

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

January 8, 1980

*"Not one of them
shall fall . . .
without your Father."
Matthew 10:29*

Photo by Roger C. Huebner, D.D.S.

**In this issue:
A Look into the '80s
by Leaders
in our Church**

AT THE MASTER'S FEET

Pastor Gary Skramstad



What Do We See?

"Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18a).

Stop! Right now thank God for the miracle that allows you to see. Even those of us with poor eyesight are blessed. Our glasses are a must. We love to read, gaze into the faces of our loved ones, behold the beauty of the universe, and spot situations that could threaten our safety.

THE PAST. But we see more than that which is within the focus of our eyes. We see into the precious memories of our yesterdays. Certainly 1979 brought some happy times for you. Yes, some sad and painful experiences were possibly yours, too. Praise God for His being with you. Some have such happy pasts that they desire to only live there. Everything they see in the present is looked upon with the glasses of the past.

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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These 17 years of the AFLC have brought countless experiences of God's love and faithfulness. The accumulation of land and buildings, longer clergy and congregation rosters, and budgets that are increased each year are things we have seen. We do appreciate what God has provided for the AFLC. But there are other things that we can see over the years.

We praise God that during the ten years that we have been in the ordained ministry there have been many who have been changed into God's own children. We have enjoyed trips to former parishes in Montana, Illinois and Minnesota. What a joy to see the people again and to learn that God is working His will in their lives. Lives that were empty and hearts which once burdened with guilt and shame are redeemed. It means so much for a former pastor to clasp the hand of one who came to the assurance of salvation during the years of his ministry there. And how we can thank God for God-loving and people-caring pastors who continue in the ministry of the Gospel. Each pastor and congregation rejoices to see the living Word abide in the hearts and lives of their people.

THE PRESENT. But it is not good for pastors to live in former parishes and for people to live as though their former pastor is still there. We must see the here and now. We see our body of believers keeping the exhortation or not forgetting to assemble themselves for the worship of God and the study of His Word. We see those who have known Christ's forgiveness for many years still growing with a warm, sensitive spirit and a teachable attitude. We see babes in Christ hungry to grow. Yes, we see some of their immature ways, too. We see those who are still lacking the assurance of forgiveness through Christ's blood. Next to such

we see a believer praying and trusting for the miracle of salvation to come to this one for whom the Savior died. We see victory over sin, comfort in sorrow, strength in trials, and New Testament life being the everyday experience of the Body.

We also see the despiser of God's Word. The thick skin of indifference is worn by many. And we do see some Christians who are not living up to their potential. We sadly see some who shrink in their backslidden condition. We see those who like Demas have forsaken the Lord and walk no more with the Master.

THE FUTURE. Yes, the Christian can see the future. We see the future in God's Word. Christ is coming! We are watching and waiting for His return. As we expect our Lord to come we see the ability of His powerful Word to change us. We have a burning desire to see souls saved. We see God's ability to make our body healthy and strong. We see fear forced out by the love from the God of our fathers who is and continues to prove Himself strong to all who believe in Him.

If we are only living in the past blessings of God, people will perish and we shall be ashamed. If we are only viewing the present we must rise above our complacency. Jesus desires to share His burden of lost and dying men and women, boys and girls with you. Can you see the most unlikely ones coming to Him? Can you see God using you? Can you see God healing and strengthening your local body?

A new year and a new decade are upon us. Oh, dear people of the AFLC, what do we see?

Lord, lay some soul upon my heart
And love that soul through me
That I may humbly do my part
To win that soul for Thee.



From our church president

by Pastor Richard Snipstead

"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13-14).

These are words of challenge and encouragement as we turn the pages of the calendar from an old year to a new year. We leave behind many mistakes, failures and sorrows. There are many joys and areas of accomplishment, too. A new year, in fact, a new decade with hopes and uncertainties is before us. As we begin this second last decade of this century, may it be with a new determination to press on for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

We live in a most critical period in history. In retrospect, the previous decade has brought us through events and developments which ten years ago most of us would have said are impossible. We have seen continued advancement in technology, bringing us new gadgets and inventions that fill us with awe. At the same time, we suddenly find ourselves with many problems that man cannot answer with all of his technical know-how. What a bitter pill it is to swallow, for those who have preached that man could produce a Utopia on earth, to have to admit that man is rather on a course of self-destruction.

The energy shortages which have become real to us will continue to be one of our greatest problems in a new decade. The food shortages already on hand in many areas of the world will also increase as natural sources of energy run out. The critical areas are also those in which the population continues to rise rapidly. The danger from pollution will continue to be a problem. These problems along with the rapid moral decline have both political and religious leaders greatly concerned.

There is little doubt that we have reached a point where we will see some

changes in the life-style for most Americans. We will undoubtedly feel the effect of these changes in the work of the church. Surely God is allowing us to see the folly of trusting in material things. Oh, that we may see a turning back to God and eternal values.

The breakdown of the family is one of the greatest concerns for the Church today. The factors that have contributed to that problem will create deeper problems for the survival of the family in the next decade.

The selfishness and sin of man, demanding that the lusts of his flesh and his eyes and the pride of life be satisfied, have brought us to our present predicament. At the base of the moral ills that face us on every hand lies the rejection of the authority of Scripture. The appalling fact for the future is that many church leaders continue to reject the Bible as the only norm for Christian living. The present moral decay can only continue in our country when such conditions prevail.

What a tremendous need there is for us in the AFLC to press on for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. If we have the convictions and the courage to stand on those convictions, the next decade may present its difficulties, but it can be a period of blessing for us as a church.

THE AFLC IN A NEW DECADE

The Association of Free Lutheran Congregations should continue to experience good growth in the challenging '80s. There will be many opportunities for beginning new congregations. Our ability to enter new fields will be limited by a shortage of pastors and funds.

The Lutheran constituency will continue to provide growth for the AFLC. The reasons presented at the organizational conference of the AFLC in 1962 as to why we did not wish to enter the merger of the Lutheran Free Church with the ALC are still valid. Developments within that body have more than confirmed the convictions we expressed at that time. The voice of the AFLC is needed more than ever among Lutherans.

We cannot condone the statements and practices of Lutherans who would bury the issues that made the Reformation necessary. We agree with Dr. Carl Fredrik Wisløff, in a statement he made when he lectured here last year, that Rome has made no concessions in any major doctrine. Yet many Lutherans are gearing "to heal the wounds" of the Reformation. Many Lutherans ought to become disturbed by these developments.

The World Council of Churches continues to prove that it is a body that



A few weeks ago the Editor of our Church paper, *The Lutheran Ambassador*, asked if I would give my personal predictions, hopes, dreams and fears concerning our Seminary as we begin a new decade. I consider this assignment as an opportunity and a privilege.

My personal prediction for the future of AFLTS is positive and bright, that is, if we faithfully cling to the convictions and principles upon which the Seminary was founded and currently operates.

These are:

1. That the Bible is the divinely inspired, revealed, inerrant and authoritative Word of God and as such is trustworthy in all its parts and the supreme and only rule of faith and practice;
2. That the Apostolic, Nicene and Athanasian Creeds, the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and Luther's Small Catechism are faithful expositions of the truths of Scripture;
3. That the local congregation is the right form of the Kingdom of God on earth. It acknowledges no authority above itself except the Word and Spirit of God.
4. That the servant of God, the undershepherd of souls, "must hold firm to the sure word as taught so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine, and also to confute those who contradict it" (Titus 1:9 is, by the way, the Motto of our Seminary).
5. That the Seminary continue to emphasize that the pastor, under God, is to have the servant and shepherd spirit, be conservative, pietistic, evangelical and evangelistic. He is to have a childlike confidence in the whole Bible as being the Word of God to which all men's theories, scholarship, desires and practice must bow. The pastor is to be, above all, a man of God. He is to maintain a consistent devotional life. Only people living close to the Lord Jesus Christ can reflect Him.
6. That the student is in the Seminary to learn. He is to study to show himself approved unto God;

STANDING ON THE WORD OF GOD

New Decade . . .

will cause embarrassment to evangelical Christians. Support by that body for communistic and reactionary groups ought to trouble the conscience of any Christian. Many will seek membership in churches outside of the WCC.

The new hymnals and rituals being adopted by major Lutheran bodies continue the trend to high-churchliness. The simplicity of worship and freedom encouraged by the AFLC will continue to be welcomed.

As an Association of free and living congregations, we need to stand firm on the Bible as the inspired Word of God. As we honor God's Word, God will bless the AFLC.

We need to keep the vision clear before us of the heritage of free and living congregations. It is not enough to be free, but we must have the life of the

Spirit of God in our members and our congregations. We shall need to re-emphasize the place of the congregation in the work of the Kingdom. To lose that vision will make the existence of the AFLC unnecessary.

The coming decade is one in which we will need to be challenged to be true to our Lutheran heritage. We cannot consent that ecumenical activities with Reformed groups which lead to compromise of our Lutheran faith are preferable to those aimed toward Rome.

There are many other matters which we should like to have touched upon, but we cannot do so in a short article. The challenge of the '80s is before us. Let us rededicate ourselves to Christ as we work together till Jesus comes. May His coming become our great hope and joy in the decade before us. †

other interests and desires must take second place to his need to study. The student ought to develop study habits in the Seminary which will continue throughout his ministry.

Again I say that the future of our Seminary is positive and bright if we hold fast to and emphasize the above stated convictions and principles. This, of course, will not exempt us from problems, burdens, testings and temptations. Time, history and experience have proved that any Bible-believing individual, institution or Church has, with the boundless blessings of the Triune God and rich fellowship with like-minded saints, shared struggles, burdens, heartaches and temptations. For example, one of these temptations in our generation is the subtle temptation to want to move along with the popular change in thought regarding the Bible. The idea that one must be very critical when he studies the Bible, that one must separate the Bible from the Word of God. It is called historical-critical methodology. This methodology starts with a negative assumption, namely, that nothing can be accepted as the Word of God in Scripture unless it can be proven to be so. In other words, unless it can be proved to be valid it must be considered invalid. Thus the so-called higher critic comes to the Bible with doubt, not with faith. He comes with the wrong attitude. Whoever approaches the Bible with doubt will always find what he thinks to be good reasons to throw out at least some portions of the Bible. The historical-critical method of Bible study is to try to

find the Word of God in Scripture before he can take it seriously.

This method of study and teaching the Bible is a deadly enemy of positive living theological orthodoxy. It is so because it places finite man with his reason above the Bible which is propositional revelation from the infinite God. You see, as soon as man negates anything the Bible affirms he has by that decision made himself a judge of the Bible which is God's truth. (At this point I want to acknowledge helpful source material which I have borrowed from Harold Lindsell's excellent book *The Bible in the Balance*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1979).

My prayer to our Heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, the Head and Lord of the Church, is that our Seminary will always hold a high and positive view of the Bible in all its parts. Let us, under God, determine to continue to hold to the presupposition that Scripture and the Word of God are synonymous. Let us continue to take all the Bible seriously and teach and preach it as **THUS SAITH THE LORD**.

Let us read the Bible as it is written; let us believe what it says and God the Holy Spirit will give us the convictions, the spiritual moral strength and love to proclaim the Word as God intended it to be preached. Then the servant of the Lord will make every effort to clearly and faithfully proclaim Law and Gospel and sin and grace, and the Triune God, through the Word, will give fruit—undying souls will be saved and nourished. Church history shows that the Church maintained its strongest influence when it faithfully held and

proclaimed the pure Biblical doctrine of redemption and reconciliation through Jesus' blood and righteousness and gave itself to the task of bringing lost souls into new life through Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

If our Seminary, which is an arm of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, will, under God, continue to lift up the standard of God's unfailing and inerrant Word, the Scriptures in all its parts, and of Biblical evangelistic Christianity in opposition to all modern apostasy, our future will continue to be bright not only for the 1980's but until our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ returns.

We need not fear the future. God's Word shall accomplish His purposes.

In conclusion I want to remind myself, my family, my colleagues, my students and all my fellowmen of Micah 6:8 and Galatians 6:14:

He has told you, O man, what is good;

And what does the Lord require of you

But to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

God forbid that I (we) should glory, save in the cross of our

Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I (we) unto the world.

"Let us continue to take all the Bible seriously and teach and preach it as **THUS SAITH THE LORD**." †

Pastor Dyrud is dean of Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary. Before that he was a missionary to Madagascar for many years.

Much has been done— There is much to do

by Pastor Jerome Nikunen,
Roseau, Minn.

observations
from a
parish pastor

The passing of another year, and especially of another decade, very forcibly reminds us of the swift passing of time. Events of the past year, if one studies Scripture at all, point to the soon return of our Lord. It would seem

possible in this next decade, perhaps in the first few years.

Some would paint a gloomy picture for the 1980s. World conditions may indeed become more intense than before. The situations that exist in Iran and the Middle East may turn into war at any time and armed conflict between nations could bring untold misery and destruction upon our country. The economic picture also is not very bright. But keeping out of war and avoiding a depression are not the Christian's nor the Association's primary goals. Our goals are different and far better; they are Christ-centered

FIELDS WHITE

by Pastor Elden Nelson

The commitment of AFLC Home Missions is to have a part in fulfilling Christ's command of "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." This may be looked upon as Christ's long-range goal. Our immediate goal is to establish free and living Lutheran congregations where the Word of God is taught, preached and lived in such a way that people come to receive and know Christ as their personal Savior.

Trying to visualize what 1990 will be for the AFLC Home Missions can be a very frightening experience. Although

we speak of looking ahead, we cannot see into the future and know what will be happening ten years from now or even ten minutes from now; only our Lord has such foresight and ability. However, we can make some predictions concerning the future based upon the past and present trends. It is the trend of the present that certainly should and does cause us to have fears about the future. We have often heard the "old-timers" speak of how things have changed over the years. Change should not cause us to fear except when it is the interpretation of God's Word and the moral standards it advocates that man takes the liberty to change and make fit his particular situation.

Such change is very evident today.

If the rate of change over the past 20 years continues in the next decade, where will we be as an Association? Where will we be as individuals in our relationship with God? In Hebrews 2:1 we are admonished to pay the closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. As a small child needs to hear and hear again the instructions of father and mother, so also we as Christians need to hear over and over what God is saying to us in His Word and to obey Him. We must not allow the influence and example of the world to lead us away from the truth and excellent standard of God's Word.

Only as our Association continues to

Much to do . . .

and heaven-directed.

For Christians and the AFLC this next decade is going to be the most exciting time to be alive and working for the Lord. Our general goal must be to have Christ live in us in a greater measure, to live victorious lives for Christ. This we will be able to do by the power that we received from Christ's resurrection. As He entered death to save us from the punishment of our sins and rose to prove beyond all doubt that He had conquered sin, death and the devil, so we, by faith in His victory, can live a more abundant life for Him, drawing on His power to conquer sin, death and the devil in the 1980s. As Paul confidently stated: "I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me," so we can live for Him in the 1980s regardless of what lies ahead.

Our church records show growth in certain areas over the past decade. Much of spiritual progress cannot be measured or charted by statistical reports. Like faith in the heart, this growth is visible only to God. The records show that many members of our congregations in the AFLC have become more frequent in their church attendance. They also indicate a larger attendance at Sunday School and Bible studies. Certainly these are goals

toward which our congregations must work. That kind of growth is certainly pleasing to God and should be continued. But we shall not boast of any statistical increases for the last decade. Instead let us humbly thank God for enabling us to accomplish it.

Other areas of growth can be measured to some extent. For years we have heard earnest appeals for development of a stewardship program, the proper use of all that God has given us. Perhaps it has seemed at times that results were slow in coming. Some of our members have accepted the challenge of total stewardship life, putting their faith in God by giving more of their time, talents and treasure for His work. Some have given the tithe and more. Others have caught the vision of our mission opportunities in South America, Mexico and India and brought truly sacrificial offerings for the Lord's work. Many have given willingly of their time to serve the Lord through our congregations in an official or unofficial way.

One very noticeable area of growth has been in our mission work. From our very humble beginnings in Brazil our vision has been extended to reach out into Mexico, India and now Paraguay.

But we do not want to pat ourselves on the back or list these things in the attitude of the Pharisee in the temple: "Look us over, God; see how good we are; see what we have done in the last decade." Let us thank God for what has been accomplished, forget those things that are behind and concentrate our energies on the work ahead.

How very much the world today needs the church because the world needs Christ! Each Christian believer must spread the news of redemption. And the Gospel still is new to great numbers of people. Again and again we come into contact with people who have never heard the real heart of the Gospel of God's merciful forgiveness in Jesus Christ. Our pastors, speaking at occasions where mixed groups of people are present, preaching this mercy

"For Christians and the AFLC this next decade is going to be the most exciting time to be alive and working for the Lord."

UNTO HARVEST

give the living Word its rightful and central place in all matters of life can we face the future with an optimistic and positive attitude. I trust that the end of the next decade will reveal such a spirit among us.

Our commitment to Christ and His Great Commission is ever before us. The task is great and fields are white unto harvest. Certainly we in this next decade or even in our lifetime will not be able to complete the task. However, we must not despair. We must keep on working until His return. We do need to establish goals; with His resources and direction we should be able and willing to do so. Over the past ten years, ten new AFLC congregations

were begun. There were organized congregations that also joined our Association. Some received subsidies and some didn't. We thank God for each congregation that has been added to our number. An average of one new congregation per year may seem like a rather small increase, but we must crawl before we walk. Is it possible for us to set a goal of two or three new congregations per year for the next ten years? I think so, simply because of the rate of growth we have experienced in the years past.

Twenty or 30 congregations in ten years may look and sound like giant strides, but when we consider the Great Commission, the resources our

Lord provides and the direction His Word promises, don't such goals seem rather meager? Again, I think so. In light of the same, we might begin to set goals of 50, 75 or maybe even a 100 new congregations for the '80s, but we know that goal-setting does not accomplish a task. Our goal-setting must be coupled with a renewed vision of what God wants and expects of us and a total commitment of ourselves, our time, talent and means to Him. This will bring about an increase in the number of new congregations and souls saved that will be pleasing to our Lord.

In the years ahead I see the need to establish clusters of congregations. One reason being so that a fellowship among congregations and pastors may be developed; we need one another. At this time it appears that we need to be looking at the larger metropolitan areas where there is an ever-increasing growth. However, we do not want to ignore the smaller towns and villages where there is also a need.

"Is it possible for us to set a goal of two or three new congregations per year for the next ten years? I think so"

Lest we begin to think that the growth of our AFLC is only in terms of new congregations, let us remember that there is room for growth in every one of our congregations. There are souls in every community who are unchurched and unsaved and thus need to know Jesus. This is the growth that our Lord desires. Let us set our goals and receive our direction from our Lord as we find it through prayer and in the Word. As we do and if the Lord tarries for another ten years the blessings will be great for those of His family who remain to carry on the Kingdom's work.

Pastor Nelson is the Home Mission Director of the AFLC and formerly served our congregations in St. Paul, Minn., and Dickinson, N. Dak., on a temporary basis.



of God in Christ, hear members of other churches which are supposed to be Christian say, "I never have heard Christ preached in this way." Even in supposedly Christian communities people are still found who have never tasted the water of life.

What are we Christians and members of the AFLC doing to prepare for the second coming of Christ which is so near at hand? The past generation of our church has brought Christ to us. Are we as effectively, as energetically, and as completely as we can, bringing Christ to the world? Since Christ has freed the world from sin and death and gained eternal life, the believer has all these things in his possession. He has been made free. When Christ comes into the heart, He does not prescribe in detailed rules what the redeemed and saved person must now do. For example, He does not say: Go to church so and so often. Give so much money for the congregation and for missions and the other areas of work in our Association. He does say: Go and tell all nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. This do in remembrance of Me. Love one another. Count worthy of double honor the elders who labor in the Word. What you sow, you shall reap, either sparingly or bountifully. He warns: Be not

deceived, God will not be mocked. He does find fault with those who forsake the assembling of themselves together with the fellow Christians with whom they are associated in the ties of a congregation.

John the Baptist was the forerunner of the New Testament ministry. We say it's unfortunate that many flocked to John just as a novelty. Even though many were baptized by him, not everyone remained faithful to his repentance and profession of faith. Is our generation any better? Is our devotion dedicated, consecrated to Christ? Is He our life? Is our greatest interest the spreading of the Gospel, the telling of Christ's soon return to our fellow human beings of every nation, every race, every position in life, and every condition? We have opportunities everywhere at home and far away. May this beginning of a new decade make us more conscious of what we have and of who we are. We are Christians in whom Christ has come to dwell. May we live to share this with others. †

Jerome Nikunen is pastor of the Roseau (Minn.) parish. He served previously at Ontonagon, Mich. He is a member of the Board of Pensions, serving as secretary.

A layman looks at

ENERGY, MORALITY, FELLOWSHIP

by Mr. Robert Knutson

Since I know of no one who is able to predict what a new day will bring, much less the next ten years, let us take some clues from the present and shed some light on the future.

Let us first mention some rather material, yet practical things, which seem likely to influence our AFLC.

We are already in what is referred to as the "energy crunch." We will likely see a more co-ordinated use of the church building. Many will be used on Sundays, with the other activities being held on the same week-day or evening. This may be for only part of the year, but if members have to travel long distances we may see it become a year-long practice. We may see more boards, committees and smaller groups meeting in homes. This could be for the good. We would expect some smaller churches to close and merge with another one, perhaps in the same parish. Even if it is financially possible to remain open, some will need to ask themselves if it is good stewardship. We will have to examine our visitation program and make each visit count. No longer can we expect a pastor to travel 100 miles to visit a parishioner in the hospital who is in for a two-day stay for routine tests. We would expect our AFLC boards to meet less frequently with the meetings to last two or more days. In a variety of ways, our church life will be different in the '80s because of fuel and energy costs.

Our churches have had, and continue to have, many tax breaks and benefits. During the last decade there

has been a great abuse of this privilege. The AFLC, and Lutherans in general, have been restrained, and have used good judgment in this area. But we can't expect a government to differentiate among denominations, church organizations, or even various religions, other than to expose the obviously deceitful and dishonest ones which exist only for the financial gain in claiming to be a church. Because of this abuse by cults, sects, and even some mainstream or traditional churches, we are all going to see greater restrictions on tax-exempt property. We may find for example, that local churches will be exempt, but not parsonages.

Another area of concern and possible involvement by our churches is in education. Many public schools do not have the confidence of Christian parents. I doubt we will see our AFLC going into this (establishing Christian day schools), but we may see an increase in local AFLC congregations being involved. I hope it is only done as a last resort, because the costs are high. There is also a danger in forming "non-denominational" schools with other churches. I doubt there is such a thing. Let's first try to bring a sense of decency and morality to our public school systems.

We realize we may be at the crossroads in this country regarding morality. We must, I believe, in the next decade, work more closely with others who share this concern. Our church structure is such that no officer or board can speak for us, but local congregations must cooperate with others in areas of abortion, pornography, homosexuality, etc. This starts at the local level. Local committees make up the nation. But let us be careful to limit our church involvement to those issues which are clearly moral or spiritual. The church does not exist to be a social improvement club or a community betterment

The '80s demand a deeper commitment to Christ and a more effective witness than many of us have shown in the '70s.

center, although communities and society both are better because of them. In other areas that involve our culture and society, we had better operate as individual Christians, being that salt and light that God expects each of us to be.

It is in this area that I have both hope and fear. As we became more ungodly and sinful as a nation, I can see that there is a greater need for Christians to find friendship, seek support, and to cooperate with other Christians. This also applies to our church life. We have spent too much time in the past finding fault with other Lutherans, and certainly with other denominations. We need to recognize that God is working in other churches also. When a Baptist crusade results in changed hearts and lives in a community, let us rejoice with them and praise God. At the same time, let us, more than ever, be faithful to the Word as He has given us the light to understand it. To "continue in sound doctrine" and to cooperate with other Christians is not a road to travel carelessly.

Finally, since we are a fellowship of local congregations, let us consider what I hope the '80s will do for them.

We have always had family-centered church worship and activities. Each age group has needs and some group activity is necessary, but let's grow into an even deeper fellowship of families.

Speaking of families, I suspect we will have to deal more fully with the role of women in our church. I would also expect that family breakups and divorce will have to be more fully dealt with.

We are a church with a heritage of strong lay participation, yet, too often in the past, the pastor has been the main Christian witness in our communities. He has no greater responsibility to witness than the laity. We call

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The Lutheran Ambassador

editorials

THE NEXT TEN YEARS

We have asked a number of people in leadership in the church, as well as a parish pastor and a layman, to write down their hopes, dreams and concerns for the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations for the decade we have just entered in upon. Their thoughts are found in this issue of the *Ambassador* and you will find them interesting.

Now, before reading what they have written, lest we be influenced by that, we herewith set down our own look into the future. None of us claim to be all-knowing, all of us know that future is in God's hands, for us personally and for the world.

First of all, two general observations of what the AFLC may face in the coming ten years. (1) Whereas the '70s was a decade of stabilization following the '60s and the beginning of the church, the '80s will see the necessity of re-examination of the reasons why the Association came into being. At a recent meeting a pastor expressed the feeling that some pastors of the church were not sure as to who we are (as a church).

If that uncertainty exists, it ties in with the need we have felt for some discussion among us concerning the principle of fellowship with other Lutherans and other denominations. The AFLC, and the Lutheran Free Church before it, never has said much about fellowship, whereas churches with Synodical Conference background have said a great deal about it and been very careful (Missouri Synod, Wisconsin Synod, etc.).

It seems that it would be good for us to take a look at whatever policies we have, as individual pastors and congregations, regarding cooperation with other Lutherans and other denominations. Are we consistent in our practices in reference to our Confessions and Guiding Principles? How deep is our Lutheranism and are we fair to it? We trust the question is not needed, but we ask it anyway. Does the Association fill a unique place in the Lutheran family and over against the evangelical Reformed denominations? These are all issues before us in these coming years.

(2) We hope that the church would be willing in the '80s to study her hymnody. We are concerned that a church group as small as ours is not united around one hymnbook of Lutheran orientation better than it is. With each passing year the situation becomes more clouded. What effect will a generalized hymnody eventually have on the theology of our church? Can we at least begin a study of what the practices are in our church music and whether or not there are some ideals which ought to be followed?

And then we would like to make some expressions about the individual areas of our work together.

The Schools—It is hard for anyone to predict what the Bible School student body size will be during the '80s. In the last several years it has averaged in the 90s. The potential is virtually unlimited when the School becomes better known. But coupled with that will be the decreasing population of the high school and junior high age group in the next decade. So perhaps AFLBS will remain around the 90 mark. It would be disappointing should it fall below that. The same size faculty is needed whether there are 75 students or 150. You can see the additional cost to the church if enrollment is the former rather than the latter.

We hope that during the '80s a third year will be added to the curriculum offering training in church work skills, such as parish work, parish education, music, lay missionary work, etc. Admission to the third year should be restricted and the requirements for the course demanding.

It is disappointing that the '70s ended with a rather small enrollment in the Seminary. According to needs in the church there should be so many more students. Actually, as one looks at the Annual Report for 1970, one sees that the enrollment ten years ago was roughly comparable to the present year. There have been higher points since then, but we are on the down side right now.

It is too bad that not more young men are coming from our congregations into the Seminary. There are prospects that that situation will change for the better in the coming years. It *must* change, for the good of the church. The Seminary must be strengthened in every way possible as a place of training congregation- and servant-minded pastors. There must be a great loyalty in our church to the Seminary.

World Missions—In all likelihood, the AFLC will be officially involved soon in a mission field in India. That will give us three fields, four if we count expansion from Brazil into Paraguay. This is good, but it will also mean a much larger World Mission budget. However, that is what it will take to evangelize the nations.

It is not at all clear how many new workers can be used in these new fields of endeavor. India won't accept the traditional missionary. Whoever goes there must have some needed skill, such as medicine or education. We predict that new workers will be forthcoming as the needs are set forth.

Home Missions—The '80s begin with numerous open doors. And open doors being entered. Almost a more critical problem than money as the decade begins is manpower. Too much expansion means more vacant parishes unless the size of our graduating classes in the Seminary increases and that won't happen for at least three years. These are problems with which our Home Mission leaders must wrestle.

The Church Extension Fund must at least double in the next ten years so that new congregations can secure or build adequate facilities.

We dare not predict, but only hope that the next decade will see Home Missions in the AFLC embracing what we have known as inner-mission work, that is, a reaching out in our own country through rescue and store-front ministries, Indian missions, seaman's work, alcoholic programs, etc. Not only would this be a reaching out for Christ, but it would make use of gifted, consecrated people who would like

Editorials . . .

to serve the Lord in full-time work but may not feel called into parish ministry, and, of course, there would be opportunities for women workers as well. Such work would never be self-supporting. It would be costly, but let the challenge be before us.

Evangelism—The Association will continue to employ a full-time evangelist in the '80s. This is one means of reaching out in the communities in which we have congregations. But with each year it becomes increasingly evident that the series of evangelistic meetings doesn't reach the same number of different people which the local pastor faces on a Sunday morning. That doesn't minimize the importance of the evangelist, whether he be the official one or not, it only emphasizes the responsibility of the local pastor to preach the whole counsel of God.

We predict that more and more Bible study-type special meetings in the congregations will be used in coming years as many of the faithful gather. And wherever the Word of God is handled there is the possibility of great things happening among the saved and unsaved. Perhaps the decade before us will find us facing up more honestly to the question of what is a "living congregation."

General Administration—We venture that the 1980s will see a big increase in the amount of money coming in through wills, legacies and annuities. Perhaps these monies will fund the expansion needed in the church. With a director of development working in the church, more and more people are going to decide to remember God's work in their estates.

The AFLC has grown a good deal in structure and administration in 17 years. It would be interesting to see what an impartial evaluation expert would think of her utilization of people and jobs. But we have done the best we could. What happens in the future will be dictated by the financial support forthcoming. The next fiscal year with its much

higher goals will go a long way in telling what the AFLC is going to do with her future.

These are some of our thoughts here on the threshold of the 1980s. We wish that you all could have shared some of yours. That's what we must do more of, share our hopes, dreams, fears and insights with one another. And then we must pray with and for one another and keep in touch. The Lord has given us a goodly work. The future is bright, but it all depends on whether or not we know His will and follow it. God help us.

THE FINAL PUSH

May we add our encouragement to that of others for the full subscription of our goals in benevolences for 1979-80? You have received letters from our president, Pastor Snipstead, from the Bible School, and perhaps others pointing out the real need before us as a church in these closing days of the fiscal year. Make no mistake, the challenge is great.

In the past the church has risen magnificently to the challenge. We have either subscribed fully to the overall goals or failed only by a little. But again we can say of this year, no greater challenge has faced us than the one before us now. This year we hesitate to single out any particular aspect of the work as standing in special need. All of them need help and need it *now*.

If there is more that you can do for our ingathering, do it *now*. Don't delay. This is said to individuals and congregations. You have responded so well before, do so again. Don't think of it just as "church work." Think of the task before us as "the Lord's work." Think of it in terms of eternal souls for the kingdom. The AFLC may be counting on you, but more importantly, the Lord is depending on you. He has no other hands than yours and mine to do His work.

May you continue to experience the joy of being a partner in the Gospel of Jesus. †

Layman looks at . . .

him, not to be our witness to the community, or to be our "pal" or "buddy," but to be our spiritual shepherd. Let him feed us with the Word, and lead us by his example, so that we go out to be that witness that Jesus has called us to be. The '80s demand a deeper commitment to Christ and a more effective witness than many of us have shown in the '70s.

Let us go into the next decade with confidence and hope. We need to keep our eyes on Jesus, remembering the Word in Romans 8, where Paul reminds us that *nothing* shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. †

Mr. Knutson is a farmer near McVie, N. Dak., and a member of New Luther Valley Lutheran there. He is a former chairman of the Board of World Missions.

LEM Midwinter conference

The 44th annual Midwinter Conference, sponsored by the Lutheran Evangelistic Movement (L.E.M.), will be held January 27-31, at Augustana Lutheran Church, 7th Street and 11th Avenue South, Minneapolis. The theme will be "Into the Harvest."

Pastor Karl Keller, LEM's new director of the work in Canada, will be the evening speaker, beginning Sunday at 7:15 and continuing through Thursday evening.

Day sessions, which begin on Monday, will feature Bible studies entitled "What Time Is It?" by Pastor Maynard Force, former president of California Lutheran Bible School, at 10, and four films on the place of prayer in revival at 11.

The 1:30 afternoon sessions will give a choice: Pastor Keller will have a seminar on Church Growth and Pastor Bob Griffin, LEM's eastern evangelist, will have a session each day on "Teach Us How to Pray."

Youth Days will follow the conference and will be held at Northrop Auditorium on the University of Minnesota campus, Friday evening, February 1, and all day Saturday, February 2. This will also be a reunion for all former Gospel team members. Speaking both evenings will be the Rev. Bill McKee from Overseas Crusades. Bible studies, music and messages will be the features of the day sessions.

The conference and Youth Days are open to the public.

"THE RIVER OF LIFE IS THE NORMAL LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN. To live a barren, fruitless life in the kingdom of God; to have no delight in the service of God; to be so allied with the world as hardly to be known as the children of God—is this the normal life of God's child? Never! It may be the usual but never the normal.

"THIS RIVER OF LIFE IS IN US WHO BELIEVE. No other condition named, none other needed, but this simple one of faith in Him for salvation. The faith which presses on to give the life to Him in dedication; which commits all to His keeping; which draws day by day upon Him for His resurrection life . . . it is this faith *alone*. Let us believe His Word!

"THIS RIVER OF LIFE WILL FILL US AS WE *YIELD*. You do have a will. And you can resist. Therefore you must yield the life to Him, so that He may fill it. As you yield your life by one definite act and then, day by day, learn to live out that act in a life of yieldedness and ministry, God's river of life will surely and steadily manifest itself from your innermost being.

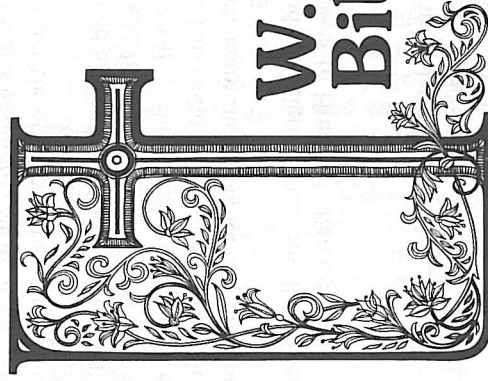
"THIS RIVER OF LIFE WILL *FLOW* FORTH FROM US AS WE *SERVE*. Do not try to shut up the Spirit in a stagnant pool of selfishness. Let Him have His river-way of flow through the outlet of loving practical service to others. Then all your spiritual moods and morbidness will disappear in the daily, joyful consciousness of His steady outflow through the channel of service. Wonderful river of life!"

Dear W.M.F. friend: This is for you and me. Let us earnestly pray, and by the Father's grace, truly believe, completely yield and willingly serve, so that others, too, may see and have that blessed river of life! H. C.

ON PRAYER

Satan does not welcome battle with a praying congregation or a praying church member. But he does challenge battle with a prayerless Church and prayerless Christians, for he knows that in the battle with such forces that are cut off from their power house, the victory must needs swing to his side. Prayer-life is the only oil which will keep the lamp of watchfulness bright and ever burning; it is also the only guarantee for the salvation of mankind.

W. F. Werheim



W.M.F. Bible Study

February, 1980

The Gospel of John

Chapters 7:1-8:11

Last month we studied the Bread of Life chapter. Jesus was in Galilee where He fed the multitude of 5000 with the bread that multiplied right in His hands. Then He taught them that He is the Living Bread from heaven that supplies eternal life and daily soul sustenance to everyone who comes to Him. We saw that we need to *eat* His flesh and *drink* His blood (v. 54) by receiving Him through His "words" (v. 63), and that no one can come to Him "unless it has been granted him from the Father" (v. 65). We need to walk softly before Him and respond with heart and action when He calls or else we will be among those who turn away, as many did (v. 66).

Between chapters 6 and 7 there is an interval of time. John was not led to record the many miracles Jesus did in Galilee as Matthew, Mark and Luke were; he writes more about events in or near Jerusalem. In John 7 we are back in Jerusalem during the Feast of the Tabernacles and right in the middle of Jesus' public ministry.

As a quick review, see John 5:18 and notice the beginning of opposition toward Jesus. In the early part of Jesus' ministry everything was calm. Look back at 2:23; 4:39, 41, 53 and see how the crowds were all for Him and following Him. But after Jesus had done a kind work and healed a man who had been ill for 38 years, the jealousy and hatred the Jews had in their hearts began to show itself and they began to openly persecute Him. We will see how the opposition rises until finally it led to the cross.

Now read carefully chapter 7:1-8:11 and ask, "What does this say and what does it say to me?" Pray for new light and life.

Leviticus 23 tells us about the seven festivals in the Jewish year. The last one is the Feast of Tabernacles (or some translations call it the Feast of Booths). It lasted seven days plus one—seven days of ceremony and elaborate ritual and one final day with less ritual (Leviticus 23:36, 40).

It was at this time when great multitudes of pilgrims were traveling to Jerusalem for this feast that Jesus' brothers came to Him and offered Him advice.

Chapter 7:1-13 BEFORE THE FEAST

1. Why did the brothers want Jesus to go up to Jerusalem? _____
2. What was the real reason for this foolish advice? _____
3. What did Jesus mean by "My time is not yet at hand"? _____
4. What is the reason the world hates Jesus? _____
- (A true Christian should not be surprised if he finds he has enemies. Compare Matthew 10:24, 34-37; 1 John 3:13; Luke 6:26)
5. Did Jesus deceive His brothers when He first said He would not go up to the feast and then later did? _____

Chapter 7:14-24 THE MIDDLE OF THE FEAST

6. What made the Jews marvel? (v. 15) _____
7. What kind of origin does He claim for His teaching? _____
8. What must be true of us if we are to know if teaching is of God or from some other source? (v. 17) Compare Isaiah 53:6; Philippians 2:13; Hebrews 13:20, 21; 1 John 5:2, 3. Here there is room for discussion on how to know the will of God. _____
9. What is the mark of one who is true and has no unrighteousness in him? _____
10. In vs. 21 and 23 Jesus is referring to His work of healing on the Sabbath in 5:2-18. This was the beginning of open opposition to His ministry. What clear advice in 7:24 should have been heeded? _____
11. Why couldn't the Jews seize Jesus at this time? v. 30 _____
- "This is full of comfort for God's people. Nothing can hurt them except and until God permits. We are all immortal till our work is done. To realize this . . . is one grand secret of living a calm, peaceful and contented life." (1)
12. What great Bible truth is taught in v. 34? _____
- Compare Matthew 25:11, 12 and Luke 13:24, 25

Chapter 7:37-44 THE LAST DAY OF THE FEAST

13. Find in vs. 37, 38: (the life that flows from faith in Jesus)

- a. The condition _____
- b. Whom does this include? _____
- c. What is the advice? _____
- d. Invitation to do what? _____
- e. Whom is this for? _____
- f. What is the testimony? _____
- g. Where is the channel? _____
- h. What is the blessing? _____
- (Are you drinking this in for yourself?)
14. What were the results of His teaching? v. 43 _____
- Compare with Luke 12:51; John 9:16; 10:19; 1 Cor. 11:18, 19 (N.A.S.)

Chapter 7:45-53 THE DIVIDED RULERS

15. What do we learn about Nicodemus in v. 51? _____

Chapter 8:1-11 THE DAY AFTER THE FEAST

Many ancient authorities omit this but that this is a true incident need not be questioned. It has much food for thought. The Scribes and Pharisees were very upset at this point (7:43-44). They wanted to put a stop to Jesus' popularity. His message was convicting them and they thought they could trap Him. If He said, "Stone her," He would be in trouble with the Romans because they had taken the privilege of capital punishment away from the Jews. If He forbade stoning, He would be dishonoring the law for Leviticus 20:10 states, "The adulterer shall be stoned." Then He would be in trouble with the Jews! He must choose Caesar or Moses. Both would condemn Him!

16. How did Jesus handle this crisis? _____

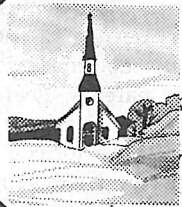
17. What lesson is there here for us? _____

"THE SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE"

Notes from *The Spirit-filled Life* by James H. McConkey. Based on John 7:38-39.

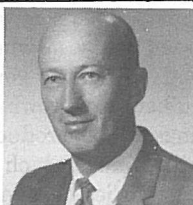
"Have you ever looked up into the Lord's face and cried, O Christ, how cold my heart is! How cold when I study Thy blessed Book with all its wondrous words of life . . . is there anything that will melt this ice-berg heart of mine? . . . And Jesus Christ says, 'There is; I have it' . . . 'Out of your innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.' The Word makes it so plain . . . 'This He spoke of the Spirit whom those who believed in Him were to receive' . . . God is talking of a river of spiritual blessing, of the river of His own life that He means shall flow from the heart and life of every child of His. It is our birthright, and no man can keep us out of it if we fulfill the simple conditions Christ gives.

✝



A Minister's Musings

Pastor Einar Unseth



TRUSTING IN MAN OR GOD?

Jeremiah 17:5-8

"Well, we all have to believe in someone, so we might as well believe in the pope," said a Catholic barber to me last October. It was at the time when the pope was touring our nation. The barber had surprised me by asking, "You didn't go to see the pope, did you?" I replied, "No, that's a long way to go to see a human being." Then I asked this barber if they (the Roman Catholics) believe that the pope is without error. He remarked, "Of course, we all make mistakes." However, having admitted this fact, he added "Well, we all have to believe in someone, so we might as well believe in the pope." After musing a bit, I responded, "I prefer to believe in God and His Word." This resulted in a deathly silence on the part of the barber.

Today man is desperately searching for someone in whom he can believe. A national magazine quoted a lady as having said, "The pope is the only one left whom we can believe in." All of us have an inborn need to find someone in whom we can really have confidence. Having such a person gives us a sense of security. Because of this need, many people are led to believe in a politician, a religious leader, or a philosopher.

The Bible tells us that it makes a big difference whether we believe in man or God. In fact, Jeremiah 17:5 says, "Thus saith the Lord; cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord." To trust in man is wrong because it is to expect from creatures that which can come only from our Creator. Certainly no man has power to save our souls. No human being has sufficient wisdom to guide our lives aright. The opinions of man are an extremely poor substitute for God's Word. He who trusts in man is living

his life under a curse.

Jeremiah pictures this cursed condition in verse 6 where he says that such a person is like a heath (shrub) in the desert. His life is barren and dreary and unproductive. Though he may have many earthly riches, he doesn't enjoy them. He is thirsting for that which really satisfies; but he never finds it because the human being in whom he is trusting always disappoints him. The followers of Jim Jones who died in that gruesome mass suicide in Guyana experienced the curse of trusting in man. Those who place their trust in man are under a curse because their hearts have turned away from God.

How different it is with the person who trusts in God. Jeremiah 17:7-8 tells us, "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river—." Such a person sinks his roots in God from whom he receives a perennial supply of water for sustenance and growth. He does not fear when the heat of trials and affliction come. Nor is he worried in the year of the drought. Even then he continues to be fruitbearing, for his Source of life and strength never fails him. He experiences that to trust in God is to live a life under great blessing. When the young man David went against the giant Goliath in the Name of the Lord of hosts he experienced the great blessing that comes from trusting in God.

Yes, we all have to believe in someone. And it's up to us to choose whether we will trust in man or God. Our choice determines whether we will be like an unproductive shrub in the desert or a fruitful tree by the waters. In this new year of 1980, let us honor God by trusting in Him and in His Son Jesus Christ for all things for both body and soul.

Union Lake WMF honored six ladies

Six women of the Union Lake Lutheran Ladies Aid of Winger, Minn., were presented with Honorary Membership WMF certificates and pins in appreciation for their many years of faithful service in their church. The recognition was given at the regular Aid meeting on Sept. 12.

As they are shown in the picture, the honorees are, first row, left to right, Mmes. Emma Throne, Lydia Lofgren and Elma Barlund, and, top row, Grace Anderson, Otto Burslie and Alvin Gulbranson.

Mrs. Bruce Dalager was the speaker with president Mrs. Randolph Kolden presenting the certificates and pins.

WELCOME TO THE ANNUAL WINTER BIBLE CONFERENCE

February 13-16

The parish of Sunnyside and Hope Congregations extends a warm and cordial invitation to all to the 18th Annual Winter Bible Conference of the AFLC. We are reminded of the words of the Psalmist, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

The sessions will be held at Sunnyside Church, which is north of the Twin Cities area between Highway 65 and Interstate 35. Sunnyside Church is located six miles west of Wyoming, Minn., on Co. Rd. 22 and one mile north on Co. Rd. 85 or ten miles east of Highway 65 on Co. Rd. 22 and 1 mile north on Co. Rd. 85.

We welcome all who can come and let us pray that God will richly bless this Bible Conference.

Sunnyside and Hope Lutheran Churches

Wendell E. Johnson, Pastor

HELPING YOUTH BUILD THEIR LIVES

by Pastor Dale A. Mellgren

In looking forward to the new decade, the role of Christian young people in our AFLC and the world takes on special importance. Within ten years most of our Leaguers will be established in their own homes, careers and a congregation. Part of the privilege of helping youth build their lives on the Solid Rock, Jesus, belongs to the Luther League Federation.

We are concerned for the organized Luther Leagues at the congregational level. Some of our churches do not have a League, as such, and there is either a haphazard youth program or none at all. Therefore, we need to pray that God would raise up concerned adults and youth through whom He can establish "living Leagues" within "free and living congregations." Guidelines to help in this area available from the LLF secretary.

We also are concerned for the spiritual health of the existing Leagues. Should the Lord tarry, the '80s can hold a multitude of blessings for our leaguers, because there are many who are learning humility and obedience at the feet of Jesus. We praise God for our young people who, with open hearts, earnestly desire to live as the servants of Christ. There are influences in the world and in what is sometimes called "Christian" which threaten to destroy this wholesome spirit.

First, a hard look at some present attitudes. There is a frivolous spirit abroad today in what is called Christianity and many youth are affected by it. There is a growing bent toward the things which produce excitement and thrills, things which exalt the dynamic personalities of man, while the principles of God's Word are set aside and a growing irreverence for a holy God and His sacred Word develops. Such a spirit often produces a type of enthusiasm among youth, but it is an enthusiasm which does not have its roots in the Scriptures and is not of the Holy Spirit.

Where there is a casual or careless attitude toward God and the things of God, no matter how great the enthusiasm, we can be sure that the influence is not of God. When Isaiah was ushered into the presence of God, he was so filled with awe at the holiness of God that his own sinfulness was the overpowering impression made upon his heart. It is sad to witness the fact that, at times, Isaiahs' cry of "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips . . ." has turned to "Whoopie, look at me!" The thrusting of "self" to the forefront has given rise to many a "personality-centered" program and emphasis within what is known as Christianity. However, when the Spirit is truly at work within a soul, the effect is a growth in humility and reverence for and devotion to God. It is a tremendous blessing to see these fruits in the lives of many of our youth. Young people, submit to the humbling work of God in you. He will enable you to die to your selfish desires and so live that others will not be drawn to you, as a personality, but Jesus as Lord.

Perhaps the greatest asset or obsta-

"Perhaps the greatest asset or obstacle in the environment of youth is the spiritual atmosphere of their homes."

cle in the environment of youth is the spiritual atmosphere in their homes. Quite simply, what is needed in the home is solid Christian doctrine and example on the part of parents. There is much spiritual confusion and instability today because the lust for comfort and prosperity has crowded or kept Jesus out of many a heart and home. We do not need a "Christianity" that fits the age, but a Christianity that fits the Bible. Youth need to see, in their parents and elders, the Christian solidity and maturity which helps to counteract the growing godlessness of the age. I will repeat what has been previously written about in the *Ambassador*. Families need to study the Bible and the Catechism together. The small Catechism was written to be used in the home. If parents and children will daily give themselves to such a study, revival fires will burn brightly within the AFLC in the '80s.

Perhaps too often, the families who do have devotional times together engage briefly in that which tickles the emotions or eases the conscience rather than establishes the heart. The real surrendered his heart to Jesus will live a life of obedience to the Lord. Self-control is one of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:23). In an age when much attention and glory are given to the one who "does his own thing," God is calling us to do His will. This means that the old Adam within us must die daily and faithful obedience to the will of God as revealed in His Word will characterize the life of the true believer.

Some time ago, a young Christian shared with me an experience she had just gone through. She had dated a fellow for several years and they had become engaged. She was converted and began to share the Gospel with him but he resisted. On the basis of II Cor. 6:14, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers . . .," she had broken the engagement. She still prayed that he might be saved but told me that unless God brought them together, in Christ, she wouldn't continue the relationship.

Young Christian, you need such faithful obedience in life's great decisions and in your daily life if you are to stand and grow in a world of decaying morals and spiritual blindness.



by Mrs. Eugene Enderlein

The Women's Missionary Federation is a vital arm of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations in that it provides an avenue of service to our Lord for the hundreds of women in our congregations. The WMF has potential to be a "great" organization in our Lord's sight if we obey Scriptural principles that God has outlined for His believing servants. I would like to share with you some valuable lessons which I have learned in my own life and compare these to our WMF's future.

Recently I was studying the characteristics of a beautiful little bird, the arctic tern, as I read the rich volume "Character Sketches," composed by the Institute in Basic Youth Conflicts, Inc. I was amazed to learn some outstanding accomplishments of this little

sponsibility of working with youth does not belong primarily to the organized church, but to parents. The parents of our youth will be the first to give an accounting to God of their faithfulness in guiding their children by the Word of God (Deut. 6:6-9). Parents and young people, God wants to make your home a home where He is truly Lord. God calls us all to listen and obey in a world that has no time for Him. God calls us to live in opposition to the Spirit of the age.

Humility before God and unswerving obedience to His will must characterize the youth of our church and our AFLC as a whole. May God help us to pray and seek His grace that this might become more and more the identifying feature of our fellowship. Then God can bless our Leagues and each of us as individuals. It is the surrendered heart which God fills to overflowing. ✚

Pastor Mellgren, Kalispell, Mont., is in his second term as president of the Luther League Federation. He is also in his second parish, his first one being at Abercrombie, N. Dak.

My hopes and dreams

bird and I can see so clearly how they apply to us.

Often we feel so small and insignificant in what we as individual ladies, or as a national WMF, are able to accomplish for the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. I discovered that the arctic tern is a very delicate little bird, in fact, "fragile" is the exact word used in a study of this little creature. Have you ever felt "fragile"? Our WMF is a rather small organism within Christian circles and perhaps we could say its birth and continued existence are "fragile," in that we depend entirely upon God's grace for continuance, not upon worldly publicity, finances or resources. But we, too, can accomplish great feats as we rely upon God's strength!

One of the most impressive facts that I learned about the delicate arctic tern is that it lives in constant sunlight.

My reading revealed to me that this little bird is born just at the time when six months of constant sunlight begins at the Arctic Circle. Its migratory pattern causes it to live in almost constant daylight because it arrives at each of the poles just in time to enjoy their long summer days of 24 hours of sunlight. Of course, this supplies tremendous energy to this little bird in preparation for its long journey ahead.

Dear ladies and friends in the AFLC, my heart felt awed by the spiritual application of this fact. You and I who love the Lord Jesus as our Savior have been translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light and we are invited by our precious Lord to "walk in the light as He is in the light." As we keep our eyes focused upon Jesus, the Light of the World, and allow His light to shine in our hearts, then, we too, can walk in close fellowship with Him. Abiding in His Word, being instant in prayer, and quickly confessing all known sin, will enable us to "walk in sunlight" and grow strong for our journey ahead.

I am sure that if ladies of the WMF

make this their main goal, then we will be a strong WMF. If individuals within our national WMF are spiritually alive, then our organization as a whole will be spiritually vital! In our personal lives we must not allow anything to "crowd out" the sunlight of God's precious Word and close fellowship with Him in prayer. That is why we stress Bible study at our monthly WMF meetings and encourage small committees to solve the details of business matters, so that our meetings can be kept "spiritually alive."

Did you know that the little arctic tern builds a very simple nest? It chooses a simple little hollow in sand or rocks and does not spend excess energies on house-building, but saves its energy for the tremendous journey it was created to accomplish. Ladies, this is a good challenge for us! Let us not waste excess energies or time on our earthly dwellings or tasks, but let's work together to accomplish the spiritual goals for which God called us into being. Our WMF has been faithful in giving generously to AFLC foreign missions, home missions, schools, publications and all endeavors within our church. My hope for us in the days ahead is that we will keep on being faithful. I hope and trust that we will not be sidetracked into busy-ness or a lot of wasted activity, but rather use our energies and monies to advance spiritual endeavors. If I have any fears for the WMF they would arise when I think about "busy-ness" or "useless activity." There is danger in occupation with non-essentials. We women are especially prone to activity, because we really do *enjoy* serving, making crafts, visiting with each other and beautifying our surroundings. But we must be careful to keep these activities in proper balance. Church suppers, sales, improving our surroundings, etc., are enjoyable pursuits, but never, *never* must be our priorities for either time or money. My earnest hope and dream for the WMF is that our priorities will ever be God's Word, prayer

WMF . . .

and ministering to others in the Name of Jesus.

We are entering the new decade of the 1980's. Great challenges lie ahead! We are certainly closer than ever before to the return of our precious Lord Jesus Christ. My heart is stirred as I contemplate the great tasks that lie before us and I become excited with anticipation as I consider the great reward that is soon to come when Jesus comes again for His own. The little arctic tern faces its challenge with courage. Each autumn it leaves its nest at the Arctic Circle and begins its flight to Antarctica, the opposite end of the earth. Then it will return home to its nesting grounds at the Arctic Circle, literally flying around the world. Oh, what a courageous, determined little bird this is! We, too, must be courageous and determined as we enter this new decade. *Courageous* . . . to faithfully proclaim God's Word, to live Christ-like lives and to build solid Christian families as we face a day and age in which these things are "rarities." Hearts are hungrier than every before for love and security and America is desperately in need of stable Christian homes. Let's be courageous! *Determined* . . . to keep our personal lives and our national WMF faithful to God's Word, pure in purpose, and not cluttered with secular trimmings and wastes of time and monies. We, too, have a tremendous "journey" ahead, and that is faithful Christian living in the daily course of life.

I have high hopes for the WMF and our AFLC. As we are faithful to God and depend upon *Him* for strength, He will be faithful in using us in this new decade ahead. Jesus is coming soon!

Let's heed God's warning in Luke 21:34-36 and be careful that our lives do not become "overcharged" with pleasure-seeking or the cares of this life so that the return of Christ catches us unawares. Let's be watchful, prayerful and occupy ourselves wisely until Jesus comes! †

Mrs. Enderlein is the president of the WMF and is the wife of Pastor Eugene Enderlein, Thief River Falls, Minn.

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