Lord's leading, which may include becoming a Licensed Lay Pastor in the AFLC if accompanied by a call from a local congregation, or pursuing studies at FLS.

"It has been terrific to see the response," explained Pastor Jason Holt, LTP coordinator. "I find it particularly powerful to hear from men who are wrestling with God's call on their lives. They are moving forward, not knowing what the Lord has for them, and LTP positions them to grow in this season."

The LTP provides an avenue for interested lay leaders to be trained and combines the requirements for becoming Licensed Lay Pastors into one sequence. For more information about the program, a webpage about LTP is available at aflc.org/ltp.

Being Lutheran podcast hosts first conference



The Being Lutheran Podcast, hosted by AFLC Pastors Brett Boe, Jason Gudim, and Adam Osier (above), offered its first conference on Aug. 10, "Being Lutheran Out Loud." Featured speakers included Gretchen Ronnevik (right middle), author of "Ragged: Spiritual Disciplines for the Spiritually Exhausted," and FLAME (top), a Lutheran hip-hop artist. Along with the three podcast hosts, each speaker talked about the role their given vocation plays in how they serve God. Between individual presentations, the speakers also participated in live recordings for the podcast. All sessions will be available on the podcast website.

The event, held in the AFLC Schools chapel, was open to the public.

PEOPLE & PLACES

Members of the AFLC Coordinating Committee approved **Veritas Church**, Prescott Valley, Ariz., for the congregational roster.

Pastor Craig Benson, Ames, Iowa, has accepted a call to serve Salem Lutheran, Radcliffe, Iowa, and St. Paul's Lutheran, Jewell, Iowa, beginning in September.

Pastor Kris Nyman, who serves Christ Community Church, Williamsport, Md., has retired.

Pastor Mark E. Olson, who serves Good Shepherd Free Lutheran, Cokato, Minn., has retired.

Pastor John German has resigned as associate pastor of Waikiki Beach Gathering, Waikiki, Hawaii.

Pastor Brent Raan has accepted a call to serve as associate pastor at Zion Free Lutheran, Tioga, N.D., beginning in January 2025. Raan and his family have served as AFLC missionaries to Gulu, Uganda, and will wrap up their work in December.



Pastoral Call focus of Pastor's Conference

The 2024 AFLC Pastor's Conference will be held October 1–3 at the Association Retreat Center, near Osceola, Wis., under the theme, "A Holy Calling" from II Timothy 1:8–10. Speaking at the conference's opening service on Tuesday will be Pastor Micah Hjermstad, AFLC president.

Wednesday's schedule will include five sessions. First, Dr. Jarrod Hylden, instructor at AFLC schools, will speak on the "New Testament Basis for the Pastoral Call." Pastor Brian Lunn, Upsala, Minn., will speak on the "Role of the Congregation in the Pastoral Call." A session follows with a panel discussion on the call process. Then, Dr. Jason Holt, the AFLC presidential ministry associate, will lead a discussion on "Mandatory Reporting." The final session will include a round-table discussion on divorce and remarriage. The day will conclude with a banquet and message from Dr. James Molstre, dean of the Free Lutheran Seminary. Thursday will include two morning sessions led by FLBCS faculty. First, Dr. Jason Gudim will lead a session on "Luther and the Office of Ministry." Then, Dr. Steve Mundfrom will lead a session on "Walther and Sverdrup on Ordination."

Registration is now open at aflc.org/pastorsconference.



Pastor Steve Junker, above center, was ordained July 14 at Chippewa Lutheran, Brandon, Minn., with Pastor Micah Hjermstad (right), AFLC president, officiating. Pictured with them are members of the church council.

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JULY MEMORIALS

Bible College
Ruth Claus

WMF
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General Fund
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World Missions
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AFLC BENEVOLENCES January 1-July 31, 2024

FUND	REC'D IN JULY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% OF SUBSIDY	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$31,122	\$256,212	56	\$226,760
Evangelism	7,413	75,225	55	68,259
Youth Ministries	9,195	95,958	62	85,082
Parish Education	14,084	120,481	64	85,082
Seminary	32,201	172,147	60	164,526
Bible College	228,187	427,758	91	244,863
Home Missions	18,645	185,120	44	167,467
World Missions	36,877	230,973	48	219,716
Personal Support	54,661	496,354	64	438,270
TOTALS	\$432,385	\$2,060,227	61	\$1,700,155

For additional financial information for each department, go to www.aflc.org/giving

Game Day.

BY AMY SKOGERBOE

“Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain” (I Corinthians 15:58).

Church, it’s game day! Love for the game is in my blood, and there’s nowhere more important for me to be than at the ballpark. I didn’t sign up just to watch from home—I’m at the field. I live for this!

Coach needs us to be there and be ready to take the field. Bring the energy and focus; this is a tough opponent, but we’ve definitely got the advantage. Our Coach is the strongest by far; he’s got us trained and equipped for whatever the other side throws our way. But we have to *show up*—no one sits this one out. You joined the team, you wear the jersey, you commit. You want field time; this is what you’ve trained for. You want *in* on what goes down today. You are hungry for it. You are here for Coach; he’s here for you. Let’s do this!

Pastors, Coach needs you ready and on the mound today. Touch base with him and watch his lead. He’s helped you develop your skills, but keep your eyes on him. He’ll see things you don’t. Trust that. Stay focused. The crowd’s fun, but they’re also distracting, and you’ve got to deliver with precision and accuracy. You’re equipped. You’ve put your time in the bullpen and on the field. But don’t rely on that; every game is different. There will be things that may catch you off guard, so trust your training. Stick to the playbook. Deliver. The team’s got your back out there; no matter how

good you are or think you are, you can’t win this thing single-handedly. Don’t try. Do your part. Let them do theirs.

Ushers, you’ve got left field. Nothing gets by you. Staff and musicians, you’ve got center and right. Deacons, take infield. Stay in your zone and cover it completely. Back your pitcher and keep laser-beam focused on Coach for his calls. There are no rock stars or solo acts today. Every player matters, but it’s ultimately not about you. Keep your ego out and your head in the game. Focus on your own playing and don’t criticize or try to coach your teammates. Your opponent’s jeers are irrelevant; tune them out. Listen for Coach’s voice above the noise. He’s got you covered. Hit the field running and bring the energy. Be ready to catch the return and make the play. Think on your feet and move fast when Coach makes the calls. Let your team members see your determination and passion for the game. It will *fuel* them and increase their desire to win this one. That’s crucial. Speak life to each other. Play with both skill and fire; one without the other falls short. There’s a lot at stake, and you want to leave the field knowing you brought everything you had for both Coach and your team.

Grandparents and teachers, keep your eye out for the kids at the game today, will you? They’re new to this and need to see how it plays out. Your love of the game is contagious, and your loyalty to Coach and

the team will have a deep impact on them. Don’t turn on the pitcher or badmouth your team; these youths are watching every move. Talk them through the plays and answer their questions. No one knows this game and its history better than you, except Coach and some of the best-trained players. You know what you’re talking about, and you uniquely bring the history and passion for the game to life. Thrive in that. Pour out your stories and shout out the cheers! Many of these kids are already players and are key upcoming leaders of the team. Make sure they know how much you value their being there, and always have a recruiting mindset. Get them team jerseys; get them excited. An early love of the game will go far.

Team, gather and take a knee when it’s over, win or lose. Get with Coach. Gain insight and learn from every game. When you learn better, *do better*. Grow as athletes, get stronger as a team, and whatever you do, come away united. Take care of the injured. Don’t discard them; help them heal so that they can rejoin the game. They may become some of your strongest players.

Church, it’s game day, and this team is a family. Bring the passion and play for all you’re worth, as the stakes are high. There are more games coming, but play every one like it’s the championship game. Game on!

Skogerboe is a member of St. Olaf Lutheran, Montgomery, Ill.

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BUILDING THE BASE \\ Part 5

Baptism: The divine invisible.

BY MONICA COYLE

Our middle schooler recently went through confirmation class at church, and I tagged along for the journey as we discussed *Luther's Small Catechism* for his homework. Studying the sacraments from an over-the-shoulder, adult perspective has been so refreshing! What began for me as mostly theoretical has over the years been challenged and tested, proving evermore trustworthy and increasingly relevant. What we believe about God and his Word has a powerful, practical impact on our lives.

In the previous installment of "Building the Base," Pastor Jerry Moan shared about the chief means of grace, God's Word, and how it delivers the gift of God's grace. As we continue to study the subordinate means of grace, specifically the sacrament of baptism, we see how Christ deals with the individual in a visible and personal way to deliver God's grace.

In baptism, the divine, invisible gift is paired with the earthly, visible sign to deliver the spiritual promises of God through his Word. It's pretty radical that God would choose to grant his gifts in such an unpretentious, surprising way. And yet that's how Jesus came to us on earth—humble, human, and majestically divine. Luther explains the paradox this way: "It is not the water, indeed, that does such great things, but the Word of God, connected with the water, and our faith, which relies on that Word of God" (*Luther's Small Catechism*).

If we take God at his word, baptism is not a mere ceremony, a box to check, or a symbol, but the application of the gospel. Through this outward means, action is taking place! Grace is being delivered through the water and Word. Grace that covers our sins with his righteousness, putting our old nature to death (Romans

6:3–5). Grace that raises us to new life and clothes us with Christ (Galatians 3:27).

Paul writes to the believers in Ephesus that Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her, "having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word" (Ephesians 5:25–26). Christ himself is taking action, removing any need to depend on our own performance.

In a day when we may be tempted to depend on emotions or our spiritual achievement, the beauty of Word-centered sacramental theology stands in striking contrast. When our souls can find rest in Christ's work on our behalf, the pressure to please God is removed. What joy and confidence we have knowing that he is already pleased because of Christ!

Coyle, a member of Shiloh Free Lutheran, Black Hawk, S.D., serves on the Editorial Board.