



CLB
President's
Report to the Convention

I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?"
And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

ISAIAH 6:8

Office of the President p. 2
Lutheran Brethren Seminary p. 4
North American Mission p. 6
International Mission p. 8

Communications and Prayer p. 11
Finance and Personnel p. 12
Associate for Biblical Stewardship p. 14
Women's Ministries p. 15

Paul Larson

UNDONE:

It's not a word we use commonly, but when hearing it, our minds may be sent down several paths. *Undone*—"...and tho' this world with devils filled, should threaten to undo us," sang Luther. Yes, there is a great enemy of our souls, an enemy of our mission and our movement! Who, along with ready assistants chiming in—the world and our own self-destructive natures—puts us as the targets of being utterly broken, spent, destroyed people. Left to ourselves, and the wiles of the devil, we and the people we live among, are *Undone*. We observe it in every breaking news story that flashes on the banner atop our preferred news site; we see and sense it in disdain or pity when our neighbor in the world or neighbor in the church crashes. And silently we wonder and fear, looking in the mirror, knowing too well the dark, despairing, disgusting paths our thoughts are capable of running down—if I might not be the next highlight reel in the devil's annual award show. Yes, we see the people we live among, we see ourselves left to our own, and indeed we are threatened to be *Undone*.

But then there is another way we hear *Undone*—related certainly, in that in it we are spent, destroyed, exhausted, stripped bare of any excuse or hope or credit to cling to. But this *Undone* is oddly by the merciful working of God's own hand! It is the raw, breath-gasping, gutting work of God's Law, when we, like the prophet Isaiah, stand and unmistakably see the blistering holiness of God, especially in the temple of his covenant provision and gracious promise where he would and could meet us. And there I stand and become absolutely despairingly aware of myself, outside of that Temple, and in the holy glow of God have every imperfection, false, dark and decaying part of me exposed. *Undone!*

Then also, there is a nuance of this word

that just perhaps infers that there is a chance, a glorious possibility, that within the scope of hard meaning of this word, *Undone*, is the hinted hope that I might also, by no work or even slightest motion of myself—I lie flattened and listless here, if not by devils, by the Lord's own Word of law—the unbelievable prospect! grace upon grace! you're telling me there's a chance! ...that in all my *Undone*, I may by Christ, in Christ, be *Re-Done*. It's true! And it is not a vague possibility. It is solid and certain, available, and right before me.

And then, we hear the prospect of purpose in *Undone*. The thought that he who has raised and remade us, who loves us, has prepared a bright home for us, our arrival at which really neither he nor our aching bodies and hearts can wait for. Yet, this *Undoing*, *Re-doing Savior* leaves us on this "terrestrial ball" to be glad and grateful bearers of the *Undoing* Gospel which has *undone* all our *undone*. And, we have no higher purpose, no other purpose, no greater pleasure or passion or privilege than giving ourselves in every way to his *Undone* mission.

Undone is the theme of our Church of the Lutheran Brethren's 2016 Biennial Convention, and I welcome you to it! You have already expended considerable sacrifice of time and energy to bless our movement, and expressed your interest and involvement by being here. As these days of our biennial convention proceed, you will be summoned to give even more of yourself to listen and dialogue and engage further in the worthy partnership of mission we share. It is my sincere desire that at the end of our convention, you will return home blessed with even more than you invested here. It is further my prayer that beyond our agenda of business meetings, workshops and gatherings, you will be renewed in your vision and passion for our *Undone* mission blessed to us by our *Undoing Savior*. We, the

Church of the Lutheran Brethren, occupy a unique and critical role in Christ's body. We have a gift of theology and mission to humbly share within the larger Church, and to our neighbors near and an ocean away. I believe our movement is a needed voice, an uncovered treasure.

You will notice at this convention some "new fare." When our mission team (whom I thank for their tireless commitment and effort in preparing for this convention) began planning a year ago, I proposed the following convention objectives:

- focus, renew and energize our constituency base to our CLB mission
- summon and encourage young leadership within our Church base
- clarify our theological forte and distinctives in a way that engages our leadership base to humbly own it, and to eagerly see it applied in mission
- provide training and encouragement to congregational health and individual disciple development
- celebrate and build the community fellowship of our base

* by music: "*The devil, the originator of sorrowful anxieties and restless troubles, flees before the sound of music almost as much as before the Word of God... Music is a gift and grace of God, not an invention of men. Thus it drives out the devil and makes people cheerful. Then one forgets all wrath, impurity, and other devices.*"

— Martin Luther

* by camaraderie and re-creation: "*If you are not allowed to laugh in heaven, I don't want to go there... You have as much laughter as you have faith.*"

— Martin Luther

And so, while you will notice much that is familiar at this convention, there is also new fare. Saturday's intensive workshops are not presented as an

optional precursor to the convention but as a central part of it, reflecting our ongoing intent to make *continuing education* an anticipated essential for our leadership base. We are assisting pastors and lay leaders to participate for the full extent of our convention, providing an uploaded keynote sermon for their churches to have the option of using for convention Sunday worship, both as a means of covering the pulpit while their pastor is at convention, but also as a means of including congregations in the convention and connecting them to our movement. We have taken the Sunday sermon of the convention and shared resources and invited area CLB churches within a one hour's drive of our convention site to engage in our convention theme, preaching that Sunday morning convention message. We do this to encourage the cross-pollination of delegates knowing and growing fellowship with the gifts and personalities of our rich and diverse congregational life. We have specifically set aside an afternoon and evening set aside for celebrating and growing the community of our fellowship. Whether reunion with old friends or meeting and making new ones, convention seems often a time when one leaves feeling cheated that there was so little opportunity to enjoy friendships old and new. (Some of us were even formerly known to have skipped a session or two because that community was so desired!) So, if you can't beat 'em, feed them pork and sunshine (hopefully!), baseball, music and laughter! We hope and trust our Sunday afternoon / evening CLB Jubilee will help us all remember how privileged we are to belong to each other. There are smaller details of change also, the chance for light breakfast eaters to enjoy a pastry and a (really good) cup of coffee in the morning, shorter morning light biblical teaching sessions to focus our day, online registration and a new CLB app serving

us technologically, a lunch truck on site Saturday and Monday, and a display hall.

You will find in the directors' reports in the following pages a report on the mission accomplished and ministry plans ahead. Some of my own "state of the church" perceptions are included in the introduction to the Parochial Report (separate booklet).

Let me add these words of gratitude, joy and remembrance: I am supremely grateful for the team of mission directors and associates, regional pastors, LBS administration and faculty, support staff, and the affiliate ministries which all make our centralized ministries go! To this team, I am thrilled to see added our new Associate for Advancement Ministry, Mr. Steve Tonneson, to whom you will be introduced at the convention. I am grateful for all of our congregations who are the heart and front line of our CLB ministries. I, and we, in the central offices are nothing, if we are not a reflection and extension of you! From our birth as a movement, the denomination has been and is the "child" of the congregations, not vice versa. Your incredible, generous, sacrificial response to the financial challenge we faced at the end of our fiscal year is appreciated beyond words. It has allowed us to press forward with Lifting Our Eyes (LOE) mission advancement initiatives of missionary sending, church planting, and resourcing congregational vitality, albeit with a present budget that might best be considered "transitional" as we observe, plan and work forward. For our missionaries and church planters, both international and national—you lead and model for us the reminder that we are essentially *one entity* with *one purpose* as a disciple-making movement. We pray, love and support you, not as mercenaries sent to do something in our place, but as the vanguard of a people stamped with the DNA of God's missionary people.

To this convention we anticipate the

welcome of three new CLB congregations: St. Matthews, Edmonton AB; Christ Centered Fellowship, Camrose, AB; and Living Word Lutheran Church, Minot, ND.

We have said good-bye for now to these colleagues and friends: Rev. Alfred Baderman, Rev. Arthur Berge, CH Major General Gaylord Gunhus, Rev. Harland Helland, Rev. Lyle Hunter, Mrs. Jeanette Jacobson, Mrs. Lois Engebretson, Rev. Joel Lunde, Rev. Robert Sletta, and Rev. Morris Vold.

We have welcomed to our band of leadership by ordination: Daniel Berge, Andrew Foss, Bruce Hillman, Mike Hussey, Mike Natale, Nathan Oldenkamp, Brian Quade, Eric Sorensen, and Jeremy Wilson.

I anticipate with you expectantly to see how God will move among us this convention, to *Undo* all our *Undone*, and *Re-do us* for His great purpose and glory.

Rev. Paul Larson serves the Church of the Lutheran Brethren as President.

LBS REPORT:

At LBS we continually assess the effectiveness of our program. We do this using many different assessment instruments. We also do this through vigilance as a faculty. At a meeting of our Strategic Planning Committee we wondered if the students of today have a deep concern for the lost and if we are instilling that concern in our graduates. We desire that our students will have a strong passion for the gospel and for bringing the gospel to lost people everywhere.

LBS 2015 GRADUATES:*Master of Divinity*

- Brent Andrews (LBS-Librarian and Media Specialist)
- Ryan Dittmann (Peace LBC, AB)
- Michael Hussey (Sidney LBC, MT)
- Nicholas Joyal
(Living Hope LBC, AB)
- Matthew Sonnenberg
(St. Matthew's Ev. LC, AB)
- Jordan Spina (Rock of Ages LBC, WA)

Certificate of Theological Studies

- Timothy Collins (Messiah LC, MN)

LBS 2016 GRADUATES:*Master of Divinity*

- Benjamin Hosch
(Stavanger LC, MN)
- Lukas Kjolhaug
(Bunker Hill LBC, NJ)
- Clinton Knutson (Birch Hills CC, SK)
- Seth Leivestad (Calvary CC, CA)
- David Narvesen (LBIM-Missionary)
- Drew Nelson (Grace LC, MN)
- Clayton Robison (Jevnaker LC, MN)
- Kevin Skaret (Hope LBC, MN)
- Troy Tysdal (CLB Director of Communications & Prayer)

Master of Theological Studies

- Peter Bradford
(Andover Rehab Center, NJ)
- John Zwiers
(LB Homes CEO)

Diploma in Christian Ministry

- Darren Shaw (Faith LBC, MN/Blom Prairie LBC, SD)

Certificate of Theological Studies

- Kay Asche (Executive Secretary for the CLB)
- Craig Schmidt (Bethel LBC, ND)
- Naomi Evans (Wahpeton, ND)

LBS PROGRAM:

We had 44 students enrolled in courses in the 2015-2016 school year. The Director of Distance Education, Dr. Allan Bjerkaas, reports that 1/3 of our courses were taken by 22 distance students. Because the distance program enabled students to be in ministry while enrolled at LBS, 15 congregations were able to have a seminary student serving them as a pastor.

Distance education has added costs. We have invested \$15,000 in classroom equipment. We spend about \$150 per credit or about \$35,000 annually in extra personnel and quality tech support. We provide Accordance Bible Software for all of our students and give on-line students access to resources. We charge the same tuition rate for both distance and resident students.

Assessment and strategic planning resulted in another significant learning opportunity for our students. We realized that our students needed to be equipped to plant churches in multi-cultural settings. So we set about to develop a practicum

in cross-cultural ministry. That resulted in a mission vision trip to Chad, Africa in 2015. The students were each responsible to raise \$1,000. LBS funded the balance. The total cost to LBS amounted to approximately \$21,000. Six students and one spouse accompanied Dr. Gaylan Mathiesen in a trip led by LBIM. The couple on the trip are now preparing for mission service in Chad.

Dr. Mathiesen began planning a trip to Asia during this next school year. The goal was to schedule a mission vision trip every other year so that each student has the opportunity to apply for this experience. However, budgetary restraints compelled us to delay the Asia trip for at least a year.

We have also realized a need for our students to have sufficient ministry experience while in seminary to enable them to step immediately into many pastoral roles upon graduation. When requiring a ministry internship proved impractical, we developed a Supervised Ministry Education curriculum which includes:

- A first year and third year testing and interview with the North Central Ministry Development Center
- Writing a Personal Development Plan
- Pursuing ministry experiences which are new to the student
- Developing leadership and administration skills
- Meeting with a mentor/advisor
- Learning to value and benefit from feedback
- Concluding with a "look in the mirror" course which includes ministering in a pastoral care setting, personal reflection on those experiences, and feedback from peers and professor

I was born into a Christian family. My father was a trustee at Word of Life LBC in Marysville, WA. I was baptized by Pastor Otto Brustad. Pastor Jack Storry confirmed me. I believed in Christ.

Starting at age 15, I lived for myself. I lived like the prodigal son. My parents almost lost hope. Finally, at age 26, my life became so unbearable, I cried out to God. He saved me and freed me.

After reading through the Bible, love

compelled me to serve. I started a co-ed church softball team. A man in our congregation asked if I would be a part of prison ministry. I saw it as another opportunity to serve.

Then in 2007 our congregation, Cornerstone Church in Ferndale, WA, was publishing its directory. My wife Corissa and I had a 6 p.m. appointment, but the photographer was an hour behind schedule. While waiting I got involved

in a game of dodgeball with the youth. I had such a good time, I asked the youth pastor if I could come back. He was happy to have the help. When he left for another job, the pastor asked me to take over, and eventually the church called me to serve on staff full-time.

As I look back now, I know God was directing my every step. He has used his Word, and even an hour wait at church, to lead me into ministry.

LBS ACCREDITATION:

LBS is currently pursuing reaffirmation of accreditation which will be for ten years. This involves submitting a proposal for a self-study, a visit from the accrediting agency, and then writing the self-study. All faculty, most staff members, and our board chair have been involved. We write and document how LBS is complying with each of the standards in the accreditation manual, a document that is itself 76 pages.

We invest a minimum of \$14,500 annually to maintain our accredited status. About half of that pays our annual fee and half is used to fund our separate LBS financial audit. We have budgeted an additional \$10,000 for Reaffirmation expenses, costs that we will amortize.

ACCREDITATION:

- Increases enrollment
- Makes distance education possible
- Increases the likelihood of student loan deferment
- Gives us recognition with the Veteran's Administration and with the military for the preparation of military chaplains and for the granting of VA Scholarships
- Enables donors to obtain matching funds from corporate employers for their gifts
- Makes us a better school because of rigorous accountability measures

LBS FACULTY:

This spring Dr. Mark Erickson resigned effective July 31. His resignation necessitated the calling of another faculty member. At the April meeting the Board of LBS received and approved the recommendation from the Faculty to call Dr. Sigurd Grindheim as Professor of

New Testament. He has served LBS for several years as an adjunct instructor as he has taught on-line from his office in Evanston, IL. He has accepted the call, moved to Fergus Falls, and will officially begin on August 1.

LAY TRAINING:

The Board of LBS included \$75,000 for the development of Lay Training in its 2015-2016 LBS budget to be funded by Lifting Our Eyes contributions. We spent \$64,000 of that amount to begin this work. During this past year Dr. Mark Erickson developed and pilot tested a course titled "Understanding the Bible Better." He is presenting about half of this course during the continuing education day at the 2016 Biennial Convention.

BUILDING AND TECHNOLOGY:

We are grateful for the provision of a new building for LBS. The additional space, the visibility, and the quality all contribute to our ministry. We appreciate having closer connections with the other CLB ministries.

RECRUITING AND ENROLLMENT:

The majority of new students enroll because of a connection to a Lutheran Brethren congregation. Most have had considerable contact with LBS personnel, sometimes for several years before enrolling. We are working hard to become the seminary of choice for Lutheran Brethren students.

In the past two years we have added 100 names to the database of potential students. Half of those entries came through website inquiries; a third through meeting with individuals while traveling to the churches; and the rest from referrals.

The database includes more than 100 active conversations.

We strongly encourage delegates to the Church of the Lutheran Brethren 2016 Biennial Convention to "Pray the Lord of the Harvest to send workers into his harvest field." We need more pastors and missionaries prepared for service.

SPECIAL THANKS:

We are grateful for the privilege of serving the Lord through the Church of the Lutheran Brethren in preparing its pastors and missionaries. We are grateful to the delegates of the 2016 Biennial Convention for your interest in and support of Lutheran Brethren Seminary.

In 1952 the President of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren reminded the Church that the work of LBS is the first phase of missionary work as we prepare workers for their calling: *"We count on the same mission friends who are faithfully supporting workers on the field to be just as faithful in providing for the training of additional workers. Each time you make a contribution to our schools you are actually making a mission offering."*

Dr. David Veum serves the Church of the Lutheran Brethren as President of Lutheran Brethren Seminary.

THE REGIONAL PASTORS' REPORT:

Since the last CLB Biennial Convention in 2014, the Regional Pastors have been adjusting to significant changes that have occurred within the RP team. Two RPs finished their RP ministry, Joel Nordtvedt and Art Hundebly, and Roger Olson and Phil Heiser have joined the RP team with Stan Olsen moving from the Pacific to the Central Region. In addition to these personnel changes, the RPs have been working with our new president, Paul Larson, elected in 2014. These changes have involved steep learning curves and other adjustments that take time. At their biannual summit last February the RPs and President Larson recognized the importance of focusing more on church health issues within our family of churches, and have consequently raised that emphasis.

Along with President Paul and at his suggestion, the RPs have also recognized the opportunity for each RP to become somewhat more specialized in different ministry areas. This will strengthen the overall effectiveness of the team. 2016 is the "off" year in terms of regional conventions, but there are already plans being made for the regional conventions that will occur in 2017.

CHURCH PLANTING:

Epiphany Lutheran Church is the new

church plant in the neighborhoods of Stuyvesant Town and Alphabet City in Manhattan, NYC. Erick Sorensen is the church planter who is starting this church. Erick's call was issued by the Council of Directors (COD) Executive Committee on behalf of the COD, and NAM is significantly contributing to the funding of this church planting effort.

Battle Lake, MN is a multi-site effort of Bethel LC in Fergus Falls, MN with Kevin Foss as the Battle Lake campus pastor. This effort started meeting for worship early in January 2015 with 100+ people in attendance. It is in its second year of ministry as well as in the second year of a two-year commitment that members of Bethel Fergus Falls made to be part of this multi-site effort.

Redemption Church, Pasadena, CA has Kyle Sears currently serving as the part-time church planter, as he completes his MDiv. Pastor Sears is continuing to develop and deepen relationships with people in the target area of the church plant in Pasadena with the intention that when he finishes his seminary education the church planting effort will ramp up.

Living Faith Church, Watford City, ND is being pastored by Bob Lawson. The church began meeting in its newly constructed church building in the fall of 2015. It is appreciating its permanent location while continuing to actively seek

to reach people for Jesus in this oil-rich, oil-boom/bust western part of the state.

Grace LBC, Bismarck, ND is continuing its multi-site effort in Lincoln, ND, just outside of Bismarck. They have recently gone through a "mid-course correction" and are focusing more directly on ministry to children in the Lincoln area while they also continue to deepen relationships with adults.

The Church of the Lutheran Brethren Canada is calling Pastor Harold Rust, former president of Canadian Lutheran Bible Institute to begin church planting groundwork in the city of Red Deer, Alberta this September. This strategic location halfway between the major cities of Calgary and Edmonton is located within 90 minutes of most Alberta LB congregations, providing opportunity for many people to not only give and pray but actively lend a hand in this plant.

Fifth Act is a CLB affiliated ministry whose purpose is to be a catalyst for starting LB churches in major urban areas in North America. It was started by seven LB pastors from the Eastern Region. Fifth Act continues to explore partnerships and other possible church planting locations, as well as providing ongoing coaching and encouragement to Epiphany Lutheran Church in Manhattan.

In addition, to these new CLB congregations, there are other possible

“I lived my whole life for work and money. I was very successful. Now that I’m older I don’t care about any of that. I’m so lonely. All I want is to be loved and to love. And I have no one, because I threw that all away for a few bucks. I’m afraid there is no hope for me now. I don’t believe in a God, but I really want there to be Something that can fill this void inside of me.”

- Rich, a man I shared the gospel with today

“Would it be alright if me and a few friends came to your restaurant night next time? I’d love to talk more about religion and politics with you.”

- a new friend I met in Alphabet City

“Yes. Yes. Yes.”

- Erick Sorensen

Jude (Erick’s son) made a friend at school. The boy’s mother and grandmother dropped him off to stay the night and came inside to meet Erick and Missy. During the conversation Erick mentioned the church plant. Instantly, their faces beamed with joy. “No way! You’re Lutheran!” they exclaimed. “We’re Lutheran too and we’ve been looking for a church in our neighborhood! When can we join up with you guys?!”

These are three very encouraging conversations from among hundreds, or thousands, many of which went very differently than these. Please pray for Erick Sorensen, his family, and those that they encounter in Stuyvesant Town and Alphabet City, NYC.

North American church plants that have potential to start in the next several years.

CHURCH HEALTH:

As was mentioned previously, at the last RP summit in February there was a decision to place a higher priority on church health and vitality in our CLB churches. There is a growing realization that there are a number of our churches that have been in plateau or decline, but still have enough of a critical mass of both resources and people to more effectively connect with their communities and reach people with Jesus. The RPs plan to offer more direct assistance to these churches (and others) as they intentionally reach outside of their church building walls to the people in their communities. There is also a proposal to begin to cultivate lifestyles and a culture of reconciliation.

YOUTH MINISTRY:

YC17 is set to happen during the summer of 2017 at the YMCA of the Rockies in Estes Park, Colorado. The theme is “Break Every Chain,” and the plenary speakers will be Pastor Dave Foss and Pastor Chris Priestaf. Pastor Brandon Pangman leads this important denominational youth event working with an active planning team. The convention had over 500 youth in attendance in 2015, with some of them hearing the Gospel for the first time.

Pastor Mark Johannesen continues to serve as the NAM point person in communication with LB youth leaders, offering training and encouragement.

REGIONAL PASTOR MINISTRY:

The Regional Pastors continue to meet online twice a month for planning, prayer and discussion of regional issues including pastoral and congregational transitions and concerns, training opportunities, and the Pastoral Candidate Program (PCP). Typically the RPs lead an annual retreat in January for pastoral candidates who are part of the PCP. Over the last two years, the RPs have assisted in numerous pastoral placements, installations, and ordinations. They have been part of regional and congregational retreats and conferences, as well as preaching and teaching in many CLB churches.

The Regional Pastors (and their wives) continue to provide pastoral care and encouragement to our pastors, as well as to our congregations. They have facilitated in conflict resolution situations, encouraged cluster ministries, provided mentoring, church assessments, pastor succession planning, and generally worked with congregational pastors and leaders toward church health and vitality. Also, two of the RPs helped facilitate the live streaming of the last LBS J-Term to distance sites in their regions.

LIFTING OUR EYES:

As part of the NAM Advancement initiative the RPs have developed a strategy to encourage and empower CLB churches to start new churches in clusters, parenting or multi-site efforts. This plan involves identifying churches most likely to plant and offering assistance to them in this process, encouraging the development of a pool of potential church planters and offering church planting training and resources on both regional and denominational levels.

Rev. Stan Olsen serves the Church of the Lutheran Brethren as Central Region Pastor.

Matthew Rogness

INTERNATIONAL MISSION REPORT:

The Church of the Lutheran Brethren has called and supports gifted, qualified, and trained missionaries in Africa and Asia. Our clear goal is to be disciplers that plant a church that can be reasonably expected to reach their own people with the gospel. We serve alongside and/or in partnership with four independent sister churches: Cameroon and Chad in Africa, and Japan and Taiwan in Asia. Additionally we continue to serve in China, our first mission endeavor as a newly founded denomination in 1901.

Since we met together at the Biennial Convention of 2014, there are several important events that have taken place in your International Mission ministry.

- Jeremy and Sallee Stanton and their girls were called, commissioned and sent to manage the Lutheran Welcome Center in Chad.
- Randy and Betsy Mortenson and Joel and Marybeth Nordtvedt accepted part-time roles as our pastoral care team for Asia and Africa respectively.
- Andrew and Kris Larsen returned after a decade of service among the Hakka of Taiwan.
- Within the last few weeks, Dave and Sonja Narvesen were called to serve among the Fulbe people of Chad and will be commissioned on Monday night (7/17/16) at this Convention.

CHAD:

Chad continues to be our most physically challenging place to send missionaries due to environmental and economic factors. It is a place, however, that we as

a Church were called to in the late teens of the 1900s. Our initial focus of ministry was in southern Chad where today there is a church of more than 800 congregations. Today our ministry has transitioned to a focus in south central Chad among the Bagirmi, Bilala and Fulbe people, all unreached Muslim people groups.

Steve and Stella Banks have been volunteers serving at our Lutheran Welcome Center in Ndjamena for more than three years. They continue to be a blessing to our ministry in Chad and to our missionaries there. They will finish their ministry to and with us this fall once the Stantons have settled into life in Chad. Danny and Mandy Bronson and their children are in Chad where they are in the midst of Arabic language study. They will eventually be working with the Bilala people group. Jeremy and Sallee Stanton and their daughters are currently in France learning the French language. Lord willing, they will complete that course and be headed to Chad next month where they will take over the Welcome Center ministry. Nathanael and Carrie Szobody and family have returned for their first year of home assignment. They have been living in Boudamasa, a predominantly Bagirmi town. It is there that they have begun their ministry outreach among the people group that we called them to serve among. They have had some great opportunities for ministry and relationship building as they have entered into the life and lives of their neighborhood. Paul and Teresa Szobody are coming to the end of a medical leave and home assignment. Their new home and ministry location is near the village of Adere where they

will undertake the ministry of teaching and mentoring our Chadian and North American missionaries to unreached people groups. The first phase of the building is going well. We value the partnership of our sister church in Chad to provide an expanded missionary work force to join our North American families in reaching the Bagirmi, Bilala and Fulbe people. We believe that this ministry will be, Lord willing, a part of helping our Chadian counterparts get some additional training toward working together as families and teams in the context of ministry to unreached Muslims.

Dave and Sonja Narvesen (as mentioned above) have been called as your missionaries to the Fulbe in Chad. Dave graduated from our seminary this spring. With the financial challenges of this past year we wondered if we would be able to send the next missionary in the CLB's plan to reach the lost in Chad. Together as a Mission Team and the Council of Directors we prayerfully agreed that despite the financial challenges, we needed to move forward. So, we will be seeking to raise prayer and new financial support for them. Dave and Sonja have been taking cross-cultural adaptation and language acquisition courses in Colorado this summer. They will visit several CLB congregations this fall. The Narvesen family will head to France in December to start language study the first week in January. Lord willing, they will arrive in Chad before Christmas 2017.

CHINA:

Joel and Liz Christenson are at the end of a year home assignment. Joel and Liz

will return to China to continue bringing international mission leaders together to engage with the Chinese church in a mission sending movement to the world. The Chinese church is quickly becoming the largest mission church in the world. Joel and Liz have some major challenges ahead of them as they return to their ministry in China and need our prayerful support.

TAIWAN:

Director Rogness joined our missionaries serving in Taiwan (Mike and Delores Kittelson and Ethan and Sandy Christofferson) in an annual review and planning conference in late February. We are praying the Lord of the harvest for additional missionaries to serve the Lord and the Church among the Hakka and other Chinese who need Jesus. In addition to Ethan and Sandy's outreach and discipling ministries, Ethan is also teaching a class at China Lutheran Seminary. Ethan and Sandy will begin a year of home assignment in August. Mike and Delores continue an effective discipling ministry primarily to Hakka seniors but also have opportunities in the broader Hakka community.

JAPAN:

Dean and Linda Bengtson live and minister in Ishinomaki, Japan, where they continue cultivating discipling relationships that they pray will eventually lead to people coming to faith in Jesus Christ and a church plant that can be expected to reach others in their community for Christ. Dean and Linda have over 150 contacts and relationships at various stages of

development, and have a real open door of ministry. Director Rogness met with the Bengtsons in mid-February in an annual review and planning time for the coming year. Dean and Linda have a busy summer of ministry opportunities planned.

SUPPORT PERSONNEL AND MINISTRY ADVANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES:

Dan Venberg serves as our mission mobilizer and recruiter. In this role Dan has been communicating the need for missionaries among the Bagirmi, Bilala and Fulbe peoples of Chad. He has also visited a number of our congregations in his mobilizer role. Dan has responsibility for day-to-day operations in Chad while Matthew splits his time between International Mission and Interim Director of Operations for the CLB. Marcos Holzner continues in his part-time role working on several Naba translation projects for the Bilala people of Chad. These projects include the Gospel of Luke; a Naba, Arabic, French and English Dictionary; and A Guide to Learning Naba. The Holzners are on an indefinite leave from ministry in Chad. We are grateful for the faithful support of Betty Christenson and Judy Rogness in our LBIM office. Randy and Betsy Mortenson were in Japan and Taiwan in November and Joel and Marybeth Nordtvedt in Chad in January to meet with our missionaries for pastoral care. Both couples were well received by our missionaries. Gaylan and Joy Mathiesen continue to compile our Daily Prayer Notes. NorVal and Carey Semchenko continue to supply our missionaries with vehicles at a very low lease rate while

they are on home assignment. Noel (MD) and Trisch (RN) Johnson serve as our volunteer Medical Advisors for Chad. We appreciate their expertise.

LOOKING AHEAD:

What does the future hold for your international ministry to unreached peoples? We are praying the Lord of the Harvest for a couple to replace the Venbergs, who served among the Fulbe people, as well as a couple to replace the Larsens among the Hakka. There are currently two couples that are sensing God's call to these specific needs.

Our CLB Plans and Goals envision two additional missionary couples or the equivalent single individuals in order to have four or five individuals in each unreached people group in Chad. This is a part of our five-year Ministry Advancement as the CLB and is in addition to the two couples mentioned in the paragraph above. In year five, Lord willing, we plan to add a fourth couple to our team in Taiwan. There are also three single women and another couple considering God's call to these important ministry opportunities. Continue to pray "the Lord of the harvest" to send laborers into his harvest field.

Rev. Matthew Rogness serves the Church of the Lutheran Brethren as Director of International Mission.

The man named Jibrine sitting across from me spread his hands as if in diplomatic negotiations: *“Islam and Christianity are the same! We worship the same God!”*

We were sitting together on a mat under a shade tree along with a dozen other men, all inhabitants of an obscure village in central Chad. Between us was a bowl of cool clear water, pumped from a new well in the village that had been installed just the prior week, thanks to donations from Lutheran Brethren churches and individuals. These were subsistence farmers, scratching their livelihood out of the dry and dusty landscape that is so characteristic of Chad. Goats and cattle were milling around us, all drawn to the water source.

As I observed the activity around the well—the joy of physical thirst quenched for both humans and livestock, I contemplated the statement that my newfound friend had just made. *“Islam and Christianity are the same! We worship the same God!”* And I thought of the scripture reference, from John 8:44, to Satan, the prince of this world who is and has been a *“murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”* And I thought about spiritual thirst, and the words of Jesus, who is Truth, who

says: *“whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life”* (John 4:14).

And so with renewed boldness, I responded to Jibrine, affirming with him that there is indeed some common ground between Islam and Christianity, as we share some of the same Old Testament stories, some of the same prophets, and even some of the same theological truths. But I responded to him that there are some strong distinctives of the Christian faith that make it very unique from Islam and other religions. And then God opened the door. Jibrine said: *“Really?”* I said: *“Really. Would you like to hear more about that?”* He said: *“Yes...would you tell me?”* *“Well, yes, indeed...I would love to.”* I replied.

What followed was a beautiful dialogue about our “undone” status as people in a sinful world and our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ who has “undone” the power of sin over us through his death and resurrection and offer of eternal salvation free to all who believe. We discussed how this Gospel is very different from what our natural minds would conclude (and what the father of lies communicates deceptively through the religion of Islam, that it is through our own efforts and good works that we earn merit before God).

After our conversation, Jibrine looked at me and responded with these words: *“I have never understood this before. You need to share this with my people!”* This is why the CLB is committed to mission among unreached peoples. Because there are many like Jibrine who have never heard the Gospel. No one else is going to them. God has called us to them. And so we go...for *“How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent?”*

—Romans 10:14,15.

Troy Tysdal

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER:

The English philosopher, Sir Francis Bacon, said, “Knowledge is power,” and John Lennon, the British songwriter, sang, “Power to the People!”

The department of Communications and Prayer has always sought to put knowledge in the hands of the people of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren, and we’ve been doing that for a long time now. It is not a stretch to say that the Communications Department actually pre-dates the denomination. On January 1, 1899, the first issue of the *Broderbaandet* was published. In that issue K.O. Lundeberg wrote his goal for the paper. He wrote that the paper exists “...to provide spiritually hungry Christians with good devotional reading...” and “...to further the cause of the *free Church* movement...” Out of that movement, twenty-three months later, our denomination was born.

Over the past one-hundred-seventeen years, modes of communication have changed. We have gone from speaking Norwegian to speaking English... we have seen the birth of the radio, the birth of television, the birth of the internet... but through it all, our primary vehicle for communicating the mission of our movement, for putting knowledge in the hands of our people, has always been print.

The reason for that is simple: we can send it to them. We have an address, we know where they live, we can go to them. In all other forms of communication (with the exception of travel) we are dependent on our people coming to us, and that is hard. There are a lot of things competing for their attention and time. So we go to them.

Our magazine, *Faith & Fellowship*, goes to them. It brings the joint ministries of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren into people’s homes—showing up on countertops and coffee tables, not only

in North America, but around the world. We don’t intend to change that anytime soon, but we are excited to introduce to you a tool that we think has the potential, eventually, to surpass the magazine as our primary mode of communication (and it will do so at a fraction of the cost).

In February of 2016, we began working with a company, called SubSplash, to develop a mobile app for the Church of the Lutheran Brethren. The expense of this app, after set-up, is \$139.00 per month, while *Faith & Fellowship* costs us over \$8,000 per issue for print and postage.

The magazine and the app both take information to people. The magazine finds them in their home. The app... will find them anywhere... in the waiting room at a clinic, getting the oil changed on their car, killing time at work. With our new CLB app, we will be there!

Our app organizes the information on our website and makes it extremely accessible to our constituents wherever they are. The app features separate pages for each of our joint ministries (Lutheran Brethren Seminary, North American Mission, Lutheran Brethren International Mission, and Women’s Ministries). Each of those pages has a spot for videos, a link to the department’s website, and a blog, where articles from *Faith & Fellowship* that are specific to that ministry are fed. If someone wants to know what is happening in one of our ministries, the information is now instantly at their fingertips.

In addition to pages for our departments, the app has an events calendar, the ESV Bible (in both print and audio), a resource page containing *Faith & Fellowship* magazine, the Daily Prayer notes from LBIM, the Prayer Link from NAM, an interactive Ministerial Acts Book (for our pastors), the CLB Constitution, CLB Position Papers, Dr. Tim Ystebøe’s Commentary on our Statement of Faith,

and our best-selling book, the *Explanation of Luther’s Small Catechism*. All of this is free... on our new CLB mobile app.

With the app’s *push-notification* feature we are able to send messages to our people, we are able to send them knowledge, while they are on the *go*. While they are on the *go*, we can alert them to important CLB news items, such as new church plants, or new missionaries. We are no longer reliant on their finding time to read the magazine, or stumbling across our website. Instead, we will find them where they are... and we will bring our information to them.

In the setting section of their app, our people will be able to choose which push notifications they would like to receive. For example, daily alerts for NAM’s Prayer Link, or LBIM’s Daily Prayer Notes (this *feature* will bring our denomination’s prayer requests before our constituents each and every day... and the *benefit* will be that we will be reminded to be a people of prayer).

The CLB app is compatible with the iPhone, iPad, Android Phone, Android Tablet, Fire Phone, Fire Tablet, and Windows Phone. Visit the app store on your mobile device today and download the CLB mobile app (Search: CLBA).

Knowledge is power, and this app, literally, puts power in the hands of our people.

Rev. Troy Tysdal serves the Church of the Lutheran Brethren as Director of Communications and Prayer.

FINANCE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Greetings from the Finance Department of the CLB. This fiscal year (FY) was a very challenging one. Beginning in December of 2014, we as a denomination have not met our anticipated contribution goals on a consistent monthly basis. Fortunately, we went into December 2014 with a very large overage from the months before, and that carried us through to the end of FY2014-15, our contribution budget needs having a shortage of only \$46,762. Going on from June 2015 through February 2016, we again had not met our anticipated monthly needs in any month, and had been falling farther behind each month up to March 1. Beginning in March, we put together a new plan, being very much more intentional in letting our churches and church family know about our needs. Our church families prayed with us daily for our ministries. The Lord heard our prayers and answered in his own way. We were on course to be over \$600,000 short for the year, but the Lord stepped in and turned our shortage around. By the time we ended FY2015-16 we were less than \$400,000 short. We are so grateful to the Lord and to our people and churches for their outpouring of gifts and contributions.

REGIONAL PASTORS SUBSIDY:

I need to report that this fiscal year's Regional Pastor (RP) subsidy is being

fully funded on a monthly basis. As you may recall, for the past few years we have been borrowing from the Property and Equipment Fund to cover this portion of our operating fund in our North American Mission (NAM) ministries. Through the fiscal year 2013-14, we were able to bring this borrowing up to date and have all loans paid off on the NAM RP subsidy. You may also recall, at our COD meeting in Fullerton, CA, it was decided to end the RP subsidy with the year ending April 2016. We do have a small amount that will be left in that revenue account for FY2016-17 which we will budget, but after that, all dollars for NAM will need to be raised within the NAM budget.

CAPITALIZATION:

On the capital side of the financial "house," our investments have been on a rollercoaster ride over the past months. To say that we have realized a return on our investment would very likely be false. As you may guess if you have followed the markets, we have been on a down trend since the last week of December and continuing all the way into March 2016. Since that time, markets have recovered some, but we seem to be flat in our overall recovery for the last 36 months.

- In other news, in our capitalization accounting we find that churches are "plugging away" at making their payments. Many churches which

were having a difficult time are now mostly up to date. Some have even paid off extra principal on their loans. So as these churches are paying faithfully on their loans, revenue for the Trust Fund continues to grow. We are presently carrying quite a large sum of dollars with no home for them. I have been watching what is happening in our churches and have spoken to a number of prospective churches, hoping to be able to assist in their financing. Presently I am in contact with three or four churches, talking about financing their project additions.

- Our property holdings in Faribault, Minnesota, are fully liquidated. We closed and sold the final three lots to an investor in February so we no longer have to invest dollars for taxes and assessments in the future. Our accounting will show quite a loss, but in the environment that we found ourselves in, it was something that we as a Finance Committee felt was necessary.

SEMINARY BUILDING:

The Seminary building is fully completed. We were still in the construction mode through April, as far as accounting is concerned, and a few items continue to creep up that require finishing touches. We completed the project financially

in April. So to complete the financial transaction, we moved the building from an expense to a fully standalone asset. To finish this transaction, it required that we take the balance needed to finish the asset from a certain named un-restricted endowment (part of the plan) and replace the HLA amount owed on a Trust Fund loan to HLA. The completed project came in about \$50,000 less than we had anticipated. Volunteer help, favorable weather conditions and area of savings were contributing factors. We are very pleased with the new facility.

Office Information:

- The Finance Office is experiencing personnel transition as we continue the process of implementing new Donor-Database Records software. We are grateful for Lori Anderson and the years that she gave first to the Office of the President and then, upon her return, to the Finance Office. We have hired Amy Cornell to take the position that Lori vacated, and added hours to her position so as to have the time and capability to work in the area of our Data Base Management. This is so needed to make it user-friendly and accessible to our Synodical Personnel.
- I'm very grateful for the rest of my Finance Staff also. As you know, the Affordable Care Act instituted

by our government seems to change daily. Larry Bethel, Brad Martinson and I have attended many meetings trying to get a handle on how this government mandate pertains to us as the CLB/HLA group of employees. As you know, we were combined with HLA in the insurance and benefit programs for the CLBA, but due to various conditions we have had to split and become two entities. With that comes a whole new set of rules, as well as the need to go out into the market and make our own CLB group for insurance purposes. So a special thanks to Larry Bethel and Kathy Uvaas, who work behind the scenes with me in this difficult area of responsibility. I/we are blessed in the Finance Department with good employees.

- The Finance Committee has held many electronic meetings during the months since the fall COD meeting. It's not uncommon to have issues crop up that really cannot wait until the next scheduled COD meeting, and I'm grateful that the Finance Committee members willingly and cheerfully operate through email as a way of conducting business when the need arises. The minutes of those Finance Committee meetings are contained elsewhere in the Board book and are available for full review

(and discussion, as needed) by the COD.

GOALS AND PLANS:

As a mission team, we are continuing to spend much time in the study and reporting of our future years' budget projections through our Advancement Ministry Goals. As you may have deduced, our advancement initiatives have been greatly compromised for various reasons. We have not been able to inject the energies needed, and have worked to remedy that situation.

In view of major planning and goal setting, many changes are proposed for us going forward. We anticipate some changes, although they should be minor, in the next years as new strategies are put in place. Regarding our Ministry Advancement Initiative plan, we have worked and reworked this plan and feel that it is still very attainable. We have completed the FY2016-17 budgets for your joint ministries both in operations and capitalizations. This has been presented to the COD for approval and was approved via a video conference meeting on June 1, 2016. We will have opportunity to review this very important document elsewhere in our time together at this convention.

Mr. LaWayne Rogness serves the Church of the Lutheran Brethren as Director of Finance and Personnel.

Roy Heggland

BIBLICAL STEWARDSHIP REPORT:

What does the Associate for Biblical Stewardship do? Many of you see my articles in *Faith & Fellowship*, so you know that at least part of what I do is write about stewardship as part of teaching stewardship to our congregations. Our understanding of stewardship is rooted in the Gospel, the Gospel which Paul tells us in the book of Ephesians is God's stewardship plan in Christ to unite all things in heaven and earth in him (Ephesians 1:9-10). Our motivation to be good stewards is not based in the law but rather springs from love and gratitude to God for his immeasurable gift of salvation. We give because Christ has given us the desire to be givers, not because we are told we "should" or we want to feel good about ourselves (or hope God feels good about us). We understand that because we are in Christ, there is nothing we could possibly do that would make God love us more or less than he does right now. His

love for us is perfect and complete because he loves us as he loves his beloved son! As I am invited by our congregations, I teach this understanding of stewardship in conjunction with teaching estate planning basics and offering estate planning services.

I have conducted estate planning seminars in a number of our congregations during which I offer free estate plans to those who attend. This service is made possible by the CLBA who offers this gift to those who want to be good stewards through their estate plans and consider leaving a portion of their estates to their local congregations and to the CLBA. Being a good steward shouldn't end when you die! Many of you have taken advantage of this opportunity to plan a final act of good stewardship and generosity while saving your heirs from the time and expense of probate. Thank you. The offer is open to any congregation or, ideally, a cluster of congregations, to invite me to

conduct an estate planning seminar for your group. I look forward to hearing from you to schedule time in the coming months. I have also presented seminars on the role of elders and congregational organization as part of my stewardship teaching.

As a member of the Advancement Team of the CLBA, I have participated in planning the Lifting Our Eyes advancement initiative as a means of inviting us all to grow in our annual giving to the joint ministries of our congregations. I am pleased that Steve Tonneson has joined our team as Associate for Advancement Ministry to lead us in this effort. Since my education, training, and experience are as an attorney, I also provide advice on legal issues to the CLBA as the need arises.

Mr. Roy Heggland serves the Church of the Lutheran Brethren as Associate for Biblical Stewardship.

ABS - YOU HAVE PLENTY OF TIME TO PLAN...MAYBE

Roy Heggland
Associate for Biblical Stewardship

As I speak with people about getting their estate plans completed, those who are in their 70's and 80's usually understand that the sooner they get it done, the better, since none of us know how much time we have left before it's too late to plan. I have often spoken with people who had good intentions of putting estate plans in place and sometimes even started the process only to let the urgent (not necessarily the important) matters of life interfere with getting them done. On more than one occasion, sadly, the delay lasted until their time on this earth ended or they were no longer competent to make plans. Their heirs ended up having to deal with all of the issues that could

have been addressed so easily by their loved ones in a proper estate plan.

You may be thinking that when you reach retirement age, you won't fall prey to procrastination and that you will make sure you plan your estate before you run out of time. If so, you are moving in the right direction, but so was the 39-year-old couple who asked me to prepare their estate plan two years ago. Their estate plan had been drafted and only needed their final review before signing. They were both in excellent health, had three young children and were very busy with work, family, church and friends. While they were busy with life, their estate plan sat on the kitchen counter waiting to be reviewed. Then one day a little

over a year ago, we were shocked and grief-stricken when this young husband and father suffered a fatal brain trauma! Since he died without an estate plan, the intestate laws of his state of residency determined how his property would be inherited by his family. Since the family home was only in his name, his wife only inherited a 1/2 share of the home she had lived in for years. Her three children ended up owning the other 1/2 – under court supervision! It was a messy complication that could have been avoided. This young widow and mother of 3 asked me to share her story so you won't make the same mistake, thinking you have all the time in the world. You may not.

Ruth Vallevik

NIGHT:

To some of us that brings thoughts of the comfort of home, of rest when weary, of times around the supper table sharing the day's events with loved ones. To others the word "night" sometimes seems a symbol for loneliness, isolation, physical weakness, anxious fears and personal calamity. My own "night" came this year with a cancer diagnosis. Perhaps yours came with a 2 a.m. call for help, the loss of a loved one or an overwhelming debt. Our Women's Ministry convention theme this year, "His Song in the Night," is an acknowledgment that in this fallen world we will all experience such dark times, but it is also a reassuring reminder of our Father-God's promise to be with us in those dark places—and not only to be with us, but to bring us through to joy and praise. *Yes, even to song!* As we gather together it is not to share our stories of sadness but to tell of his "songs in the night!" We will hear of his provision, his lovingkindness, his reassurance, the answered prayers, renewed strength, and fresh call to service in his Name. And yes, we will SING! I am so glad that you have joined us!

As your Director, I am called to be the "face" of ministry *by, through and to* the women of the CLB. Some of you might wonder what that looks like. Here is some of what I do, by God's grace:

- Teaching at retreats and other women's ministries events

- Representing WMCLB on the Council of Directors of the CLB
- Serving as a resource and encouragement to women's ministry groups
- Supporting pastors' wives through a Facebook prayer group and personal ministry
- Providing leadership to a ministry team of eleven, under the chairmanship of Rachel Patterson
- Traveling to local groups to inform, teach and encourage through the Heart to Heart project

This year my visits have included Lutheran Brethren church groups in Watford City, ND; Kelso, WA; Portland, Salem and Eugene, OR; and Cape Coral, FL. I spoke at the Pacific Region North Women's Retreat in Bellingham, WA, and also met with the Seminary women in Fergus Falls, MN. I received intensive training in Biblical Peacemaking in Colorado as well. My anticipated visits to both the Central Region and the Pacific Region South had to be postponed because of my illness and treatment. I was so sorry, and thank you for your patience and your prayers. I trust the Sovereign God's purposes even in this.

My own story of "His Song in the Night" is best described in the words of the Psalmist, "I will sing of your strength, in the morning I will sing of your love; for you are my fortress, my refuge in times of trouble... (You) surround me with songs of deliverance" (Psalm 59:16, 32:7b).

I've been grateful for the storehouse of memorized Scripture and hymns which God used to speak peace and hope to this child of his throughout the hours of the night. Many of you can testify of this as well.

I wish to thank all of you for your generous support of this ministry. It is a joy and privilege to be called a Child of God and to be given a task for the Kingdom, enabled by grace and led by his love.

Mrs. Ruth Vallevik serves Women's Ministries of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren as Director of Women's Ministries.



ONE VISION, TOGETHER

We see God stirring in our Church a fresh passion to reach beyond our own comfort to all people among whom God places us. We embrace God's mission to bring the life-changing Gospel to unreached people in Asia and Africa, and we sense God convicting us to more intentionally reach out to people who live in our midst in North America as well.

CLB Vision Statement

ONE MISSION, *UNDONE*

In response to God's person and grace, we worship him with everything we are in Christ, serve one another in Christian love and share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with all people.

CLB Mission Statement