

THE 

AUGUST 2019

# LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR



WE WILL

# SERVE THE LORD

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THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE  
CANADENSIS, PA





# BECOMING ACCLIMATED

BY PASTOR BOB RIETH

*Acclimate: to become accustomed to a new climate or environment; adapt.*

**M**ankind is very adaptable. We change to fit in with our surroundings, and sometimes that is necessary for survival. We get used to cold weather, or warm weather. We get accustomed to noises, smells, and sights. If we live in a beautiful place, we take it for granted and don't really see it until visitors come to town and we show it off to them. A person living near a highway shuts out the sound as if it weren't there.

So, acclimation is a good thing, right? That depends.

Some of the things we get acclimated to are not so good. We grow accustomed to violence on the news, bad language on the street, abnormal sexual themes in the movies, accounts of rape and murder and graphic, bloody autopsies on television.

Our consciences become immune to things that should make us protest in horror and blush from embarrassment.

Jesus warned His disciples in Matthew 16:6, "Be careful," Jesus said to them. "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees."

Jesus knew the effect of a little yeast. You use only a small amount of yeast in a batch of bread, yet it permeates the whole batch and affects every loaf. Jesus was warning the disciples to look out

for some bad characteristics of the men who claimed to be the religious leaders of the day.

The Pharisees and Sadducees should have known the Scriptures, but their religion had degraded into an outward show of piety. They gave gifts to be seen, prayed loud prayers to be heard, and dressed in sackcloth to be considered humble—but their hearts were filled with self righteousness and pride.

Don't become like them, Jesus warned. Don't become acclimated to their misguided ways.

As the Lord warned Aram and Ephraim through the prophet Isaiah, "If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all" (Isaiah 7:9).

Sometimes we need to stand apart from the crowd. We need to stand for what we believe and not adapt to the popular practices of the day.

Like David, may we turn instead to the Lord and say, "Let not my heart be drawn to what is evil, to take part in wicked deeds with men who are evildoers; let me not eat of their delicacies" (Psalm 141:4).

Let us, then, be careful of the yeast of society.

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*Rieth, a member of Our Redeemer Lutheran, Kirkland, Wash., is founder and president of Media Fellowship International. Adapted from "Pastor Bob's Two Minute Devotion," from March 15, 2010.*



## THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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We may not be growing numerically like we once were, but the Word of God is doing its work in lives where it is received.

—Pastor Lyndon Korhonen

Biblical illiteracy is a widespread challenge in congregational ministry.

—Marian Christopherson

Because of the aging of our clergy, we are in need of six to eight men every year to simply maintain the status quo.

—Pastor James Molstre

If our AFLC fellowship is to continue echoing the refrain of Joshua 24:15, then our congregations will prioritize ministry with teenagers and their families.

—Pastor Jason Holt

In every culture, the best way for people to be reached for Christ and to grow in Christ is for them to be a part of a free and living congregation.

—Pastor Craig Johnson



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THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE  
CANADENSIS, PA

# 2019 ANNUAL CONFERENCE



By Pastor Craig Johnson

**I**t was a new location for an annual conference of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, but the same Spirit of God was present and the same Word of God was proclaimed. The AFLC met for their 57th Annual Conference June 11 to 14 at the Spruce Lake Retreat Center in Canadensis, Pa. It was the first time the annual conference was held in Pennsylvania and in the eastern part of the United States.

Various committees met during the day on Tuesday, June 11. Some prepared resolutions to present to the conference while others discussed the different parts of the ministry of the AFLC.

The conference began with the opening worship service in the evening on June 11. The AFLC views conferences as being much more than simply business meetings. They are times for spiritual renewal, so worship services and prayer times are central to the conferences. Pastor Terry Olson, vice-president of the AFLC, shared the message at the opening service from the conference's theme verse of Joshua 24:15: "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Also at the service, four recent graduates of the Free Lutheran Seminary were ordained into the ministry. The men ordained were Kevin Cyzmbor, Kendal Flaten, David Niemela, and Matthew Pillman.

On Wednesday, June 12, the different ministries of the AFLC reported on work God has been doing in their areas of service. They presented written reports and had eight minutes each to share oral

reports. The day also included a prayer time, held each day from 11:30 a.m. to 12 p.m., and a time of praise and worship led by Pastor Rodger Olson, Tioga, N.D. The conference business session recessed at 4:15 p.m. and three different workshops were held from which people could choose to attend. The workshop topics were: "Grace-Empowered Ministry," led by Pastor Joel Rolf, Andover, Minn.; "Life Issues," led by Dr. John Eidsmoe, Pike Road, Ala.; and "Home Missions," led by Pastor Jim Johnson, director of AFLC Home Missions. The workshop topics on Thursday, June 13, were: "A Lutheran Two Kingdoms Analysis of Church/State Issues Today," also led by Eidsmoe, and "Evangelism in Grief," by Dr. James Molstre, dean of the Free Lutheran Seminary.

The evening service on June 12 was the Mission Festival Service, planned by the Women's Missionary Federation. Michael Rokenbrodt, an AFLC missionary to Uganda, brought the message. Part of it was a dramatic presentation of Paul's message while on trial and in chains, recorded in Acts 26. Michael also shared about having a heart for evangelism and sharing Christ with Muslims.

The Mission Festival Service included the installation of Pastor Earl Korhonen as the new AFLC World Missions director. He began in the position on March 1. Appreciation was expressed to retiring director, Pastor Del Palmer, and his wife, Karen, for their 17 years





LEFT: A group of pastors gathered outside the conference meeting house during a break.

TOP: Members of Committee No. 4 met on Tuesday to discuss the work of publications, parish education and youth. They presented several resolutions to the conference.

MIDDLE: Susan Hughes, Bethel Park, Pa., contributed to a discussion on Committee No. 1, which covered the work of the administration of the AFLC.

ABOVE: Doug Hertlein, a member of Peace Free Lutheran, Canal Winchester, Ohio, joins a group in prayer.



of service to World Missions. The Palmers and Korhonens shared about the transition which has included traveling together and visiting all of the AFLC mission fields during the period from March 1 to the beginning of the annual conference.

AFLC Home Missions had a time of prayer and thanksgiving during the Mission Service as they announced that Good Shepherd Lutheran of Camarillo, Calif., has graduated from being considered a Home Missions congregation to being an established church.

June 13 was the day for the election of the executive officers of the AFLC. Pastor Lyndon Korhonen was re-elected to his third three-year term as AFLC president. Also re-elected were Pastor Terry Olson as vice-president and Pastor Micah Hjermstad as secretary.

June 13 and 14 included elections of people to various committees and resolutions on different areas of the work of the AFLC. A resolution was presented regarding funding of *The Lutheran Ambassador* magazine. Consideration of the resolution was postponed until the 2020 conference. The conference called for a committee of representatives from the Coordinating Committee, Schools, and Missions Corporations (all of which contribute to the magazine's subsidy) to be formed to work on the issue.

During the report of the minutes of the Schools Corporation meeting it was announced that the corporation had decided to change the name of the AFLC Schools to Free Lutheran Bible College and Free Lutheran Seminary. The Schools also introduced the new dean of the Bible College: Pastor Adam Osier.

Another upcoming transition was announced at conference. Pastor Jim Rasmussen, the director of Evangelism







THIS PAGE: (Clockwise from top) Pastor Terry Olson gave the message at the opening service. Pastor Rodger Olson led a time of praise and worship each afternoon. Elementary-aged kids took part in a week-long vacation Bible school. Pastor Lyndon Korhonen led the ordination service for recent graduates of the Free Lutheran Seminary.

OPPOSITE PAGE: (Clockwise from top) Pastor Richard Sliper and Eric Westlake enjoy a break from the business. Pastor Craig Johnson recognized outgoing World Missions director Del Palmer and wife, Karen, along with members of the World Missions board and incoming director Earl Korhonen and wife, Joan. Incoming Bible school dean Adam Osier and wife, Courtney, talk with Pastor Alan and Lisa Arneson. Conference attendees spend time in prayer.



THIS PAGE: (Clockwise from top) Jessica Nikunen and Moriah Graham, parish workers in Hagerstown, Md., chat with Pastor Jonathan Unverzagt during a break from the business meeting. David Niemela, who was ordained at the conference, helps count ballots. Nathan and Nancy Niemela, Cokato, Minn., pray with a small group. Pastor Kris Nyman, Hagerstown, used sign language during praise and worship time.

OPPOSITE PAGE: (from top) Kelvin Olson and Caleb Holt form part of a small group tasked with creating a town, including a list of characteristics, laws, and consequences as part of a youth activity. Michael Rokenbrodt, AFLC missionary to Uganda, takes on the role of the Apostle Paul in chains from Acts 26, during the Mission Festival service.



and Discipleship, announced that he is stepping down from that position in the next six months to a year. Meanwhile the committee will search for his replacement.

In other areas of ministry, the director of the Association Retreat Center, Kirk Rautio, shared about work that has been done to cut costs and reduce debt and gave thanks for progress that has been made. He also shared about various events during the summer that will be held to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the ministry of the ARC.

In the area of Home Missions, it was shared that Loren Tungseth has been called to be a half-time coordinator of the mission work in Alaska. The goal is to have the Alaska mission be fully supported, freeing up members of the Home Missions Committee to focus on new church starts in the other 49 states. Home Missions shared about their goals, which include seeing three new AFLC congregations planted each year.

A resolution encouraged congregations and AFLC districts to “prayerfully consider how to support and take part in planting free and living pietistic Lutheran churches across the United States.” Some discussion was held on the conference floor about the word pietistic and its meaning and importance in the heritage of the AFLC. The conference voted to keep the word in the resolution.

The conference attendance was 197 lay members, five visiting lay people, and 104 pastors for a total of 306. The next annual conference will be June 9 to 12, 2020, at the Association Retreat Center in Osceola, Wis.

*Johnson, former editor and chairman of the World Missions Committee, serves Bethany Free Lutheran, Astoria, Ore.*



# WE WILL SERVE THE LORD



By Pastor Terry Olson

**W**hat does one say to the next generation of shepherd pastors as they begin their ministry? What do you tell your people who have witnessed God's salvation, His deliverance from enemies, and who have seen and heard the promises of God fulfilled and retold as a faithful reminder of His love and grace? How do you prepare the next pastor-leaders—shepherds of their congregations—who are surrounded by enemies of their souls? What do you teach the people whom the Lord has given you?

Joshua was faced with such a prospect and situation. He was an understudy of Moses and was with him at Mount Sinai when the Ten Commandments were received.

Joshua was a man of God who had great faith, courage, and leadership qualities. He believed that the Lord would not fail to do as He promised.

Now, when Joshua came to the end of his life, to the end of his time leading the Israelites, what would he say to his people? Only what the Lord wanted him to say.

Joshua could have taken the pragmatic approach. With the history of failure among God's people to remain faithful, he could have come up with a strategy to at least look successful. But he did not. The man of God faithfully held to God's Word and said, "as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15).

What does it mean to be a servant of the Lord? It certainly does not mean that we serve ourselves. Yet, pastors are daily tempted to seek their own honor and profit. But it is really not about you. Nor should it ever be. Our message is always about the Lord Jesus. Even when Joshua said, "as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord," the emphasis was on Christ. The gospel, which is the message of Christ, the cross, and His resurrection, benefits and honors Christ alone. It is the Lord Jesus Christ we serve. Why? Because He alone has saved our souls and rescued us from ourselves and our enemies. The life calling of pastors, then, as servants of His, is to study the Word and to see Christ anew and afresh every day.

The question is, what does it mean to serve? To serve is an action verb and must never be separated from the gospel of God's saving grace. Service, then, as a shepherd, pastor, or father, is connected with the heart that itself is

overwhelmed by God's grace and mercy.

There are two words that I have found indispensable to true service: The first word is faithfulness. "The basic characteristic of a minister must be conscientiousness. What can this faithfulness be? ... But whether a minister is faithful, gives his followers the Word of God, preaches the Gospel, and dispenses the mysteries of God, this is the question; for faithfulness benefits everyone. Above all things, therefore, faithfulness is sought and required in these stewards" (Martin Luther).

Faithfulness in God's Word is indispensable. Study the Word. Preach the Word. Teach the Word. Bring the Word into the homes of your flock. This is the calling to faithfulness. For in His written Word, we are empowered by the Spirit to faithfully exalt Christ in preaching, teaching, and life. "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (I Corinthians 4:1-2).

The second word is love. In John 21, Peter is asked three times by Jesus, "Do you love me?" Again, His forgiveness overwhelmed Peter. To understand this better, the question could be asked in reverse, "Jesus, do you love me, the sinner?" Consider Romans 5:8, "But God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." The sheep and lambs that the shepherd pastor are to love and tend need the same forgiveness.

Pastors have no other message to give that is life-giving. We have no other reason to be called His servants. And no matter what the various gifts He has given to the church, there is but one message—"For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (I Corinthians 2:2-5).

Men, let us humbly serve the Lord.

*Olson, vice president of the AFLC, lives in Grafton, N.D.*



TOP: Pastor Shane, Paula, and Abigail McLoughlin, Minot, N.D. MIDDLE: Kurt Ziegler, McMurray, Pa., spoke at the laymen's service. ABOVE: Pastor Jon and Jeannette Benson, Janesville, Wis. RIGHT: Pastor Jon Langness, Deshler, Neb.



## COLLOQUY

One-year terms

- Pastor Michael Brandt, Rapid City, S.D.
- Pastor Kirk Flaa, Sioux Falls, S.D.
- Pastor Jarrod Hylden, Beresford, S.D.
- Pastor Jon Langness, Deshler, Neb.
- Pastor Thomas W. Olson, Golden Valley, N.D.
- Pastor Ryan Tonneson, Moorhead, Minn.

## BOARDS & COMMITTEES

### AFLC Evangelism & Discipleship

- Layman, five-year term  
Michael Lynnes, Leonard, N.D.

### ARC Board

- Layman, five-year term  
Roger Benson, Brooklyn Park, Minn.

### Benefits Board

- Layman, five-year term  
Phil Peterson, Beresford, S.D.

### Board of Publications & Parish Education

- Pastor, five-year term  
Pastor Ryan Patenaude, Kindred, N.D.

### Budget Analysis Committee

- Layman, three-year term  
Mike Tietjen, Wetmore, Mich.
- Layman, three-year term  
Christine Stout, Presto, Pa.

### Coordinating Committee

- Pastor, five-year term  
Mark Johnson, Dalton, Minn.

### Schools Board of Trustees

- Layman, five-year term  
Don Balmer, Thief River Falls, Minn.

### Youth Board

- Layman, five-year term  
Michele Smith, Brookings, S.D.
- Layman, four-year term  
Adam McC Carlson, Sioux Falls, S.D.

## OFFICERS

### President

- Three-year term  
Pastor Lyndon Korhonen, Plymouth, Minn.

### Vice President

- One-year term  
Pastor Terry Olson, Grafton, N.D.

### Secretary

- One-year term  
Pastor Micah Hjermstad, Fargo, N.D.

The Mission Corporation failed to make a quorum. They have scheduled a Corporation meeting for 1 p.m. Sept. 17 at the AFLC campus, Plymouth, Minn. The following elections will be held.

### Bay Broadcasting

- Pastor, three-year term  
Pastor Thomas Olson, Farmington, Minn.
- Pastor Joe Ocker, Frost, Minn.

### FLAPS Board of Managers

- Pastor, five-year term  
Pastor Henry Mohagen, Reva, S.D.
- Pastor Paul Nash, Brooklyn Park, Minn.

### Home Missions Committee

- Pastor, five-year term  
Pastor Mark Richardson, Faith, S.D.
- Pastor Ron Smith, Brookings, S.D.

- Layman, five-year term  
David Strand, Kindred, N.D.
- Kurt Mortensen, Underwood, Minn.

### World Missions

- Pastor, five-year term  
Pastor Kent Sperry, Beulah, N.D.
- Pastor Jon Langness, Deshler, Neb.
- Layman, five-year term  
Stephen Deysher, Fleetwood, Pa.
- Kenneth Sletten, Duluth, Minn.

## CORPORATIONS

Five-year terms, unless noted

### ARC Corporation

- Thomas Asfeldt, Sioux Falls, S.D.
- Dan Ballmann, Hico, Texas
- Pastor Richard Carr, Tioga, N.D.
- Pastor Leroy Flickinger, Thief River Falls, Minn.
- Lori Lyon, Kenyon, Minn.
- Penny Nash, Fargo, N.D.
- Flint McLoughlin, Minot, N.D.
- Pastor Elden Nelson, Prinsburg, Minn.
- Naomi Paige, Ramsey, Minn.
- Curtis Twedt, Oxbow, N.D.

### Mission Corporation

No quorum, top 20 nominees by ballot

- Pastor Matthew Ballmann, San Antonio, Texas
- Paul Handsaker, Radcliffe, Iowa
- Pastor Richard Long, Arlington, Wash.
- Andrew Quanbeck, Fargo, N.D.
- Pastor Jonathan Unverzagt, Sparta, Wis.
- Pastor Scott Stroud, Salinas, Calif.
- Gloria Flaa, Sioux Falls, S.D.
- Pastor Mark Olson, Minneapolis
- Pastor Craig Wentzel, Edmore, N.D.
- Pastor Michael Brandt, Rapid City, S.D.
- Pastor Greg Schram, Loveland, Colo.
- Lay Pastor Bill Buck, Sioux Falls, S.D.
- Ken Sletten, Duluth, Minn.
- Pastor David Johnson, Boyertown, Pa.
- Pastor Ray Ballmann, Kopperl, Texas
- Linda Fugleberg, Moorhead, Minn.
- Dr. Lyle Westrom, Crookston, Minn.
- Hans Tanner, Fargo, N.D.
- Pastor Mark Richardson, Faith, S.D.
- Pastor Paul Nash, Brooklyn Park, Minn.

### Schools Corporation

- Pastor Kirk Thorson, Sioux Falls, S.D.
- Bonnie Handsaker, Radcliffe, Iowa
- Pastor Jon Wellumson, Williston, N.D.
- Pastor Matthew Quanbeck, Laurel, Neb.
- Pastor Gideon Johnson, Kenyon, Minn.
- Gwen Berge, Maple Grove, Minn.
- Elika Korhonen, Fargo, N.D.
- Pastor Peter Ward, Pelican Rapids, Minn.
- Susan Parsley, Pipestone, Minn.
- Robin Johnson, Esko, Minn.
- Nathan Dalager, Argyle, Minn. (two-year term)



# ELECTION RESULTS

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## 2020 COMMITTEES

One-year terms, serving at the Annual Conference, June 9-12, 2020, at the Association Retreat Center, Osceola, Wis.

### Committee No. 1

Pastor John Amundson, New Leipzig, N.D.  
Pastor Ken Hart, Fairbury, Neb.  
Jean Sheldon, Ray, N.D.  
Roger Van Someren, Amery, Wis.  
Bruce Stoudt, Bechtelsville, Pa.

### Committee No. 2

Joel Erickson, Oslo, Minn.  
Bill Fish, Everett, Wash.  
Pastor Barry Nelson, Tripp, S.D.  
Pastor David Tilney, Cloquet, Minn.  
Paul Welsch, Amery, Wis.

### Committee No. 3

Pastor Karl Anderson, McIntosh, Minn.  
Iver Heier, Prairie City, S.D.  
Pastor Nathan Olson, Savage, Minn.  
Jessica Smith, Brookings, S.D.  
Stewart Vachal, Epping, N.D.

### Committee No. 4

Pastor Brett Boe, Shakopee, Minn.  
Amy Dalager, Argyle, Minn.  
Pastor Rob Edwards, Dassel, Minn.  
Albert Engevik, Eden, S.D.  
Rebecca Moan, Corcoran, Minn.

### Committee No. 5

Pastor David Johnson, Boyertown, Pa.  
Bruce Sellent, Almena, Wis.  
Ken Sletten, Duluth, Minn.  
Stan Strong, Blackduck, Minn.  
Pastor Craig Wentzel, Edmore, N.D.

## NOMINATING COMMITTEE

One-year terms

### Central Tri State

Wayne Olson, Frost, Minn.

### Eastern

Susan Hughes, Bethel Park, Pa.

### Eastern North Dakota

Vince Larson, Fargo, N.D.

### Illinois

Jim Thompson, Janesville, Wis.

### Lake Superior

Robin Johnson, Cloquet, Minn.

### Minneapolis

Dr. Nathan Olson, Eagan, Minn.

### Nebraska/Kansas/Colorado

Keith Croonquist, Loveland, Colo.

### North Central Minnesota

Loren Dryburgh, Fosston, Minn.

### Northern Michigan

David Blake, Ontonagon, Mich.

### Northwestern Minnesota

Joel Erickson, Oslo, Minn.

### Pacific Northwest

Pastor Cal Willard, Everett, Wash.

### South Central

Mary Jo Jackson, Stover, Mo.

### South Dakota

Michele Smith, Brookings, S.D.

### Southwestern

Mark Gustafson, Apache Junction, Ariz.

### West Central Minnesota

Andrew Quanbeck, Moorhead, Minn.

### Western ND/Eastern Montana

Lynn Wellumson, Williston, N.D.

# FAITHFUL TO ALL GENERATIONS

*“One generation shall commend your works to another,  
and shall declare your mighty acts” (Psalm 145:4).*

By JoyAnn Dahl

One hundred and one women attended the Women’s Missionary Federation Day on June 11, at the Spruce Lake Retreat Center, Canadensis, Pa. Lavonne West, the national WMF president, opened with prayer, and Nancy Brumbach, from Living Faith, Boyertown, Pa., gave a greeting and welcome. Beverly Enderlein, the 2019 WMF Bible study writer, shared in devotions exploring God’s faithfulness in our lives.

Members of the 2019 AFLBS Ambassador team sang praise and worship songs, including the theme song, “Great Is Thy Faithfulness.” Pastor Jonathan and Tamba Abel, AFLC missionaries to Brazil, gave a presentation on the Miriam Home in Campo Mourão, Brazil, followed by a missionary wedding slideshow during the morning offering. During a stretch break, WMF board members Esther Hylden (first vice president) and JoyAnn Dahl (recording secretary) engaged the group with trivia questions and gave away prizes. The next workshop presenter was Vicki Johnson, from Living Faith, Boyertown, with the title, “Four Life Lessons I learned Behind the Mic,” which included some experiences and lessons learned as a radio host. A beautiful memorial service remembering those who had died this past year was led by Linda Korhonen, of Plymouth, Minn.

After lunch, encouraging praise and worship music was led by Pastor Roger Olson, Tioga, N.D., followed by the last workshop presenter, Sandy Newman, a former member of Ruthfred Evangelical Lutheran, Bethel Park, Pa., on the topic of “Loving God in Every Generation.” Pastor David and Vicki Johnson of Boyertown, and their daughter, Esther, shared in beautiful music, along with sign language interpretation provided by Pastor Kris Nyman, Hagerstown, Md.

In the afternoon, the national WMF annual business meeting was opened by President West, who announced the morning offering amount of \$1,906.37. The president’s report, treasurer’s report, and minutes of the secretary from 2018 were approved as presented. Resolutions were read and approved with one friendly amendment. Members of the Nominating Committee presented names for election for the positions of first vice president and recording secretary. By ballot election, Anne Presteng

(Grafton, N.D.) was elected to the position of first vice president, and Karen Floan (Plymouth, Minn.) was elected to the position of recording secretary. A yearly budget of \$156,850 was approved for 2020. A closing benediction and blessing were given by Pastor David Johnson, and a brief Advisory Committee meeting was held with WMF members Ruth Rautio, Lynette Strong, and Candice Johnson, along with the national WMF board. Thank you to parliamentarian Lyle Westrom for his willingness to preside over the business meeting.

## WMF BREAKFAST

Wednesday morning, June 12, Hylden and Dahl led the breakfast program. Hylden shared devotions and members of the WMF board presented a skit, “The Parable of the Persistent Widow,” with a guest appearance by Michael Rokenbrodt, AFLC missionary to Uganda. Praise and worship songs followed, and Hylden gave a presentation on the “The Joy Recipe,” from I Thessalonians 5:16-18. The blessing and benediction were given by Pastor Richard Larson, Ortonville, Minn.

## MISSION FESTIVAL SERVICE

The Mission Festival service prelude was provided by the 2019 AFLBS Ambassadors. President West welcomed all and then called on Pastor Del Palmer, outgoing World Missions director, to lead the congregation in worship. A drama presentation, “I Too,” from Acts 26:9, was presented by Michael Rokenbrodt, AFLC missionary to Uganda. Members of the Home Missions Committee had a short presentation. Pastor Earl Korhonen was then commissioned as the new director of World Missions, followed by a cake reception. The offering total for the evening was \$3,034.

Thank you to our 2019 hosts and the Spruce Lake Retreat Center for providing for our needs during the conference. Join us next year at WMF Day which will be held June 9, 2020, at the Association Retreat Center, located near Osceola, Wis.

*Dahl, Thief River Falls, Minn., is the outgoing recording secretary for the WMF.*





Clockwise from top right: Beverly Enderlein; Linda Schierkolk and Barb Moland; Tamba Abel; Enderlein and Julia and James Pillman; Vicki Johnson; Janice Johnson; Lynette Strong; Casey McLoughlin; Erin Johnson and Candice Johnson. CENTER: Sandy Newman.



## Housing reservations open for 2020 Annual Conference

The 202 AFLC Annual Conference will be held June 9-12 at the Association Retreat Center, near Osceola, Wis. The theme of the conference, “Will He Find Faith,” comes from Luke 18:8.

Though planning for the conference has just begun, the ARC has already opened up housing reservations for the week. A variety of room styles are available to reserve, including hotel-styled rooms, Jack and Jill rooms, dorms and multi-bunk rooms. There are also spaces to tent or RV camp, as well as private homes to reserve. Meal packages are also available. A three-night minimum reservation is required.

To reserve a room and sign up for meals, please contact the ARC at (715) 294-2877 or email [arccamps@arc-aflc.org](mailto:arccamps@arc-aflc.org).

TOP: Stan Strong and Pastor Nathan Olson go over a resolution for Committee #3. LEFT: Dawn Johnson, Deb Benson, and Lori Willard chat outside the gym. TOP LEFT: John Eidsmoe and Lyle Westrom acted as parliamentarians for the conference business. BOTTOM LEFT: Pastor Jim Johnson, Fergus Falls, Minn., spoke to a resolution.



## More images from Annual Conference



TOP: Pastors attending conference gathered around the four seminary graduates who were ordained during the opening service of the conference. ABOVE: Members of Committee #2, which focus on the work of the AFLC Schools, met on Tuesday afternoon prior to the opening of the conference. Pictured, from left, are Gary Yerger, Leesport, Pa., Pastor Ryan Tonneson, Glyndon, Minn., Pastor Mark Richardson, Faith, S.D., and Albert Engevik, Eden, S.D. RIGHT: Jeanie Sheldon, Ray, N.D., contributed to the discussion for Committee #5, which focused on the work of Evangelism and Benefits.



I would assume that most churches have a couple of those little red boxes on the wall scattered about with the words, “Pull in case of fire,” written on it. Probably not too far away is a round red cylinder with instructions that say, “Hold upright, pull the ring, stand 10 feet back and squeeze the lever.” To make life even more interesting, in our church we have a compact defibrillator hanging on the wall just off from the sanctuary. There is also a first aid kit somewhere in the building, which I suspect is close to the kitchen since that is where all of the sharp objects are stored and used. Turns out we also have a fair number of church members who are trained in a variety of health field professions, including first responders who are always ready to volunteer their services. I guess you could say as a congregation we are ready for just about any emergency.

What happens when the emergency is more of an ongoing nature, such as news that someone has a diagnosis of cancer, or has lost a loved one? Who responds to the family when a member is deployed to defend our country and will be gone for up to a year? What about the lifelong church member who is now too ill to attend church? There are many examples of struggles that are happening all around us on a daily basis that are often the after effects of an emergency.



## IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

BY PASTOR JERRY NELSON

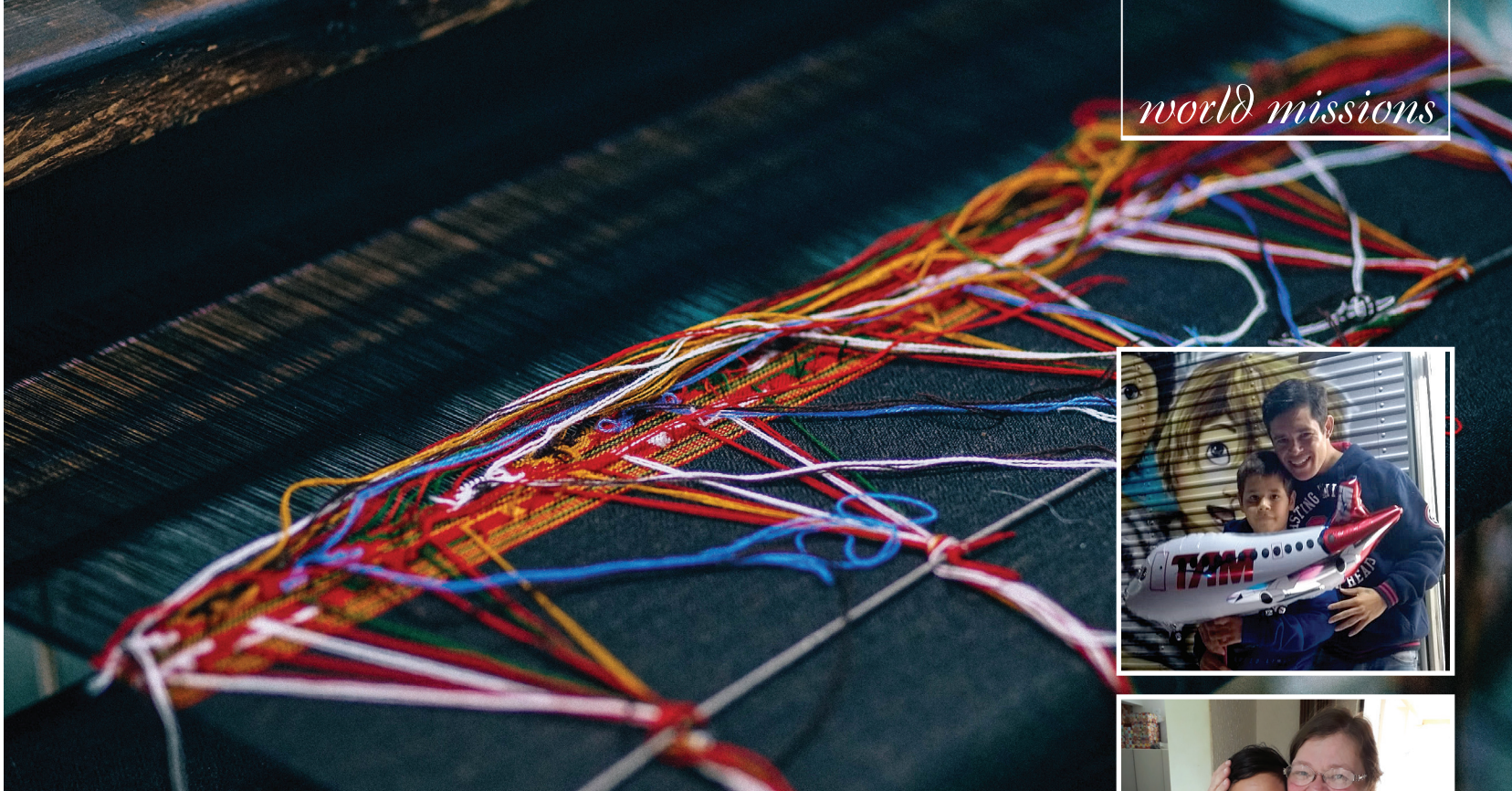
Perhaps our first answer for who is best prepared to be the first responder is our pastors. After all, they went to seminary! Have you ever wondered what Scripture has to say about our role as the congregation in coming alongside struggling people?

A few years ago at Christ is Lord Free Lutheran we did a Bible study looking at the “one another” verses in Scripture. Through our study we found that we are all called to love, be at peace, wash feet, pray, honor, serve, carry burdens, encourage, use whatever gift, be patient, forgive ... and the list goes on. That is a lot of one-anothering for one person to accomplish even if he is the pastor. We can also see from Acts 2:42 and following how the church in Jerusalem came together for teaching, fellowship, and meeting each other’s needs.

It takes a church to be ongoing responders.

Since concluding that study, our congregation formed what we call faithful living groups, as well as a spiritual care ministry. Members of faithful living groups come together to study the Word, fellowship, and perhaps share a meal. However, they are also involved in ministering to the needs of others, both inside and outside of the church. The spiritual care ministry team is a group of church members who have been trained more specifically in meeting ongoing individual needs. These two groups work synergistically as an extension of not only the pastor, but of the whole congregation—responding to the struggles and emergencies we all encounter.

*Nelson is the marriage and family pastor at Christ is Lord Lutheran, Onalaska, Wis., where he also coordinates the spiritual care ministry.*



# HIS TAPESTRY

BY JONNI SLIVER

**T**apestry is the intricate weaving of threads into a beautiful work of art. If you saw the work in process it might look less impressive—threads and shuttles and knots; but as the work progresses the artist’s design appears. In much the same way, our lives are amazing works of tapestry, which form as God works out His wonderful plan for us.

I would like to describe the tapestry of siblings who have passed through the Miriam Home.

The first thread is Nicolas, who came to the Miriam Home for the first time as a 3-year-old in 2012. Though he had been completely rejected by his mother, it took a whole year for social services to decide that there was no blood relative interested or able to receive him. Nicolas certainly left his mark on the Miriam Home. A beautiful, intelligent, loving little guy, he could have challenged Dennis the Menace in getting into mischief—we have one toilet that took six months to get in working order after Nicolas tried to figure out how many rocks you can flush before the water won’t go down. Nicolas was put up for adoption, and in just weeks a couple came to meet him. Like us, they fell in love with him, and after 16 months, he joined his new family.

The second thread entered a year later when a precious little girl named Nicole came to the Miriam Home. She was only 8 years old and had

already gone through terrible traumas at the hand of her father. It so happens that this loving child was the older sister of Nicolas, having the same mother. Nicole lived with us for nine months when we received a phone call. Nelio, Nicole’s oldest brother, had just discovered she was with us. He had long ago left home, gotten into trouble, and ended up in jail. Praise the Lord, in jail he had given his life to Jesus. When he was released, he began going to church, met a sweet young lady, and they got married. Upon discovery that his little sister was in a children’s shelter, they immediately asked to receive Nicole in their home. It took a little while for social service to agree—they wanted to make sure there was a stable home environment—but soon Nicole joined her brother.

It sounds like the story ended, doesn’t it? Ah but tapestries have knots!

In September of last year Nicolas returned to the Miriam Home. His adoptive mother had problems with mental health issues all her life, a factor of which we weren’t aware when he was adopted. Recently she had become increasingly unstable and at times physically violent with Nicolas. The return was very difficult for him; Nicolas loved his father with his whole heart, but after a few months it became clear that he wouldn’t be rejoining the family.

Recently we had a surprise—Nicole and her family appeared at our door. She had been asking

for weeks to visit her friends in the Miriam Home. As I visited with Nicole, Pastor Silvio talked to Nelio and told him that one more member of his family was here. We didn’t expect their reaction: Nelio’s wife slugged him in the arm! It seems the couple had been talking about Nicolas for days. They knew he had been adopted and assumed he was doing well, but he weighed on their minds. Just the night before, she had dreamt about the little lost brother.

Nicolas has already visited Nelio’s home twice and their lives are intertwining. We are so blessed to see how God is reweaving the tapestry of this family.

*Sliver is an AFLC missionary serving at the Miriam Home in Campo Mourão, Brazil.*

PEOPLE & PLACES

**Pastor Eric Swenson** has resigned from Christian Free Lutheran in Wheatland, Iowa, and has accepted a call to serve Stavanger Free Lutheran in Garden City, Iowa.

**Pastor Kendall Flaten**, a 2018 graduate of the Free Lutheran Seminary, has accepted a call to serve Ortley Free Lutheran, Ortley, S.D., and Egeland Lutheran in Waubay, S.D.

## Youth Ministries adds two part-time staff

AFLC Youth Ministries is pleased to welcome Pastor Eric Christenson as a part-time staff member beginning in August. Christenson will serve as networking coordinator by connecting with AFLC congregations, youth leaders, and pastors about their Kingdom work with teenagers. Christenson will continue in his primary call to his local congregation of Amery Free Lutheran, Amery, Wis., and serve a few hours a week with the AFLC. Christenson joins Jordan Langness, training coordinator, and Daniel Keinanen, FLY Convention coordinator, as part-time employees that multiply the influence of Youth Ministries as they serve our national church fellowship.

The three other employees of AFLC Youth Ministries—Chris Rasmussen, Liz McCarlson, and Pastor Jason Holt—serve in the AFLC administration offices in Plymouth, Minn.

## Green Lake congregation hosts all-church reunion for former members and friends

Members of Green Lake Lutheran Church, Spicer Minn., are hosting an all-church reunion on Aug. 11. Former members, pastors and friends are invited to a special service at 10:30 a.m., followed by a dinner served by members.

## JUNE MEMORIALS

**AFLBS**

Ralph Johnson  
Ruth Claus  
Clarice Dahl

**Evangelism**

Todd Storley  
Benjamin and David  
Temte

**Home Missions**

Harvey and Grace  
Loftsgard

**WMF**

Ralph Johnson

**WMF**

Bev Burke  
Linda Halverson

**World Missions**

Judy Sprung  
Allen Erickson



## AFLC Schools plan Festival of Praise planned for fall

The Free Lutheran Schools will host a Festival of Praise at 4:30 p.m. on Sunday, October 27, in the Hans Nielsen Hauge Chapel on the Free Lutheran School's campus in Plymouth, Minn. The event has been modeled after the Reformation Festival held in 2017, which commemorated the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. The Festival of Praise will include a congregational hymn sing, Handel's Hallelujah Chorus, and the newly-composed *The Hallel*, a brand new set of musical pieces which the Bible College choirs helped to commission, based on Psalms 113-118.

The entire evening will be led by a professional chamber instrumental ensemble, a festival choir including current Bible College students, alumni, and friends, and Marian Christopherson on the 35-rank Wicks organ. Two of the movements will include a children's choir.

Two years ago AFLBS choir director, Andrew Hanson, was approached by Deo Cantamus, a non-profit organization of Christian musicians in the Twin Cities. Their director, Al Hawkins, proposed a joint commissioning of an original work by local composer Lloyd Larson. The work, titled *The Hallel*, means "praise" in Hebrew. Larson set each Psalm to its own song, creating a 40-minute work of six movements.

The AFLC Schools invite anyone interested to join the Festival of Praise in person, to view via live-streaming, or to be a part of the festival or children's choir. For more information, visit the AFLC Schools' website at aflbs.edu.

### AFLC BENEVOLENCES January 1-June 30, 2019

FUND	REC'D IN JUNE	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$31,725	\$222,441	\$230,633
Evangelism	6,423	62,368	52,275
Youth Ministries	6,476	59,062	72,554
Parish Education	3,592	89,257	112,732
Seminary	12,936	134,691	147,325
Bible School	34,058	292,586	299,327
Home Missions	18,169	195,746	206,585
World Missions	21,913	235,249	193,539
Personal Support	46,912	309,172	408,526
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$182,203</b>	<b>\$1,600,573</b>	<b>\$1,723,495</b>

For additional financial information for each department, go to [www.aflc.org/giving](http://www.aflc.org/giving)

# IT'S ONLY A NAME, BUT ...

The title of an editorial in the April 2, 1991, issue, during this editor's first stint in the position, was "New Names." I suggested that *Association Free* was a most inadequate and awkward title for our schools, but wondered if we were



Pastor Robert Lee

already too attached to *AFLTS* and *AFLBS* to even consider a change. The response was quite underwhelming, and only one person said that he agreed with me.

The decision by members of the Schools' Corporation and

conference this year to change the names of our schools was almost breathtakingly swift, with little opposition. The chief concern was to retain "free Lutheran" in the titles, and so it was decided. The campus offices were reminded that the change will not take place immediately, since the legal steps and related issues (not to mention the stationary and signs!) must be completed first, so we must continue to use the old names for the time being.

It was good to drop "Association" from the name, but the change from "Bible school" to "college" is a more significant change than it may seem on the surface. The Lutheran Bible school movement in the U.S. dates back to the early 20th century, inspired by the Scandinavian "mission schools" that emphasized the preparation of lay people for Christian service. The Lutheran Bible Institute (LBI) was organized in 1918 in Minneapolis/St. Paul, representing a cross section of Lutheranism, and schools were eventually established in Minneapolis, Los Angeles, Seattle, and Teaneck, N.J. Students were frequently awakened to a call to full-time ministry at home or on the mission fields during their time at one of the Bible schools, and countless lay people were prepared for

service in their congregations. Several years ago, a pastor told me of an LBI graduate who led the Sunday school program in his congregation for more than 50 years. Several of our AFLC pastors studied at one of the LBI schools.

All of these schools no longer exist. It's sad to drive by the LBI campus on Highway 55 in Golden Valley, Minn., and see that it has become a state-operated arts school. Three of the Bible schools attempted to make the transition to a college, but the change was not successful. The Lutheran Brethren Bible School closed several years ago, and our Bible school is the last one in the U.S. to continue. We have survived and thrived, and for a time AFLBS was the largest Lutheran Bible school in the world.

A name change was certainly not the reason for the decline of the Lutheran Bible school movement. In at least a couple of cases there was an attempt to introduce a liberal arts curriculum together with a Bible school program, and more recent graduates speak of a growing higher critical approach to the Scriptures. People with a more liberal approach to the Bible will hardly support a Bible school, and so attempts to modify the program to fit the changes within broader Lutheranism probably alienated those with a heart for what the Bible schools have been.

The seminary will continue to be a seminary, and the only anticipated change could be the addition of more degrees. The administration and the Board of Trustees must be united and alert to oppose any possibility that the name change from "Bible school" to "Bible college" could mean in any way an attempt to alter the basic character

of the program. Too many institutions from other denominational families made the transition over the years from Bible school to Bible college to college—and even to university for a few—and for some the convictions of the founders were lost in the process. Many of our readers come from backgrounds where they were betrayed by their church schools.

There was an article in the issue referenced above listing distinctions of the seminary that can also be applied to our Bible school/college. First, our high view of Scripture is noted, evident in our stated conviction that the Bible is both inerrant and infallible. Second, we believe in pietism in the midst of orthodoxy, upholding a

*Too many institutions from other denominational families made the transition over the years from Bible school to Bible college to college ... and for some the convictions of the founders were lost in the process.*

balanced emphasis on heartfelt faith and godly living, as well as a commitment to our Lutheran confessions without apology.

It's only a name, but a new name could hopefully mean a new season of outreach especially for our Bible school/college, and it's exciting to hear that a large new class is expected in the fall. Please pray for our schools, that this new season might continue to be firmly established on the solid old foundation.

*building the base*

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# SEEING DEAD PEOPLE

BY PASTOR GIDEON JOHNSON

**I**n the 1999 supernatural drama *The Sixth Sense*, a young boy named Cole Sear struggles with the reality that he sees dead people. In fact, the most famous line from this film comes when Cole confesses to his therapist, Malcolm Crowe, “I see dead people ... all the time.” In an effort to help this young man, Crowe then urges Cole to deal with this reality by doing what he can to help the dead people he sees.

Now, to be honest, I am glad I don’t see dead people roaming around like young Cole experienced. However, as we are faced with a world and culture that has increasingly grown hostile to those of faith and the truth of God’s Word, it may be worth our time and effort as Christians to “see some dead people”—that is, to remember the saints who have gone before us. Not so that we might help them, but so that they might help and encourage us as we walk this narrow road.

The author of Hebrews offers this encouragement, “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses,

let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith” (12:1-2, ESV).

Here, we are urged to remember the saints who have gone before us and be encouraged by their examples. These are sinners saved by grace who have fought the good fight of faith, who have run the race with endurance, always looking to Jesus “who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God” (12:2).

In an article titled *Why Study Church History?*, Dr. Jon Payne writes: “Every believer knows that he desperately needs divine grace, motivation, and encouragement to carry on. Of course, Christ and His ordained means of Word, sacrament, and prayer are the essential means and motivation for perseverance (Hebrews 12:1). Even so, we can find motivation to persevere in the study of church history” (*Tabletalk*, October 2016).

He concludes his article with these questions and words of encouragement, “Are you feeling spiritually weary? Are you ready to give up? Throw yourself into the arms of Christ, and into the pages of church history. Spend time reflecting upon the faithful lives and godly voices of the past, on those whose faith motivates you to keep running.”

Looking ahead it’s obvious that following the narrow way will continue to be difficult. Therefore, we must continue standing and relying upon God’s Word. We must continue surrounding ourselves with the great cloud of witnesses in the local congregation. And, we should always be willing to “see some dead people” by studying the lives of the saints who have gone before us so that we might be encouraged and motivated by their examples.

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*Johnson serves the Kenyon, Minn., parish (Hauge and Emmanuel Lutheran).*