

THE 

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LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

TO PURSUE
WISDOM



THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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ENCOURAGING
WORD

BE FREED FROM SUFFERING

BY ELIZABETH NEUFELD

We all desire freedom. We can be imprisoned by worry, depression, physical or emotional hurts, or brokenness. During His three years of ministry, Jesus healed people from these very things. One was a woman, faith-filled and hopeful, who reached out to Him.

“A large crowd followed and pressed around him. And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse” (Mark 5:24-26).

Maybe your situation looks bleak. You’ve tried everything you can think of, your resources are stretched thin, and perhaps you’ve given up hope. Likewise, this woman was in the depths, and when she found Jesus, she knew her only chance of escape from this debilitating situation was through one source, and she sought Him.

“When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, because she thought, ‘If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed’” (vs. 27-28).

The source of all healing comes from the Maker of heaven and earth, a prospect that may seem too wonderful to be true. This woman had heard of Jesus’ miracles, and it renewed her hope that there could be healing after all, even though it seemed like it was such an insignificant act—she simply brushed her hand against His robe as He passed by, a mere touch in anticipation that somehow she wouldn’t hurt anymore.

“Immediately her bleeding stopped, and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering” (vs. 29).

All the things she had heard about Jesus were true after all. I can imagine her standing there, shocked, hands wide open, and in total awe that

Jesus had the power to heal her even indirectly.

“At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from Him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, ‘Who touched my clothes?’” (vs. 30).

The woman froze and probably wanted to hide, but though timid, she also wanted to meet her Savior. The disciples understood little of what had happened, and commented the same way most of us would have:

“‘You see the people crowding against you,’ his disciples answered, ‘and yet you can ask, ‘Who touched me?’” But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it” (vs. 31-32).

Jesus pursued the one who needed Him. Like a shepherd, He was aware that a lost sheep was crying out to Him.

“Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth” (vs. 33).

She broke down before Jesus and let everything be spoken aloud at last. She had been suffering endlessly, without hope, fearful that this would be her state for the rest of her life. It was dark, it was scary, and it seemed like it would go on forever and ever. But Jesus was there, and she found hope in Him.

“He said to her, ‘Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering’” (vs. 34).

Be freed—the very thing she wanted to hear. She was free because the Savior had come. My friend, even when it feels like there is nothing else, call out to Him. He is your Savior, no matter how humble your step toward Him may seem.

Neufeld is a Home Missions parish builder serving at Calvary Free Lutheran, Mesa, Ariz.

To teach is to learn twice.

—Joseph Joubert

Education is simply the soul of a society as it passes from one generation to another.

—G.K. Chesterton

When schools flourish, all flourishes.

—Martin Luther

It is a fact that unless children are brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, they, and the society which they constitute or control, will go to destruction.

—Charles Hodge

Helping people to know God and to be obedient to him is perhaps the greatest gift we can bestow. Understood in this way, Christian education can be one of the most compassionate ministries of the church.

—Perry G. Downs

The most important Christian education institution is not the pulpit or the school, important as those institutions are; but it is the Christian family.

—J. Gresham Machen

“Critical thinking” is a term that gets thrown around a lot, and I’m not sure that everyone who uses it agrees on what it means. Although this is more of a description than a definition, I like the way Anita Harnadek defines the term in her book, *Critical Thinking Book One*:

Critical thinking is a term that includes many kinds of thinking all at once. When we say that a person is thinking critically, we do not mean that he is finding fault with something or that he is looking for a fight. We do mean all of the following:

1. He is open-minded about new ideas.
2. He does not argue about something when he knows nothing about it.
3. He knows when he needs more information about something.
4. He knows the difference between a conclusion which *might* be true and one which *must* be true.
5. He knows that people have different ideas about the meanings of words.
6. He tries to avoid common mistakes in his own reasoning.
7. He questions everything which doesn’t make sense to him.
8. He tries to separate emotional thinking from logical thinking.
9. He tries to build up his vocabulary so that he can understand what other people are saying and so that he can make his own ideas clear to other people.

Boiled down, critical thinking is the ability to understand and evaluate what someone is saying. These traits do have to be taught and practiced as they do not come naturally.

Why teach critical thinking?

The most important reason youths and adults should be able to think critically is to be like the Bereans, who “... received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11, NKJV). Upon hearing a new concept, the Bereans neither accepted nor rejected it out of hand. Instead, they applied critical thinking techniques. They knew the Scriptures and how to look things up, and they knew how to use reason to see whether what they were hearing held up to the light of the truth. “Therefore many of them believed” (Acts 17:12).

Another reason is that the better someone is at thinking critically, the more “unfoolable” he is. He will not be susceptible to whatever faddish thought is being promoted by the media, he will be able to decide for himself about hot topics in the news and cogently defend his opinion, and he will be less likely to accept revisionist history.

When should we learn critical thinking?

It is never too late to learn critical thinking techniques. It would behoove us all to hone this skill as much as we can. However, I think there is such a thing as too early for most aspects of critical thinking. Younger children are not capable of that level of analysis. Instead, you can prepare them by nurturing their relationship with the Lord and filling their minds with truth. You can also build up their vocabulary and expand their horizons through literature.

So how do you know when someone is old enough for critical thinking? It happens sometime around middle school. In her seminal essay, *The Lost Tools of Learning*, Dorothy Sayers writes that the ideal age to begin teaching these skills “... is characterized by contradicting, answering-back, liking to ‘catch people out’ (especially one’s elders), and the propounding of conundrums (especially the kind with a nasty verbal catch in them).” You’ll notice when a child is in that stage.

How can we teach critical thinking?

There are many useful books to use as a resource for teaching critical thinking techniques. *Fallacy Detective*, by Nathaniel and Hans Bluedorn, is enough to save a person from falling prey to a lot of the misinformation bouncing around the internet. I am using *Critical Thinking*, by Anita Harnadek, with my own (sixth-grade) boys this year. There are also excellent worktexts in formal logic suitable for preteens or teenagers, such as *Introductory Logic*, by Douglas Wilson.

Like any skill, critical thinking must be practiced and not merely studied. Discussion is key. Everything you hear or read—especially from the media—can serve as material for practice. Make sure you understand it. Does it even make sense? Is the author’s argument sound and based on truthful premises? If not, where is the mistake? Ask yourself what the author had to gain by presenting his or her case this way. Then maybe do a little research and see what someone else said who did not stand to gain by an idea. As Proverbs 18:17 says, “The first one to plead his cause seems right, until his neighbor comes and examines him.”

It is worthwhile to heed Sayers’ warning, though: “Wherever the matter for Dialectic is found, it is, of course, highly important that attention should be focused on the beauty and economy of a fine demonstration or a well-tuned argument, lest veneration should wholly die.”

Finally, there is nothing so important as staying close to Jesus and reading His Word daily. If you immerse yourself in truth, you are less likely to fall prey to a lie. If you submit to the infallibility of God’s Word, you are less likely to think yourself infallible. That is of much more benefit than any amount of practice with critical thinking techniques.

Giles, Mesa, Ariz., a 1999 graduate of the Free Lutheran Bible College, is a member of Calvary Free Lutheran, Mesa, Ariz.

CRITICAL

THINKING

TECHNIQUES

By Ingrid Giles





LEARNING ONLINE

A whole host of online avenues of learning have emerged. As a result, the resources with which we engage in growing as learning disciples has changed.

By Pastor Brett Boe

Learning is at the heart of Christianity. The definition of disciple, after all, is “learner.” God has chosen to communicate to us through a book, the Bible. That reality alone should move all Christians to assume a posture of learning. With this driving force compelling Christians to grow in their faith, we have reached for books, attended Bible studies, and perhaps even attended a Christian college, such as our Free Lutheran Bible College. For many centuries these in-person options were the go-to source of information about the faith that we hold.

While all of those in-person resources have endured, a whole host of online avenues of learning have emerged. With the dawn of the internet and the subsequent addition of smartphones, we suddenly have instant access to a world of information. As a result, the resources with which we engage in growing as learning disciples has changed. The rapidity of this change has descended upon us like a January blizzard in Minnesota. There are blog posts, podcast episodes, sermon videos, recorded seminars, and classes. We can read, watch, or listen to anything online with a few taps on a keyboard.

With this unprecedented advance in technology and options before us, we need to have trusted friends and mentors in Christ who can serve as guides for us as we navigate this Wild West of online learning. When considering online learning, one must conclude that a Google search alone is probably not a sufficient guide for our endeavor to grow in our faith through online resources. While I would strongly recommend that you find these trusted mentors in person, I would like to propose guidelines for a fruitful experience of growing in the faith through online resources.

Have a Home Base

It is tempting to embark on an online journey of learning disconnected from an actual physical congregation. Your

pastor can serve as a great guide as you launch out to learn online. Keep coming back to that physical, local congregation. One can listen to any pastor online, but despite the growth of online churches, one key thing that a congregation provides that you can't have online is an ongoing physical presence of fellowship. This physical presence feeds into digital presence and vice versa.

Explore

Having your identity firmly fixed in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ through the ministry of your local congregation, you are ready to explore. Find great blog posts to read. Listen to excellent podcasts. Take advantage of that long commute by listening to an audiobook. Pose a question online and read with a discerning eye. Read physical books and resources, too. Pray that the Lord would give you a hunger to learn and grow in His Word.

As you explore, take on the mindset of a scuba diver rather than a jet skier. In his book titled *The Shallows*, Nicholas Carr writes, “When we go online, we enter an environment that promotes cursory reading, hurried and distracted thinking, and superficial learning.” The process of learning is one that takes us deep. Don't settle for superficiality.

Beware

Two common pitfalls of online learning are being overwhelmed by information and false teaching. Watch out for these dangerous beasts out in the wild world of the inter-webs. Being overwhelmed stings us when we fall into endless rabbit holes. In I Timothy 1:4, Paul warns believers to not “devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.” An endless sea of information exists. Don't overwhelm yourself by trying to reach the end of it. “Twitter completionists” think they need to read every tweet of every one of the

accounts they follow. It may be helpful to take the approach that Cal Newport takes in his book *Digital Minimalism*. He advocates “a philosophy of technology use in which you focus your online time on a small number of carefully selected and optimized activities that strongly support things you value and then happily miss out on everything else.”

Beware, also, of false teaching online. It isn't necessarily true if you “read it on the internet.” Stories of those who have succumbed to false teaching online grieves the hearts of those who cling to the truth of God's Word. Find trusted sources. Yet don't allow yourself to be padded into an echo chamber where you only receive from those who think exactly like you. Read, watch, and listen to viewpoints other than your Free Lutheran viewpoint in order to strengthen your convictions, but beware of the siren song of false teaching.

Synthesize

Record what you find. A commonplace notebook, be it digital or analog, is a great way to gather your online gleanings. This container of nuggets, highlights, notes, and musings provides you with a wonderful travelogue of your growth in Christ through online resources.

Technology is not inherently evil. Sure, the evil one has used technology to ensnare unsuspecting believers. Use the tool wisely. Online resources can bring great blessing. I have had the privilege co-hosting the *Being Lutheran* podcast. It is a treat for us to see the list of places in the world where listeners download our episodes. One man in Florida claimed on Twitter that he got baptized with his children after binge-listening to *Being Lutheran* podcast episodes. With these guidelines in hand, be prepared to be blessed as you explore, learn, and grow in your faith online.

Boe serves King of Glory Lutheran, Shakopee, Minn.

The Scripture teaches that when Christ completed His earthly ministry by His death and resurrection, and when He victoriously ascended into heaven, He gave gifts to men (Ephesians 4:8). The Apostle Paul lists the gifts given and explains the purpose of the gifts in Ephesians 4:11-12, “And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (ESV). Of special interest for this study is the Christ-given gift of “pastors and teachers.”

In the New Testament, the pastoral office is referenced by three key words: pastor (*poimane*, which literally is the word “shepherd”), overseer (*episkopos*, which is translated “bishop” in the KJV), and elder (*presbuteros*, which on occasion refers to an aged person in contrast to someone younger, but which word also is used for the pastoral office).

That these three words are used interchangeably in the New Testament to refer to the pastoral office is demonstrated by Titus 1:5, 7, by I Peter 5:1-2, and by Acts 20:17, 28. In Titus 1:5 and 7, the elder in verse 5 is described as the overseer in verse 7, and the terms are used to refer to the same person/office. In I Peter 5, Peter addresses the elders in verse 1 and exhorts them to “shepherd the flock of God among you.” The work of the elder is to shepherd or “pastor” the flock. In Acts 20:17, Paul sends for the elders of the church of Ephesus, and in verse 28 Paul refers to the elders as overseers who are to shepherd the flock of God among them. The special work of the elder is to be an overseer and to do the work of the shepherd.

These three key words carry different overtones of emphasis, but all three words refer to the same pastoral office.

In a sense, we rightly say the **pastoral office is the teaching office.** Not all **teachers fill or are called to the pastoral office,** but certainly all who fill the **pastoral office are called to be teachers of the Word.**

We return now to Ephesians 4:11. As Paul lists the gifts that Christ gave to His Church, Paul places special emphasis on the Giver of the gifts. It is Christ Himself who gave these gifts. Included in these gifts is the gift of “the pastors and teachers.” The manner in which Paul structures his sentence in verse 11 (Paul writes under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, so the manner in which he constructs his sentence is significant) suggests “pastors and teachers” are not two separate gifts, but rather are two aspects of the same gift. A pastor is a shepherd, and he is also a teacher. He is given to the Church, and the pastoral office is instituted by Christ Himself.

That a pastor-shepherd is one who also teaches should not be surprising. A shepherd is one who leads and guides the sheep, who protects the sheep, whom the sheep follow because they know his voice, but who also feeds and nourishes the sheep. Metaphorically, the pastor feeds and nourishes his congregation

by faithfully and carefully teaching the Word of God and administering the Sacraments. This is most certainly a key aspect of a pastor’s role.

In a sense, we rightly say the pastoral office is the teaching office. Not all teachers fill or are called to the pastoral office, but certainly all who fill the pastoral office are called to be teachers of the Word.

Other portions of Scripture indicate the close relationship between pastor-shepherd and teacher. As Paul describes the elders who are overseers in Titus 1:5, 7, he declares that the elder “must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it” (verse 9). In I Timothy 5:17, the elders who rule well are those who “labor in preaching and teaching.” In I Timothy 3:2, the overseer must be “able to teach.”

Timothy himself, who functioned as a young pastor among the believers at Ephesus, was urged to “preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.” The purpose of the gift of “pastor and teacher” in Ephesians 4:11 is “to equip the saints for the work of service, for the building up of the body of Christ” (verse 12). The saints are equipped, and the body is built as the Word is preached and taught.

Christ is the “great Shepherd of the sheep” (Hebrews 13:20; John 10:11, 14; I Peter 5:4) and the Teacher par excellence. As an “under-shepherd,” the pastor is called to continue and extend the shepherding and teaching ministry of the Lord Jesus until He comes again (I Peter 5:1-4).

Haugen, part-time faculty at the Free Lutheran Schools, is a member of Faith Free Lutheran, Minneapolis.



**PASTOR
AND
TEACHER**

By Pastor Phil Haugen

AN APPROACH TO SPECIAL NEEDS





By Sharon Rykhus

“I’m not ready to be confirmed, mom. I can’t stand up there and say things that I’m not ready to say. I don’t believe it yet.”

My son, David, spoke those words as his confirmation class prepared to share their testimonies, own their faith, and be confirmed in front of our congregation. I confess that I worried about what people would think, since my husband, Dan, and I were leading David’s confirmation class at the time. But after talking with David, and with our pastor, Kirk Flaa, we advised David that he was right to wait. We realized that standing up in front of the congregation and declaring a faith that wasn’t his was the wrong thing to do. Thirteen months later, as David stood in front of the church during our Thanksgiving Eve service and read his testimony to the congregation, I don’t think there was a dry eye in the sanctuary. Everyone knew that he meant every word. Even as he struggled to read it.

Our David is “differently-abled,” though that’s not how we raised him. We knew he had challenges in learning and motor skills, but it wasn’t until he was nearly 6 years old that we learned that David has cerebral palsy. When he was in fifth grade, we learned that he also had dyslexia. David learns differently. He needs help with writing, reading, and staying focused in a classroom. Throughout his schooling, we navigated lessons in education that we never anticipated. At one point I became a volunteer and later a substitute teacher in our school district so that I was a presence in his school, which allowed David to have an advocate in the building. This decision helped me understand what it takes to allow a child with different abilities to thrive in a classroom.

As a church, we should be a welcoming place. Unfortunately, that isn’t always the case when it comes to families with members who have special needs. I don’t refer to the structure being handicap accessible, I am writing to open the dialogue on being a church that helps people with all abilities to feel comfortable and part of the congregation. We’ve likely all heard stories of families who have searched for a church home because their child wasn’t treated well or was left out. I write this not only as a mom who worked hard to help her child be comfortable in

his classrooms, but also as someone who was once the director of education at a large church. We need to ensure that we are churches who strive to meet the needs of each and every member, not just the ones who are typically abled. It’s not an easy path to walk, but it is worth the work. I don’t pretend to be an expert on this topic. I also don’t pretend that this isn’t a sensitive subject, but it is a topic that we must consider.

Statistically, there is a family in your church with a child who learns or behaves in ways that add challenges to their family and to their education. Befriend them. They likely are overwhelmed at times and feel like they cause a distraction during worship or Sunday school. Share a kind word of encouragement with them. Offer to volunteer in a classroom where a teacher may need an extra hand. Work one-on-one with a special needs child. If you are the teacher, plan a time to talk about how God made each of us differently and that each person is valuable to God. If you are the parent of a child who needs additional help being independent or can have challenging behaviors in a learning environment, ask the teacher to meet and discuss how to best incorporate your child into the Sunday school setting.

I remember a few moments in David’s education as if they happened yesterday, even though the events were a long time ago. In one instance, we got a call that David had taken to hiding in the bathroom during recess. No one was playing with him and he thought if he just hid in the bathroom stall it would be easier than being left alone out on the playground. His very kind teacher chose to ask his classmates if they would like to take turns being David’s buddy for the day. Most and then all of his classmates jumped at the chance to be a buddy. I cried tears of joy that day.

There is no one way to be an inclusive congregation. And every step we take to make all learners welcome is important. As Jesus said, “Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them for to such belongs the kingdom of God” (Matthew 19:14).

Rykhus, a member of Abiding Savior Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D., serves on the Free Lutheran Youth Board.

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My prayer for myself and my family is that we would learn and grow together in the fear and love of the Lord by gaining wisdom and understanding first from His Word and secondly through studying the world He created.



When I was a young child, I was eager to learn and read. I read many books by the time I was in early grade school. Unfortunately, junior high came around and my desire to be cool often took priority over reading and learning. Fortunately, that time in my life was short lived and my desire to learn began to return during high school and accelerated while I attended the Association Free Lutheran Bible School (now called the Free Lutheran Bible College). At FLBC, I discovered the vast riches of God’s Word and a love for church history. The first book I read after graduating from FLBC was my church history textbook.

Today I enjoy spending time learning and reading along with my family at home. My oldest son has been an avid reader since learning how to read, and my wife also enjoys reading. She can read quite fast and whenever we read something together, she kindly and patiently waits for me to finish before turning the page. I wish I could say I do a lot of reading these days, but I do not. I have good intentions though. Five years ago, I began resolving each New Year’s Eve to read more books, specifying the number of books I resolved to read in the coming year. Yet each year I failed to meet my reading goals. The failures, however, helped me to discover a few strategies to continue learning and reading through life.

First, I try to keep my expectations reasonable. My wife has encouraged me to keep my goals small (thanks to a book she read

TO INCREASE IN KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM

By Luke Johnson



on mini habits). Sometimes simply getting a book from the library or picking up a book at all gets me to a point where I might as well read it since I checked it out or have it in my hands. I have been wanting to learn more about the crusades, Calvin Coolidge, and Western civilization's rise to modernity, so I got the books and read a few pages. I was surprised how much I learned by simply reading a few pages in each book.

When I read my Bible, I personally find that the amount of reading required to get through the Bible in a year sets me up for failure. Even reading whole chapters (depending on the chapter) can be daunting. Now I stick to reading sections of the Bible separated by headings or individual paragraphs. This makes it more likely that I will read in the first place.

Second, when I cannot read, I listen. Both my wife and I read lots of books to our children. All the grandparents, aunts, and uncles do likewise when they visit. As my wife home schools our children, she reads many books and stories to them. For me, audio books (specifically books on CD) and *The Great Courses* (thegreatcourses.com) have helped me get through much more material and provide an alternative to the radio during commuting to and from work. I can say that I have "read" J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (twice) and *The Hobbit*, George Orwell's *1984*, and various portions of the Bible by listening to audio books.

I enjoy being able to relax and listen to the narrator.

Last, I have to work hard to minimize distractions. Not only do I enjoy audio books, but I also enjoy reading articles on the Internet and watching YouTube videos on various topics, especially history. These types of media are great ways to learn and gain knowledge, but they often take time away from reading and learning by myself or with my family.

God called on the kings and leaders of Israel to read His Word and to do so every day "... that [they] may learn to revere the Lord [their] God ..." (Deuteronomy 17:19, NIV). His Word says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Proverbs 1:7a). My prayer for myself and my family is that we would learn and grow together in the fear and love of the Lord by gaining wisdom and understanding first from His Word and secondly through studying the world He created. When I take time in life with my family to read and learn, the blessings He gives are evident: knowing God better and His Son Jesus Christ, understanding God's creation, seeing His story unfold from the beginning of time, and knowing the end from the beginning.

Johnson, of Crystal, Minn., is a 2007 graduate of the Free Lutheran Bible College.

CONFIRMING OUR FAITH

By Pastor Ryan Patenaude

It's not always bad to follow the crowd. When deciding what to do for confirmation this year, this rookie was quick to look for advice. Confirmation, although described by Luther as "purely a human contrivance," is a unique and important opportunity to disciple students and challenge them in their faith. Choosing curriculum should not be taken lightly. Should I stick with the curriculum I inherited? Switch to a different one? Or write my own? It didn't take much asking around to discover that many AFLC pastors were abandoning their tried and true confirmation curricula for Ambassador

Publication's brand new *Foundations of the Faith* curriculum written by Pastor Christian Andrews. If that's what all the cool kids on the block were doing, it was certainly worth my consideration. Ultimately, we made the switch, and with one semester down, I am glad that we did.

Foundations of the Faith is sold as a PDF, "fully downloadable and reproducible" as the website says, and formatted to print on standard letter-sized paper. Some pastors print each lesson as they go with the students adding

them to binders. I opted to have the whole year printed and spiral bound. Purchasers of the curriculum are also entitled to free upgrades as the curriculum undergoes any revisions and improvements. This style of publishing not only saves our church money, it provides a great deal of flexibility. And although you shouldn't judge a book by its cover, *Foundations of the Faith* looks modern and well-polished, too.

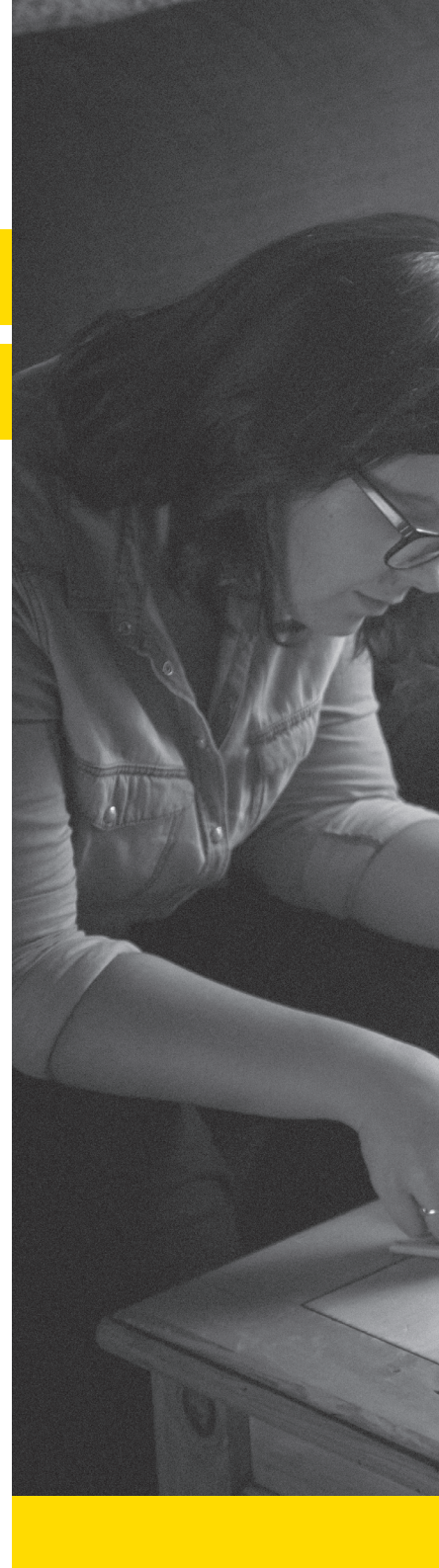
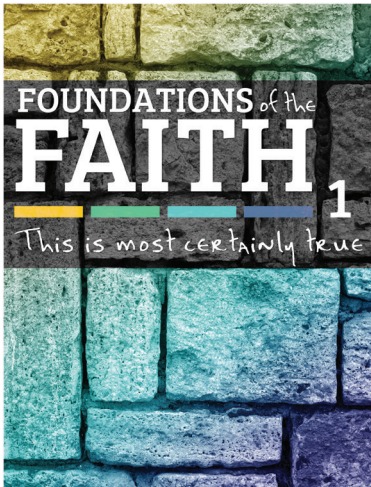
Like most Lutheran curricula, it is based on Luther's *Small Catechism* for its structure. Our AFLC catechism is the recommended companion text—focusing primarily on Luther's explanations but referencing H. U. Sverdrup's questions and answers, as well.

What I appreciate most about *Foundations of the Faith* is that it regards Scripture as the primary text. The majority

of each lesson has students interacting with their Bibles and seeing firsthand that what the catechism teaches "is most certainly true"—not on the authority of Martin Luther, but according to the Word of God. Students spend more time in their Bibles studying the words that cannot return void than they do in their workbooks. Over the course of two years, through 60 lessons students will study the authority of Scripture, the Ten Commandments, the Apostle's Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the sacraments. A law and gospel emphasis is present throughout and students are introduced to Lutheran confessional writings as well as the "Fundamental Principles" of the AFLC.

Lessons are intended to include four educational elements: writing, inquiry, collaboration, and reading. As much as possible, opportunities for each are built into every lesson. The variety in learning activities helps the lessons stick. For unique circumstances or particularly small classes, suggestions are provided.

According to the author, each lesson is written to "allow freedom and flexibility to the teacher." The suggested order for class is emphasized as just that—a suggestion. Every lesson includes a primary Bible passage, quotes from the Lutheran confessions, copying from Luther's *Small Catechism*, allusions to Sverdrup's explanations, lesson text by the author, and a series of questions. Blessed by a studious bunch, I've found that my students do all their book work at home and are tasked to come back to class with at least one question from their lesson. We spend much of our class time exploring the answers to their questions.





Although *Foundations of Faith* does not come with any tests or assigned memory work, its flexibility certainly does not preclude their use. Some pastors assign the corresponding *Catechism* explanations as memory work while others have the students memorize key Bible verses from each lesson. I do oral review quizzes with the kids when time permits to assess how they are doing and what they are retaining.

Foundations of the Faith also comes with a robust teacher's manual sufficient to equip even a novice teacher. It not only provides suggested answers to the questions in the students' books, it also proposes introductory material, object lessons, and discussion starters. With each lesson comes more ideas than could possibly be implemented in a single one-hour class.

Teachers have the luxury of selecting the material and activities that will best serve their individual class.

I am excited to have a modern confirmation curriculum founded on the Bible, guided by Lutheran tradition and teaching, and that is uniquely Free Lutheran. The material is careful to distinguish law and gospel, points to Christ, and provides a well-rounded foundation for our kids. I trust it shall serve our congregations well for many years to come.

Patenaude, who serves West Prairie Free Lutheran, Kindred, N.D., is a member of the Board of Publications and Parish Education. For more information on how to order Foundations of the Faith, see page 16.



Resources

This collection of resources, focused on the theme of Christian education, are offered through AFLC Parish Education's Ambassador Publications. To order or to search for additional publications, please visit the publishing website:



ambassadorpublications.org

Additionally, you may reach Parish Education via:

email:

parished@aflc.org

phone:

763.412.2010

address:

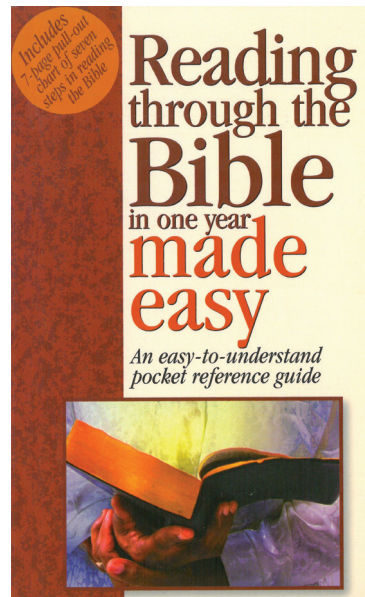
3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441



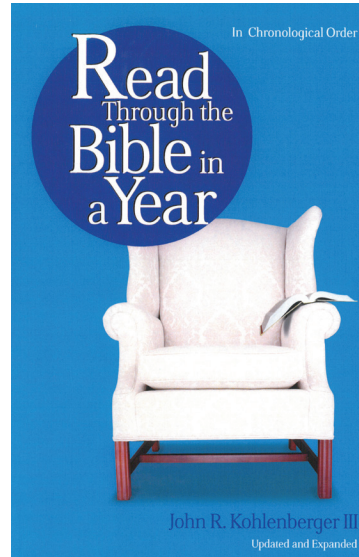
For an in-depth look into the AFLC's new confirmation curriculum, see pages 14-15.



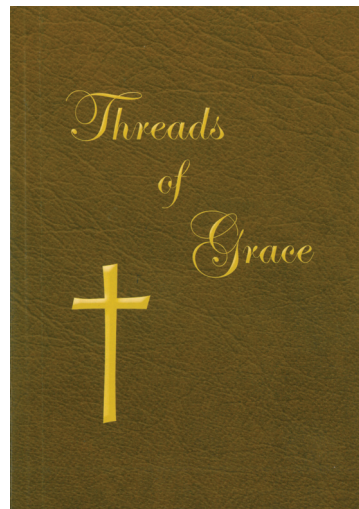
Though specifically designed as a guide for teaching children with a variety of learning challenges, this practical book provides thoughtful considerations for teaching every child in your Sunday school classroom, regardless of ability, about the love of Jesus. \$9.95



Features a year-long reading schedule, helpful insights on what to look for in each book of the Bible, key verse and prayer for each week, and pullout chart with seven encouraging steps for reading the Bible. \$5

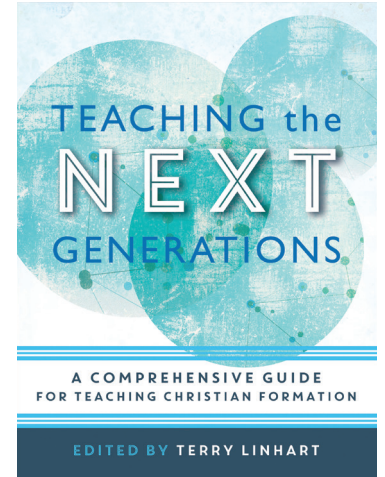


Start any time with this helpful booklet including background information for each book of the Bible and easy reading order. \$5.95

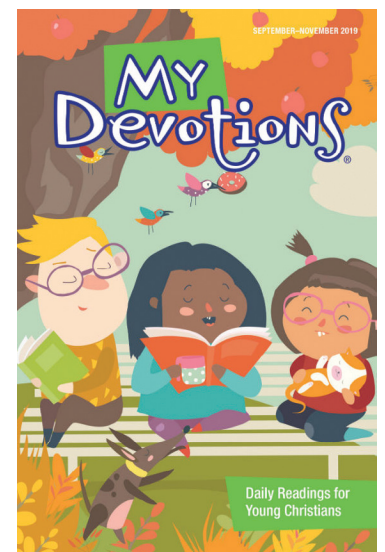


The daily fabric of our lives is woven with threads of expectations and commitments, laughter and tears, joy and discouragement, mundane routine and unpredictable events. In the midst of all this, the unbroken thread entwined throughout the life of the believer is the thread of God's grace in Christ. This daily devotional book is now available as an e-book!

Hardcover sale \$15 (\$18 retail); paperback sale \$7 (\$12 retail); e-book \$8



This book champions the role of teaching as a necessary skill for ministers to develop, equipping leaders to teach effectively in the congregation. Through a wide range of topics beneficial for all Christian educators, learn how teaching connects to discipleship and the church in current contexts. \$22.95



Encourage 8- to 12-year-olds to build a habit of daily Bible reading at home! Each daily devotional page includes a Scripture reading, a true-to-life story, and a short prayer. Ideal for personal, family, or classroom devotions. Distribute quarterly copies in class or mail directly to children's homes.

One-year \$14; two-year \$24



The roads here in Uganda can be extremely dangerous at times as some people

tend to drive recklessly. It is not uncommon to drive past an accident where one or several people have lost their lives due to a mindless mistake.

Maybe this is not a fun topic to consider in just the second month of the year, but friends, death for a believer is not something to fear. If I were to die, I know where I will be after death. I would fear for my family, especially if something would happen while we are overseas. And I dread the possibility that my wife or one of my children might be face-to-face with God and away from me. But I do believe in the promises of God that I will see them again. May God grant me the strength if or when we face this.

The Apostle Paul writes in II Corinthians 5:6-8, “So we are always of good courage.

TO KNOW MORE OF GOD

BY PASTOR BRENT RAAN

We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.”

I wonder how seriously we actually take Paul’s words. Or, do we actually just live for this world? Lord, have mercy on us and teach us more about Your kingdom and the reality of its presence in our lives.

I have been told that one of the scariest prayers we can speak is calling out to God and saying, “I want to know you more.” But if my name is written in the Lamb’s Book of Life, is there anything should I actually hold back as I strive to know Him more and make Him known to this world? No, nothing! We have the greatest hope to rest in and news to share.

The Apostle Paul again writes in II Corinthians 5:20-21, “Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him

to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

Brothers and sisters, I challenge you through this year to join me in meditating on this next Scripture and ask God how He might want us to apply it to our lives.

“Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead” (Philippians 3:8-11).

Raan is an AFLC missionary serving in Jinja, Uganda.



Sverdrup Society hosts annual forum

Members of the Georg Sverdrup Society held their annual forum on Jan. 10 on the campus of the Free Lutheran Schools, Plymouth, Minn., under the theme, “The Living Congregation at Work.” The schedule included three sessions, as well as the presentation of a newly translated work of Sverdrup’s by Larry Walker, titled, “The Justification of Our Congregations and the Relationship of God’s Children to a Christian Congregation.” The sessions included a retrospective of seven decades of service in the Lutheran Free Church and AFLC by Pastor Raynard Huglen; a history of Thor and Halvor Quanbeck, lay preacher and pioneer LFC pastor by their descendant, Pastor Lloyd Quanbeck; and a look at “Home Missions in a Free Lutheran Context,” by Pastor Gary Jorgenson.



TOP: Sverdrup Society members and friends listened as Pastor Lloyd Quanbeck presented his paper on his ancestors. ABOVE: Seminarians Joe Larson and Jeremy Nikunen take notes during the forum. TOP RIGHT: Pastor Raynard Huglen, who one of the sessions. BELOW RIGHT: Pastor Gary Jorgenson presented a paper on Home Missions.



ITINERANT TEACHER

BY PASTOR MARLIN HARRIS

Historically, teaching has been at the core of pastoral ministry.

The importance of teaching in the early Church was found in the role of the rabbi in the Jewish community. Jesus—called rabbi or teacher—taught His disciples and followers.

As the disciples became apostles, they were commissioned to go and teach. Teaching became the primary mode of communication of the apostles, including Paul. So, it is not a surprise that Christianity arose out of Judaism, which is rooted in the Torah or Law, which God commanded His people to teach their children (Deuteronomy 6:1-7). The ability to teach was considered an essential qualification for pastoral leadership in the epistles (1 Timothy 3:2).

The importance of teaching was reemphasized by the reformers as they valued biblical knowledge. Martin

Luther is certainly a great example of one who valued teaching the Scriptures, which we likewise value in the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations.

Today as disciples who follow in the footsteps of Jesus, we too value teaching the Scriptures. The chaplain as the itinerant teacher manifests himself through many roles such as administrator, advocate, comforter, consultant, counselor, pastor, prophet/ethicist, sacramental leader, and visitor of the sick.

However, the teaching style of the chaplain goes further than formal teaching with instruction and imparting information. The chaplain is also informal and itinerant in his style of teaching truth, which is imparted as he moves about from place to place.

Jesus' ministry is a great example of one who moved about and walked from place to place. He roamed about the countryside and into the villages and cities with the 12 disciples, teaching them as well as other followers. He taught in the synagogues, on the hillside, at the beach, in boats, at a well, and at city gates. He taught people wherever He encountered them. He taught where people lived and worked, celebrated and suffered, rejoiced and grieved. He responded to questions. He taught through dialogue. He taught an estranged woman who came to the well in the noonday heat. He confronted the crowd that was ready to execute a woman caught in an adulterous

relationship.

The chaplain who is engaged in pastoral ministry is an itinerant teacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In the work of a chaplain—whether in counseling, law enforcement, hospital or health care services—there is a demand for immediate theological and educated responses. Questions about life, its value and meaning, the place of suffering, evil, and the will of God are not mere academic questions.

The chaplain frequently encounters a variety of questions such as: Why do good people suffer? Does it do any good to pray? Should we consider a do-not-resuscitate order? There may also be bold challenges, debates, or subtle hints. The people chaplains serve probe for the will of God, the meaning of life, the meaning of suffering, and guidelines for anguished moral decisions. More often than not, the response of a chaplain is that of a teacher, helping others to seek biblical wisdom and truth.

As chaplains, we hold to the great commission, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20).

Harris, who serves True Vine Lutheran, Mora, Minn., is the director of Institutional Chaplaincy.

Free Lutheran Schools host J-term classes



Hunter keynotes seminary course

Dr. Ron Hunter, CEO of Randall House Publishing and founder of D6 Family Ministry, was a featured instructor during the 2020 J-term and Winter Bible Conference on the campus of the AFLC Schools. Hunter led two sessions on intergenerational discipleship.

Nelson accepts call as next director of AED

Members of the AFLC Evangelism and Discipleship (AED) board have announced that Pastor Randy Nelson has accepted the call to become the next director of the AED.

Nelson, who currently serves Peace Lutheran, St. Francis, Kan., will begin his new duties in March.

“Along with a servant heart, Pastor Nelson has a deep desire to see the Kingdom of God increase in our homes, churches, communities, and workplaces,” stated Micah Johnson, member of the AED board. The board has asked for prayer from the AFLC for the Nelson family as they make the transition.

The board members have also expressed gratitude to Pastor Jim Rasmussen for his years of ministry as the former director of AED. Members of the board include Johnson, Pastor Matthew Quanbeck, Michael Lynnes, and Kevin Hoops. A more in-depth article on Nelson and his call will be featured in the March issue on evangelism.



The Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary hosted a week of J-term classes Jan. 6-10. The seminary offered two courses: “Soul Care in the Congregation,” taught by Pastor Jerry Nelson; and “Youth, Family, and Intergenerational Ministry,” featuring a panel of speakers including Jordan Langness (left). The Bible College hosted two classes: “Comparative Religions,” taught by Pastor Robert Lee; and “Relationships and Marriage,” taught by Pastor Brett Boe (above).



BE READY ALWAYS

BY ANNE PRESTENG

Members of the Eastern North Dakota District Women's Missionary Federation held its fall rally on Sept. 21 at Trinity Free Lutheran Church in Grand Forks, N.D. In spite of heavy flooding (closing Interstate 29), 38 ladies registered for a day of fellowship focusing on the rally theme, "Be Ready Always," and theme verse from I Peter 3:15b, "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear."

Morning and afternoon devotions centered on "the hope" of the gospel message and that "it begs to be told." We enjoyed special music for both morning and afternoon sessions. A time of praise and singing was led by Marilyn Lee

and Kathryn Green. Our theme song was, "I am Jesus Letter."

AFLC missionary to Uganda Michael Rokenbrodt was a featured speaker. He challenged us by asking, "To what length would you extend yourself to affect just one other person?" His challenge to us came from Mark 4:35, when Jesus left a crowd and told His disciples, "Let us go over to the other side." Michael related the Scripture to Noah's experience, reminding us of the ark and our need to "cling to righteousness." Michael shared about his missionary outreach in Uganda using the orality approach to learn and teach the gospel. Michael spends part of each year stateside and assists the ministries of Lutheran Island Camp in Henning, Minn. He also writes and produces with a drama ministry initiative called WatchWord Ministries (watchwordministries.com) based in Fergus Falls, Minn.

Marion Christopherson, director of AFLC Parish Education, gave a presentation from Ambassador Publications and presented new materials and curriculum.

A short business meeting was held at the end of the morning session with District President Debby Strand presiding. Offerings were taken for



Pictured (from left) are members of Bethel Free Lutheran, Grafton, N.D., including Rose Carlson, Alyson Olson, Shawna Erickson, and Anne Presteng.

AFLC Parish Education, the AFLC General Fund, and Michael Rokenbrodt. A special offering was given to short term missionary assistant Emily Olson.

New officers were installed. They include Alyson Olson as vice president and Roz Hubner as secretary.

We were blessed and challenged to "be ready always," to invite someone, to reach out, to take the chance, and to share the experience.

Presteng, first vice president of the WMF, a member of Bethel Free Lutheran, Grafton, Minn.

PEOPLE & PLACES

Chanel Pederson, Sioux Falls, S.D., has accepted the position as executive assistant to the AFLC president. Pederson, who is a 2018 graduate of FLBC, began her duties on Jan. 2.

Pastor David Tilney, a member of the AFLC Fellowship Roster, has announced that he has resigned from St. Paul's Lutheran, Cloquet, Minn., and accepted a call to serve a congregation outside of the AFLC.

Pastor Tim Carlson has accepted a call to serve Timberland Ringebu Free Lutheran, Barronett, Wis. Carlson, who will have served Bethel Free Lutheran, Grafton, Minn., for more than 18 years when he steps down in July, will begin work at Timberland in late August.

Pastor Jon Benson has accepted a call to serve Newark Lutheran, Newark, Ill., beginning February 1. He previously served Trinity Free Lutheran, Janesville, Wis.

Pastor Dan Giles will be installed Jan. 26 at Calgary Free Lutheran, Mesa, Ariz., with Pastor Gary Jorgenson, assistant to the president of the AFLC, officiating.

Resurrection Free Lutheran, a new church plant in the Twin Cities metro area, is moving its location to the Elk River, Minn., area, northwest of the Twin Cities. The congregation will meet on Saturday mornings.

Correction: Ilona Fouks, a writer for the WMF in the December 2019 issue, was misidentified.



Pastor Roy Warwick

Pastor Roy Warwick, 82, of Branson West, Mo., died Dec. 13, 2019, at his home. Born March 17, 1937, in Aakeroya, Norway, he was the son of Oswald and Dagney (Wroldsen) Warwick. He married Beverly Sjule in 1959. She preceded him in death in 1990. He married E. Louise Nehrenberg, who also preceded him in death in 2011.

He studied at the King's College, Briarcliff Manor, N.Y.; Staten Island Community College, N.Y.; before earning a Bachelor of Arts degree at Moorhead State University in 1963. He earned a Graduate of Theology degree from the Lutheran Brethren Seminary in 1963 and was ordained by the Church of the Lutheran Brethren in 1971. He served congregations in New York, North Dakota, and South Dakota before joining the AFLC clergy roster. He serve AFLC congregations in Aberdeen, S.D., Mason-Drummond, Wis., Long Island, N.Y., and Snohomish, Wash. He loved traveling and was an active volunteer for the senior center in the state of Washington. In Roy's own words of wanting to be remembered, "Worshiping the Lord was not a somber but a joyous experience, preaching the good news and helping others understand God's Word."

Surviving are two sons, Bruce (Jonnie) Warwick, Branson West, Mo., and Brian (Linda) Warwick of Sioux Falls, S.D.; one daughter, Elizabeth Warwick, Branson, Mo.; 11 grandchildren; three step-grandchildren; three great-grandchildren; and five step-great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by one daughter, Melody Penner.

Per his request, no service will be held, and his cremains will be taken (weather permitting) to Bottineau, N.D.



Dr. Douglas Dahlquist

Dr. Douglas A. Dahlquist, 87, of Baxter, Minn., former adjunct Pastoral Counseling instructor at the Free Lutheran Seminary during the 1970s, died of a heart attack at his home on Christmas Day, 2019.

Born Feb. 2, 1932, in Minneapolis, he was the son of Albert and Carrie Dahlquist. He graduated from the University of Minnesota and Bethel Theological Seminary. After ordination, he pastored several churches. After earning a PhD in Religion, he served for several years on the faculty of Bethel Seminary, St. Paul, Minn., as professor of Pastoral Care, and prior to retirement worked with outpatient mental health clinics for Lutheran Social Services, Brainerd, Minn.

A memorial service will be scheduled at a later date.

DECEMBER MEMORIALS

AED

Roy & Beatrice Rasmussen

Bible College

Kendra Olson
Ruth Claus
Emily Nash

FLAPS

Harvey Hoops

Seminary

Kendra Olson
Pastor Tom Baker
Barb Hagen
Kevin Anderson
Spencer Brein

Youth

Barb Hagen
Kevin Anderson

WMF

Merry Palmer
Betty Blikre
Esther Nelson
Ron Britz
Marvin Onstad
D Tollefson
Gene Larson

World Missions

Scott Naylor

... in honor of

AED

Pastor Jim Rasmussen

Home Missions

Pastor Paul Nash

WMF

Bea Anderson

AFLC BENEVOLENCES December 31, 2019

FUND	REC'D IN DECEMBER	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$41,173	\$415,102	\$407,161
Evangelism	13,089	130,106	135,765
Youth Ministries	11,927	134,522	141,803
Parish Education	10,094	149,140	167,251
Seminary	28,138	280,679	293,021
Bible College	42,509	525,170	522,830
Home Missions	36,774	391,991	474,235
World Missions	49,094	428,260	394,914
Personal Support	99,345	672,131	742,695
TOTALS	\$332,143	\$3,127,101	\$2,279,675

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

THE GIFT OF MEMORY

My memory was jogged when reading of a man who said he often forgot what he had for dinner yesterday but still could recite the Gettysburg Address that he had memorized as a child. (I was a second or third grader when I memorized it, earning me a pair of snowshoes from my uncle Pat.) It's been said that learning to



Pastor Robert Lee

memorize at an early age may well give us more capacity to focus later in life. Our memories really are marvelous gifts, aren't they, and it is a tragedy when memory is lost.

Those of us who are senior citizens may recall elementary school teachers who assigned us to memorize songs or works of poetry. Our pastors, too, required memorization during confirmation years, and weekly classes could be quite challenging as we were called upon to recite portions of *Luther's Small Catechism* and verses of Scripture. Then there was catechization day when the recitations took place in front of family ... and sometimes the congregation. Did your pastor tell you in advance what he was going to ask you?

As a pastor during the 1960s and '70s I became aware quite quickly that much of public education had changed and that memorization seemed to be something quite new—and at times unpleasant—to most of my confirmation students. “Why can't I just put it in my own words?” some of them would say, but it seemed to me that their own words were usually wrong. Critics of memorization would mock “rote memory” as a teaching device, and many (most?) pastors abandoned it. I heard of one congregation from another denomination in which the instruction consisted of only a weekend retreat during which the students prepared their own confirmation service.

“Confirmands don't really understand

what they are memorizing,” is an objection often heard. But haven't you later understood something that you memorized in the past? I know that I have, and an example is the meaning to the Third Article of the Apostles Creed, “I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to Him,” and I hope by God's grace that I am still growing in my understanding of these profound words.

The above is an example of learning “sound doctrine,” as we read in the Pastoral Epistles, and it's interesting to learn that the word “sound” means “wholesome” or “healthy.” If it is helpful to memorize “healthy” doctrines or teachings, it is even more important to memorize the words of God's Word upon which they are based.

“Thy Word have I treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against Thee” (Psalm 119:11). Of course, we realize that this is more than memorization, not just the understanding but the affection. Yet is it not appropriate to memorize what we treasure? One author believes that Scripture memorization is fundamental to spiritual formation. A prominent professor was quoted as saying that every seminary student should be required to memorize 1,000 Bible verses before he may graduate.

It is thrilling to read of Martin Luther's gospel discovery which sparked the great Reformation movement. But a foundation had been prepared through His Bible reading and memorization, and he wrote that after the Spirit shed new light on the passage from Romans 1, “my mind ran

though the Scriptures, as far as I was able to recollect them.”

We read of believers who have been imprisoned without access to a Bible, and how they tried to share with one another any verses of Scripture that they could recall. I have been personally challenged to ask myself how much of God's Word I would have if my Bible had been taken from me. It has also been an encouragement to me as a pastor to visit aged believers in nursing homes who may not know me from

one visit to the next, but who still have the Word of God treasured in their minds and hearts. I recall one dear lady who surprised herself by reciting with me a portion of Scripture, tapping her head and saying afterwards, “I guess this old coconut's not so bad after all!”

Yet is it not appropriate to memorize what we treasure?

The Christian home is the key, of course, as parents (and grandparents) encourage our little ones to store up the Word of God in their minds. For those of us who are older and not as sharp as we thought we once were, the gift of memory is still with us, and there is still some securing of Scripture in our hearts and minds that we can do ... reviewing, repeating, and perhaps even adding some new verses to our memories. A catechism review wouldn't hurt, either. Our old coconuts might surprise us, too.

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR
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Periodicals

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building the base

FINDING GOD'S WILL

BY PASTOR DAVID AND VICKI JOHNSON

"Seek the LORD while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near" (Isaiah 55:6).

It was 1939, and tanks were rumbling through Europe. Germany had begun its aggressive actions, already subduing many neighboring nations. The reality of war was on the horizon for the people of England and many were getting nervous about what might lie ahead. Many wondered what other nations might do in the face of this German aggression—Russia, for instance—to which British Prime Minister Winston Churchill famously observed, "I cannot forecast to you the action of Russia. It is a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma; but perhaps there is a key. That key is Russian national interest."

Sadly, that is how many people feel about finding—and following—God's will. They think that identifying God's will is some sort of illusive, hopeless enterprise—a fool's errand. Many feel like God is playing a game of hide-and-seek, the all-wise grown

up hiding from a bewildered toddler. How are feeble human beings going to find—much less follow—God's will when even the Bible says that His ways are higher than ours?

Then we have the surrounding culture that fills our heads with thoughts of independence and an emphasis on our feelings. They scream the very words of the serpent in the garden who challenged Eve to use her independence to take the fruit and "be like God." After all, our culture whispers, it's not about "finding the right train to get on, it's only about getting on" (*The Polar Express*). Messages such as, "do what feels right," "be true to yourself," and "just follow your heart" fill our ears and penetrate our hearts at every turn.

But God does not play sadistic games, and He isn't the manipulative earthly father who coldly takes advantage of ignorant little children. Instead, God not only wants His children to find Him, He also wants them to know and do His will. God is not only clear, He is also obvious about exposing His ways to mankind, though it may require some

diligence and commitment on our part.

Consider II Chronicles 15:3-4, "For a long time Israel has been without the true God, without a teaching priest, and without law; but when in their trouble they turned to the Lord God of Israel, and sought Him, He was found by them." This same God who wants to be found also tells us how to find Him, "But from there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find Him if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul" (Deuteronomy 4:29).

The point of this little article is not simply to encourage you to seek the Lord and pursue His will, but to introduce three coming Building the Base pieces in May, August, and November. Each segment will deal with one of the three tools God uses to guide us in our search for His will in our lives: His Word, godly counsel, and the inner prompting of His Holy Spirit. We trust that each will encourage and bless you.

The Johnsons live in Boyertown, Pa., where David serves Living Faith Lutheran.