



# THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

April 13, 1993



O

Sing

Unto

The

Lord



A  
New  
Song!

# THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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## A Self-Portrait

Romans 7

**N**ow we tackle a somewhat controversial chapter in Romans, "The Christian's struggle with sin." There are three views of chapter seven. The first view is clearly wrong. It could not be a picture of a person before he is converted because it is a self-portrait of Paul himself.

But there are many who describe chapter 7 as a picture of a man who is saved, but who is living a defeated, carnal life, or as they say: "is out of fellowship with God." But if chapter 7 is a self-portrait of Paul, it must be describing very aptly what you and I face in our daily lives as Christians!

Whenever we look inward, we have reason to be discouraged. But thanks be to God, we have chapter 8! Chapter 8 looks at Christ and there is hope. But before we can appreciate that chapter, it is necessary for us to experience chapter 7.

In the sixth chapter of Romans, we faced the question: "If we are saved by God's grace, shall we go on sinning that grace may increase?" Paul answers his own question: "By no means! We died to sin, how can we live in it any longer? You were buried with Christ. You are now dead to sin — objectively (positionally), but alive in the Spirit." But subjectively, it's another matter! Unfortunately as Christians, sin still tempts us. Someone put it this way: "You may have thought you had drowned the 'Old Adam' but you soon learn the rascal can swim!"

Paul likens salvation to marriage. When a woman marries, she closes her book on all the other men she has dated. As far as she is concerned, they are dead. As far as a Christian is concerned, all his past life is dead as well. His loyalty is only to his new life. But as all married men and women know, the wedding ceremony does not necessarily cause former boyfriends or girlfriends to die! So careless, sinful thoughts may bring

## Light on the Way

them back "to life" in their lives again. Sinful actions cause separation. It's true in a marriage. It is also true in salvation.

Now the Law is a "measuring stick" that reveals our sin and drives us either to despair or to Jesus. Not until the Law shows us that we are lost, will the Gospel of Christ's gift of redemption be appealing. And, not until our marriage to the Law is broken by death (as a means of salvation) can we enter that marvelous marriage to Christ, our Bridegroom, through the Gospel of Christ's finished work on the cross of Calvary. That marriage is grace alone.

But it is important to recognize what Paul explains in the verses beginning at verse 15. "I don't understand myself," says Paul, "It is not I, the saved new nature, doing it. Rather it is that old nature within me that still keeps me from becoming as perfect in reality as God has declared me positionally." Paul goes on: "I have to admit there isn't much good in that old nature of mine! So you see how it is: my new life tells me to do right, but the old nature that is still in me, loves to sin. What a terrible predicament I am in!"

So, dear reader, take courage from Paul. He makes it very clear that you are not kept by your good works any more than you are saved by them. You are saved by faith. It is entirely of God's mercy. Your unconverted life was not deserving of salvation. Neither is your life as a Christian! It is by faith in God's mercy.



— by Rev.  
Lloyd Bjornlie

# MUSIC IN OUR DEVOTIONAL LIFE

God's Word is rich with verses that speak of singing. Many verses mention singing a new song to the Lord, singing songs in the night, songs of deliverance and songs of praise. God obviously desires that we sing to Him and about Him. I believe He wants the singing not only in our churches, but in our homes as well; not only in our corporate worship services, but also in our family devotions. How can we accomplish that end?

We can begin by singing songs that fit the occasion and the need. When someone in our family is having a birthday, we always sing the "Happy Birthday" song to them. When someone in our family is experiencing difficulties and pain, why can't we just as naturally sing "What a Friend We Have in Jesus," or "You Are My Hiding Place," or "It Is Well With My Soul"? The singing of hymns and scripture songs should be heard more often in our homes.

When I was a young child, I remember being close to death because of having pneumonia and measles. My parents and my pastor were praying for me. When my condition was at its worst, my mom sat on my bed and sang to me the song, "God Will Take Care of You." There were tears in her eyes and I could see that she was worried about my condition, and yet I also knew she was trusting in God during this difficult time. She was singing her faith, and somehow the words plus the music added a deeper meaning to each phrase. My mom was not a soloist in the choir, but she sang from the heart, and she knew the ministry of music. At that moment it was a beautiful sound to me, and it ministered to both of us. I don't remember much of anything else about my serious illness, but I'll never forget the song that ministered to me in those difficult days.

During this illness, there were scripture verses from Psalm 46 that were read and claimed for me. There were times of prayer. We were having a devotional time together in our home! This family crisis became a teachable moment, a time that drew us all to the Lord and His Word. I'm thankful that my parents set the example for including the singing of hymns within our home.

It's very easy for us to make excuses for missing our devotional time, but it is vital for our spiritual health to have that precious time with the Lord each day, wherever we are. In Acts 16:25, we read that Paul and Silas were praising God far into the night, even when they were in prison. It was a witness to all the prison-

ers around them. They were having their devotions, and their devotions included singing hymns of praise. They weren't in their home, or in a comfortable place of worship, but they spent time with the Lord as they normally would, even when bound in chains.

Begin singing songs to the Lord when you are alone. Many of us spend time alone in the Word and in prayer, but seldom do we sing to the Lord in our own private devotional time. You may feel uncomfortable because you've never done solos before. God is not concerned with the quality of our voices, only the condition of our heart. In Ephesians 5:18b-19 it says: "Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." You may even want to try putting a melody to a favorite scripture verse, and sing that as a part of your devotions. (It's a great way to memorize the Word!— If we are to continue to sing a "new song" in our churches, we need to encourage our people to "sing their devotions." It's from our devotional times that new songs will come.

Our family has a regular devotional time after supper that includes a Bible story, Scripture reading, prayer and singing. Our little 5-year-old usually reminds us if we have forgotten to start the devotions immediately after finishing the meal. She will bring the devotional book to us even when we have guests for supper! As a result, we've included several guests, Christian and non-Christian in our family devotions, and it's given us good opportunities to talk with friends and relatives about Jesus.

Are you having family devotions right now? If not, find a time when your family can come together and worship Him. Try some new things. Take a familiar hymn and read it as a part of your family devotional time. Discuss its

From someone  
who's been  
there

# What is the Spirit of Rock Music?

Imagine there is no heaven, It's easy if you try, No hell below us, Above us only sky, Imagine all the people living for today.<sup>1</sup>

So went the words of Rock superstar John Lennon's smash hit entitled, "Imagine." The Scripture says that one of the signs of the antichrist is blasphemy against God. *"And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, that is, those who dwell in heaven,"* (Revelation 13:6). The antichrist himself isn't here yet, but we are told that the spirit is already in the world, (I John 4:3). Rock music is one area where the spirit of the antichrist is prevalent.

Consider the words of Jesus in John 10:10, *"The thief (Satan) comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy."* Death and killing is a prominent

theme in a lot of rock music. Groups will put out albums and T-shirts with skulls and decaying flesh on them. Young people wear these horrid shirts with the name of their favorite rock group proudly displayed. Some groups will show an executioner wielding a bloody axe with skulls all around, some put out songs of killing and suicide.

Jesus said, *"For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah,"* (Matthew 24:37). When we look in Genesis, Scripture says, *"Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence."* Rock music is one area where violence is prevalent. The Lord makes it crystal clear of His feelings about this, *"The Lord tests the righteous and the wicked, and the one who*

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## DEVOTIONAL LIFE

meaning, and then sing it so that the family will understand it better the next time it's sung in a worship service. You could discuss the meaning of a verse of "A Mighty Fortress is our God," and explain that it is based on Psalm 46. If you have younger children, talk about what the words "fortress" and "bulwark" mean. In your next family devotional time together, do some research and talk about Martin Luther the composer, or study the derivation of another hymn. There are a number of books in print that include wonderful stories about how the composer and/or authors were inspired to write their famous hymns. Kenneth W. Osbeck has written two books entitled, "101 Hymn Stories," and "101 More Hymn Stories," that are excellent for this purpose.

Try memorizing Scripture by including scripture songs in your devotions. Many children's musicals have songs directly from the

Word. If your kids have learned a song at church, continue to use it when it ties in to the theme of your devotions. Sing one scripture song each day for a week until you all have it memorized. Play a tape of a scripture song, and sing along. Be creative!

In the Hymns and Music course at AFLBS this past fall, I was blessed to hear students share with the class what their favorite hymns were. Many explained that their favorite hymn was a song that they sang as they came forward to receive Jesus as personal Savior of their life. Others shared that a hymn became a favorite because it was sung regularly at their family devotions. What a rich heritage we can leave our children if we teach them the Word and teach them to sing their faith, to introduce them to the uplifting and encouraging words of our hymns and scripture songs.

— by Mr. Jerry Nelson  
AFLC Schools Music Instructor

loves violence His soul hates," (Psalm 11:5). Rock legend Jimi Hendrix described rock concerts this way: "Lots of young people now feel that they're not getting a fair deal, so they revert to something loud and harsh, almost verging on violence; if they didn't go to a concert, they might be going to a riot. Music is such an important thing now. If parents really want to love their kids, they should be aware of their music."<sup>2</sup> The spirit of rock music is against the Spirit of Christ.

Consider also the admonition of Scripture in Galatians 5:19-21 where it talks about the war between the flesh and the Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul says, "*Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these.*" This list seems tailor made for rock music. Immorality, impurity, sensuality and carousing speak of sexual sins. Rock music is laced with sexual overtones; in fact, the name Rock and Roll is slang meaning sex or "rocking" in the back seat while the car "rolls" down the road. The volume, beat, lyrics, and other stimulations in rock music are designed to stimulate people sexually.

Idolatry is listed. It is something that you worship as God, something that is the most important thing in your life. For many young people, rock music is an idol that they devote the greatest portion of their time to and for many it's more important to them than the Lord. It should not surprise us to see such idolatry and bondage in the area of music. God created Satan originally as an angel of music. Satan revolted against God and was defeated and was cast out of heaven to the earth and this musical ability was cast out with him. "*Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of the viols (the sound of his stringed instruments),*" (Isaiah 14:11, KJV). Satan was once an angel that covered God's throne with music, and what he once used for God he is now using to receive the worship that he has always wanted.

Sorcery is also listed, and this would be the use of mind altering drugs. One need only attend a rock concert to see how much the drug culture is interwoven into rock music. Also tied in with this is the drunkenness and carousing, which would be drinking parties with sexual overtones.

Also included in this list is enmities, which is hostility between people, strife and outbursts of anger, disputes and dissensions. Many homes become divided between parents and children

**"Lots of young people now feel that they're not getting a fair deal, so they revert to something loud and harsh, almost verging on violence; if they didn't go to a concert, they might be going to a riot. Music is such an important thing now. If parents really want to love their kids, they should be aware of their music."**

**— Jimi Hendrix**

because of rock music. It causes anger, dissension and strife between parents and children.

Lest we think that doing the things listed above are trivial, God says, "those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God," (v. 21). The spirit of rock music is against the Spirit of Christ. Is Satan behind rock music? Rock star David Bowie said, "Rock and Roll too — it will occupy and destroy you that way. It lets in lower elements and shadows that I don't think are necessary. Rock has always been the devil's music. You can't convince me that it isn't."<sup>3</sup>

Instead of imagining if there is a heaven or a hell, God's holy Word tells us clearly that there is an eternal bliss called heaven that waits for every believer in Christ, as well as an eternity in a fiery inferno called hell that waits for every unbeliever. "*And these (the unrighteous) will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life,*" (Matthew 25:46). There is a hell to shun and a heaven to gain. Jesus Christ went to Calvary's cross and died for your sins, shedding His very life's blood so that you might be cleansed and forgiven. Will you come to Him today, confess your sins to Him and accept Him as your Lord and Savior? Instead of following Satan and the desires of the flesh, follow God's Spirit who gives you love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, (Galatians 5:22-23). This is just the opposite of what rock music gives you.

<sup>1</sup> "Imagine" by John Lennon. Lenonn Music BMI, Recorded on Capitol Record

<sup>2</sup> Newsweek, May 26, 1969, pg. 82

<sup>3</sup> Rolling Stone, February 12, 1975, pg. 83

*The author, a senior seminarian at AFLTS, spent several years as a youth, involved with rock music. The Lord mercifully saved him, and today he writes and speaks on the dangers of satanic involvements.*



— by Mr. James Haga  
Minneapolis,  
Minnesota



# Preserving the Past, Providing for the Future

It began without fanfare on June 16, 1988 in DeKalb, Illinois, the AFLC annual conference adopted a resolution saying: "BE IT RESOLVED, that the Co-ordinating Committee consider appointing a hymnal committee, lay people included." Nearly five years later, a 930 page hymnal is in its final stages of being readied for typesetting, design and editing.



Worship and Music Commission members at First Lutheran Church, Camarillo, California display sheets of the new hymnal. Members are Jack Forbes, Lillian Naaktgeboren, Steve Hauptman, Cathi Peterson, Ed Stricker and Pastor Walter Johnson.

A sample copy of the proposed new hymnbook is available for study purpose only. This sample is on a loan basis for a recommended three weeks. Interested congregations are encouraged to share with neighboring churches as only two study samples are available. Write to Rev. Brian Davidson, P. O. Box 762, Rice Lake, WI 54868 for more information.

## California Congregation Presents Challenge for Hymnal Fund

Our Worship and Music Commission in First Lutheran, Camarillo, California, has been excited to think that our AFLC is going to have its own new hymnal. It isn't that we need new hymnals because ours are wearing out. They are in good condition. We need a new hymnal because we want to be a unified part of the AFLC in its worship and music.

We are aware that congregations in the AFLC are using many different hymnals. A common hymnal can bind our congregations together in worship and song. We need a hymnal that we can identify with the AFLC. We need a book that we can say is AFLC music. In other words, "That's us."

We have asked to see what the hymnal will be and in this hymnal are 650 of the best Gospel and Lutheran hymns you will find. There is also a wealth of worship helps.

We need \$75,000 in donations before printing can start — \$45,000 of that by July 1, 1993.

We want to challenge all congregations within the AFLC to do what we have done.

We have asked all of our organizations to reach into their treasuries and donate some of their funds to the hymnal fund. We also invited individuals to join us. We will end up with over \$500 and nobody is hurt and all will benefit.

We are asking all congregations in our AFLC to do something like this. Our Worship and Music Commission even had a craft sale for the hymnal fund.

We believe our churches will rally to the challenge and we will see our hymnal project on target. Why not do it this month?

DeKalb, Illinois — On May 22, Grace Free Lutheran Church will be using their parking lot for a flea market, garage, porch, or "anything you want to get rid of sale." All proceeds will be sent to the AFLC Hymnal Fund.

**The AFLC  
30th Anniversary  
Pictorial Directories  
Are Available  
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The committee appointed to tackle this enormous project included: Rev. Thomas Olson, Cumberland, Wisconsin, chairman; Rev. Brian Davidson, Rice Lake, Wisconsin, editor; Mrs. Ooryn Benrud, Goodhue, Minnesota; Rev. Norman Dornquast, Weslaco, Texas; Mrs. Cynthia Erickson, Fergus Falls, Minnesota; Rev. Donald Greven, Minneapolis; Mrs. Barbara Moland, Kirkland, Washington; and Rev. Rodger Olson, Fergus Falls, Minnesota. Mrs. Marilyn Johnson, North Mankato, Minnesota participated in many of the committee meetings. After hundreds of volunteer hours, the committee selected 650 hymns which reflect a strong Lutheran, pietistic and evangelistic heritage of several ethnic groups. Hymns written throughout the ages are part of the book, including one that was commissioned "The Ambassador Hymnal."

Following are some of the reasons why this committee devoted so much effort to make a seemingly impossible task a reality.

## Preserving Our Heritage

The "Concordia" hymnal which is common in the AFLC has completed its final printing. With its demise, we are losing a rich treasure of orthodox and pietistic Lutheran hymnody. The "Concordia" included many Scandinavian hymns that are excellent and it appears that no other book will seek to preserve them. "The Ambassador Hymnal" will include a new literal translation of "One Resolve" which comes from Norwegian tradition. The book will also include Luther's "Small Catechism," the "Augsburg Confession" and the three creeds.

All poetry is unchanged. The Concordia Worship Service #2 is reprinted without alterations. There are no gender changes, only a few archaic words were revised.

## Uniqueness

The book has several worship services including: a Communion service taking elements from the Augustana Hymnal; a simplified version of the Common Service from the Service Book and Hymnal for the more liturgical congregations; helps for those who design their own service such as confessions of sin and faith and numerous Scripture selections.

"Children of the Heavenly Father" will have one verse in Swedish. Five other hymns will

**"The Ambassador Hymnal will meet a special need within Lutheran congregations in America as we enter the new century."**

have a verse in Finnish, German, Norwegian, Portuguese and Spanish.

"The Ambassador Hymnal" will meet a special need within Lutheran congregations in America as we enter the new century. Other Lutheran hymnbooks do not reflect the worship style nor the hymnody preference of most AFLC people. Other generic hymnals are missing many things that are precious to many of us such as simple Lutheran worship services, hymns for the church year, baptism and communion. Also a few of the hymns are theologically weak and do not communicate our true beliefs.

A free church like the AFLC has the unique need to develop unity and identity. Certainly the Gospel, the Word and Sacraments and good doctrine are our primary unifying characteristics but we would be strengthened if we maintained a degree of common hymnody and worship style practices. Diversity is good but the new hymnal could prevent us from becoming too diverse.

### The Path To Completion

The finished book will be offered in two colors, dark blue and deep red. Congregations can hopefully find one of these colors to be different than their pew Bible so confusion can be eliminated. This new book should also take away any need for more than one hymnbook for congregational use. The size will be smaller than "The Lutheran Book of Worship," and larger than the "Concordia." Before printing, \$75,000 of donations are needed for typesetting, copyrights and other preliminary costs. As soon as the \$75,000 is raised through donations, the book will be available within 12-18 months! At that time an additional \$50,000 will be needed to actually print 10,000 hymnals. This will be raised through pre-sales at a discount price. A project which usually takes hundreds of thousands of dollars and many years in other church groups, will be completed!



— by Rev. Thomas Olson  
Cumberland, Wisconsin



# Teaching Music to Children



**Y**ou want me to lead the singing with the children? You don't know what you're asking? I'm not a music teacher so I don't think I can do the job! Do these comments sound familiar? Oh, there's a few more excuses that could be added such as: "I can't lead any singing without a piano player."

I, myself, have made similar responses to requests to help in church and guess what? I have ended up with a lot of experience singing with children and teaching them new songs! And probably I am the one who has received the greatest blessing!

Children love to sing and it is something they always seem to remember. My own children, for example, love music. They couldn't wait to come home to share with us the new songs they had learned in Sunday School, VBS or Bible Camp. The scriptural truths learned in those songs will stay with children throughout their lives. That is both an exciting thought and one filled with serious responsibility.

Since I am not a music teacher, I have had to find a way to teach myself new songs. Tapes are a wonderful tool to both learn and teach a new song. Some of my favorites have come from "Children's Bible Hour." Tapes with a split track enable you to use the background music alone with the children, especially when there is no one to play the piano. There are so many fine children's tapes on the market.

## Good News From a Distant Land

*Like cold water to a weary soul is good news from a distant land (Proverbs 25:25).*

**I**n February, I had the wonderful opportunity to visit the eastern European nations of Estonia and Latvia. Lutheran Estonian-American Friends (LEAF) invited me to represent them as a guest lecturer at the newly formed Tartu Theological Academy in Tartu, Estonia. LEAF has had an important role in encouragement and support of this new school which has been accredited and



The first students of Tartu Theological Academy writing their final exams.

licensed by the government of Estonia.

With classes held on the campus of Tartu University, I taught a course on the fundamentals of the Christian faith to 35 very eager and alert students.

Their goal is to be certified as Bible teachers in the public schools of Estonia. Recent legislation mandates the teaching of Christianity in every public school. Although the schools must



Of course, you can sing without background music because children simply love to sing. Singing without accompaniment is good for all of us. It is a good opportunity to focus on the words and help the children understand the meaning of the song. You can also sing the song in a lower key which often helps most of us. I have occasionally added a guitar and that is always enjoyed by the children.

With the large volume of music available, selection becomes challenging. It never fails. When I ask a group: "What would you like to sing?" I always get a request for a song we sang last year. Children remember the songs they sing so chose with great care and wisdom! Songs for fun do not always have a worthwhile message. Teach songs that explain biblical truths. I heard recently of a first grader singing a song while putting on her coat and boots to go to school. The words were, "My God is a righteous God; My God is a holy God. My God is a faithful God: He will surely stand by me." Scripture songs are excellent because it is a good way to hide God's Word in our hearts. Often memorizing becomes effortless when you can sing the Bible verses. If you have small children, use action songs, so be creative and try acting some out with simple movements.

Singing songs with children is like planting seeds. Songs can help a child grow in his or her relationship

with Christ and with those around them. I have found that some of my "old favorites" are still the favorites of today's children. Many of these deal with salvation and having a personal relationship with Christ which is what we want the children to learn.

It is a privilege, it's fun and it's challenging to work with children. They are great blessings! Children can tell if you enjoy working with them and will respond accordingly. We need to have a genuine love for children and a love for singing and learning new songs. Also it helps to be open to what the children like to sing. If you do not know a song, then have one of them teach it to you and the class. It is amazing what you can learn about them when they are the teacher.

Some of my most rewarding experiences in life have been when working with children! If you are asked to lead the children's music, say "yes." And may the "Joy of the Lord, Be Your Strength."

— by Mrs. Linda Mohagen  
Towner, North Dakota

*The author lives on a ranch with her husband, Pastor Henry, and two children. She is a rural mail carrier, a speaker and ventriloquist, and a busy pastor's wife at Hope Free Lutheran Church in Rugby and a member of the AFLC Board of Parish Education.*



Rev. Eenok Haamer leading the dedication service of Tartu Theological Academy on February 6, 1993.

offer this training, attendance is optional for the students.

Rev. Eenok Haamer, a Lutheran pastor, is the rector of the new school. As an evangelical minister, his influence has extended to the top echelons of the government. He is often called upon for counsel by government lead-

ers. He feels an urgency in equipping the students for Bible teaching. The political situation in the Baltic states, as well as in next door neighbor Russia, remains very unstable.

The first students came from all parts of Estonia. Most of them were in their late 20s or 30s. It was obvious that they had come to the academy at great personal sacrifice involving the need to be away from jobs and families. I was happy to bring along a gift from our AFLC congregation at West Lisbon, Illinois which had been designated for student support. That amount was used to pay for the board and room expenses for the students during the two weeks as well as rental of a swimming pool and a gymnasium for recreational activities.

The daily schedule of the academy began at 8:45 a.m. with devotions. On most days, there were eight or nine hours of classes. Besides my course,

the students were studying church history, Old Testament and Hebrew, as well as hearing lectures on the Estonian culture. Concluding the day with an evening devotional service, the students returned to their dormitories at about 8 p.m. for study and rest. I was thankful for a very able and conscientious interpreter who diligently read over my lecture notes prior to my daily four hours of classes to be able to interpret as accurately as possible.

It was refreshing and encouraging to observe the evident commitment to the study of God's Word on the part of the students. In conversation with many of them over the two-week period, I was impressed with their thoughtful and earnest questions and the concern to discover the answers in the Scriptures. These students will return to Tartu for two-week sessions five times annually until their certification standard is achieved.

## GOOD NEWS

From Estonia I traveled by train to Riga, Latvia where an interview had been arranged with the bishop of the Evangelical German Lutheran Church of Russia. This devout 83-year-old pastor heads a church group of 500 congregations which are mainly scattered across Russia and the former Soviet states. Because of the inability to provide formal theological training under the former oppressive communist system, there is a dire need to train the approximately 250 lay leaders of these congregations. A new seminary will begin this summer near Riga to seek to meet this need. Groups of 15-20 men at a time will be brought in for three-week periods in which they will be given concentrated instruction in doctrinal and practical theology. Because of the far flung locations of this fellowship of churches, there is tremendous potential for reaching a large geographical area with the Gospel of Christ.

Another exciting project in connection with the bishop's ministry involves the desire to begin a Christian orphanage on a farm site some 50 miles from Riga. Located in an area containing some of the most fertile land in Latvia, this farm was given to the bishop in loving appreciation for his kindness to the family of a wealthy farmer who had been sent to a Russian prison camp and never heard from again. This would be the first Christian orphanage in Latvia. The existing orphanages are operated by the state and are sorely lacking in ability to provide for the greatest needs of the children.

The plan is to have a division for mentally handicapped orphans as well as for those of normal intelligence.

As I visited this long neglected farm with the bishop and listened to him as he described his vision for the orphanage, I almost began to hear the echo of happy children's voices as they might run toward the little creek that winds through the farm.

There is much work to be done to make the farm productive once again and to renovate the buildings as well as



The first students and staff of Tartu Theological Academy, Estonia.



**"What a wonderful new day of freedom to proclaim the Gospel of Christ in eastern Europe!"**

to build additional ones but, Lord willing, it can be accomplished.

Eastern Europe Missions Network under the leadership of Rev. Don Richman, an AFLC pastor, is cooperating with this Russian Lutheran Church group and its courageous and consecrated bishop in an effort to facilitate the provision of both personnel and funds for the seminary and the orphanage project.

What a wonderful new day of free-

dom to proclaim the Gospel of Christ in eastern Europe! How long this freedom will last is a serious concern. It is urgent that we support the dear brothers and sisters in Christ in these nations in our prayers as they seek to spread the Gospel throughout their beloved nations while the door of freedom is still open!

— by Dr. Francis Monseth  
Dean of The Association  
Free Lutheran Seminary

b. 1 Thessalonians 5:18

c. Colossians 2:7 and 4:2

d. Philippians 4:6

12. Who are we specifically instructed to be thankful for in the following verses? 1 Timothy 2:1, 2 and Thessalonians 5:12

13. What can every believer thank God for? 1 Corinthians 15:57

14. There will be thanksgiving in heaven. Note the scenes in Revelation 4:9-11 and Revelation 11:15-17. Determine to make praise and thanksgiving a more consistent part of your own prayer life for "He is worthy."

Compose your own prayer of thanksgiving and praise from Scripture.

"Come, Thou Fount of every blessing  
Tune my heart to sing Thy grace;  
Streams of mercy never ceasing,  
Call for songs of loudest praise."

—Robert Robinson

## Lord, Teach Us To Pray

Prayer:

## Giving Thanks and Praise



Key Verses:

"To Thee I shall offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and call upon the name of the LORD," (Psalm 116:17).

"In everything give thanks for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus," (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

Thanksgiving is defined as an expression of gratitude; a recognition of divine mercies or favor. Our Old Testament verse above described it as offering a sacrifice. This language is also used in Scripture to describe our praise.

Psalms 107:22 says: "Let them also offer sacrifices of thanksgiving, and tell of His works with joyful singing."

Psalms 141:2 says: "May my prayer be counted as incense before Thee; the lifting up of my hands as the evening offering."

David's testimony is, "I will praise the name of God with song, and shall magnify Him with thanksgiving. And it will please the LORD better than an ox or a young bull with horns and hoofs" (Psalm 69:30, 31).

The first mention of thanksgiving in the Bible is found in Leviticus 7:12. This verse is describing the procedure for a peace/thanksgiving offering in the tabernacle worship system. This offering was given perhaps in response to a recovery from illness, a safe journey or redemption out of captivity.

1. What had David also instituted as a practice in the worship of his day? Read Nehemiah 12:46.

2. This assignment came on the day of the celebration of the return of the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem after its excursion into the hands of their enemies, the Philistines (1 Chronicles 16:1, 7). Read the psalm of thanksgiving found in 1 Chronicles 16:8-36.

3. How often was thanksgiving and praise a part of the temple service under the direction of the Levites? 1 Chronicles 23:30

4. Our Catechism, in the explanation of the Second Commandment, tells us that the proper use of God's name is to "worship Him with prayer, praise and thanksgiving."

a. How does Psalm 92:1-4 also reflect this truth?

b. How does Psalm 34:3 define praise?

5. There are many reasons why we should thank and praise the LORD. Look up Psalm 136:1 for just two of them.

"For

"For

6. What did Daniel thank God for in Daniel 2:23?

We praise God for who He is and thank Him for what He has done. Many times praise — adoration of God's character and worthiness — is a missing element in our prayer life. Reading in the Psalms will help us with polishing this facet of the prayer jewel. (See especially Psalms 95-100, 103-108, 113-118, 145-150.)

7. What does Psalm 103:2 tell us not to forget?

8. Who is the singer of one of the New Testament songs of praise? Luke 1:46-55

9. What does Jesus point out about thankfulness in Luke 17:17, 18?

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Walvoord and Zuck) makes these comments on prayer and thankfulness. "Prayer is not a spiritual luxury, it is essential for growth ... Being thankful should always accompany prayer for it places a believer in the proper attitude before God. (cf. Romans 1:21) An attitude of gratitude contributes to an enjoyment of spiritual tranquility, whereas grumbling makes for inner agitation." pp. 682, 684

10. Thanksgiving is a common theme of Paul's writings to the early church. Read Colossians 3:15-17. In what ways are we to let our thankfulness show?

11. Read more of Paul's instructions on thanksgiving in the following passages and share any personal observations you wish with the group.

## A Book Review

# The Christian Music Battle

*The Battle For Christian Music*, by Tim Fisher, Sacred Music Services, Greenville, SC 29606.

If you are looking for a well balanced approach to Christian music, this is the book! The title is appropriate because we are in a battle when it comes to what is in the church.

Tim Fisher measures Christian music by the Word of God, maintaining there is hardly such a thing as neutrality in music. He emphasizes that music in the church is for worship and not for entertainment. The audience is God and we are to please God in the use of music.

He explains that when God saves us through Jesus Christ, God gives us a new song. The following passages mention this gift of song: Psalm 33:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1; Isaiah 42:10; Revelation 5:9; and 14:3. There should be no mixture of worldly elements and the spiritual. "... how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, where unto ye desire again to be in bondage," (Galatians 4:8, 9).

"If any style of music ... creates feelings, ideas, emotions, values, or moods that are of, by or for the unchanged way of life, such music is out of place in the changed life experience." Amen!

"Christian music is that music which in text, music, performers, and performances practices are conforming to the image of Christ ... Christian music should reflect Christ ... Perhaps a better term is godly music."

"We fall into the entertainment trap when we make our decisions based on a songs popularity rather than its content. Both pastors and congregations need to actively fight for doctrinal purity in text, in preaching and in music. We will never be doing the right work for the Lord until we are singing the Word."

In chapter 8 the author talks about

worship where there is an increasing numbness to spiritual things. I feel he is right when he asks, "Why blame music?" He attributes deadness to a lack of devotional life among the Christians. "What we are experiencing in our churches is more of a result of what is going on (or failing to go on) before the service begins." He adds: "Why blame music when the real problem is us!"

He talks about the performers mentioning the content of the performance. The content is to honor the Lord. "When we are moved by the voice of the words sung, I confess to have sinned."

"Churches need to make investments in their music programs; investments in time for diligent preparation; investments of people who will work with the program at all levels; investments in patience in training younger ..."

We are interested here in music as it relates to our children and youth. Fisher challenges those who think that the only way to reach teens is through music. He maintains that one of the greatest offenses of the church is to submit to the pressure of young people who do not know the principles or the issues. We should be exposing youth to "greatness in music, moreover, we

## YOUTH

need to tell them the differences between the good and the bad, between the worthy and the unworthy."

Personally, I agree with much in this book. In our singing we should do what pleases God. He is our audience in worship. We need to give our youth what is good for them, not necessarily what they want!

I believe that our youth like to sing the Scripture-based songs. They also like to sing the great hymns of the church. It ought not to be our music which gives life to our worship. It ought to be the lifting up of Jesus Christ in every part of the worship experience.

Fisher makes a stand against using music as evangelism. Even Michael W. Smith does not claim to be an evangelist. Trying to revive the church and reach people for Christ, young or older, by the use of music is wrong, I feel. It is Jesus who draws people unto Himself. If something or someone else does this, then it is not right.

— by Rev. Dennis Gray  
AFLC Youth Resources Director

## Lutheran Presidents Reaffirm Pro-life Stance, Condemn Florida Murder

The presidents of three conservative Lutheran bodies have issued a joint statement reaffirming their support for the pro-life movement while condemning the recent murder of abortionist Dr. David Gunn in Pensacola, Florida.

"Murder is clearly not a pro-life activity," wrote the presidents. "The tragic crime of one individual with a history of mental problems should not detract from 20 years of sincere and peaceful efforts by the vast majority of the pro-life movement."

The joint statement was issued by Dr. Duane Lindberg, Presiding Pastor of the American Association Lutheran Churches, Pastor Robert Lee, President of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, and Pastor Robert Overgaard, President of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren.

"One murder is one too many," they continued, "but we are proud of the patient and non-violent work of the many thousands of pro-life volunteers. Tens of thousands of them have responded with love and humility to extreme verbal and physical abuse at the hands of pro-abortionists and even police."

"We reaffirm that the way to solve this tragedy of abortion in America is not with violence, but rather by changing the hearts of the American people. We call on all Christians to support compassionate, non-violent Christian groups and ministries that are endeavoring to protect the sanctity of human life and are providing positive support and ministry to men and women who are experiencing crisis pregnancies or otherwise need Christian care and comfort and the forgiving love of Christ."



## PEOPLE and PLACES

### Centerville, South Dakota —

Immanuel Free Lutheran Church will celebrate its centennial on May 1-2. Rev. Robert Lee, AFLC president, will be the guest speaker for the Sunday morning worship service.

### Valley City, North Dakota —

Grace Free Lutheran Church hosted special services on March 21-24 with AFLC President Robert Lee, a former pastor of the congregation. A district pastors' fellowship was also included in the schedule on March 23.

### Upsala, Minnesota —

180 people attended the annual Valentine Banquet hosted by Word of Life Free Lutheran Church. Rev. John Rieth, Amery, Wisconsin, sang and spoke. The congregation also was a part of the LEM Conference in the area during March 28-31, with Rev. Michael Brandt, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, as guest evangelist.

### Arlington, Washington —

Atone-ment Free Lutheran Church hosted special meetings on March 14-17, with AFLC evangelist John Abel. During the preceeding weekend, Pastor and Mrs. Abel conducted an Evangelism Training Seminar. Interest in follow-up bible studies and church attendance is continuing to grow. Evangelism teams are now regularly doing visitation and the congregation is rejoicing in what the Lord is doing in their community.

**Rev. Gary M. Skramstad**, Osakis, Minnesota, has resigned as the pastor of Elim Lutheran Church, an independent congregation, where he has served for the past three years.

**Pukwana, South Dakota** — On February 28-March 3, Rev. Michael Brandt, Sioux Falls, spoke at Pukwana Lutheran Church for their special meetings. On Sunday afternoon, parish Luther Leaguers met with Pastor Brandt for Bible study and pizza. The St. Olaf Sunday School, rural Pukwana, is sponsoring a seven-year-old boy from the Philippines with monthly support through Compassion International of Colorado Springs, Colorado.

## Association Retreat Center Family Bible Camps, July 4-10, 1993 Second camp week, August 1-7

Note on the Women's Retreat at the ARC May 1-2.

The Banquet time is changed to 5:30 p.m.

Ladies, bring treats to share on Friday night.



**Cokato, Minnesota** — On June 16, 1992, a tornado destroyed the 100-year-old building of Good Shepherd Free Lutheran Church. Currently they are meeting at city hall, and after many delays, construction of a new church home began in December on their new seven-acre site about a half-mile south of the city limits. They hope to be using the new facilities by the beginning of May.

## Partners In Prayer



"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God" (Philippians 4:6).

**Praise God** for the first commitments received for *Partners In Planting*, a Home Mission new program to aid a congregation in calling its first pastor.

**Pray** for the new school year starting at the Bible School in Comp Mourao. **Praise God** for the approximately 50 young people who accepted Christ at Bible camp recently.

**Pray** for the upcoming informational meetings in Houston and San Antonio, Texas.

**Pray** for Canton, South Dakota and Warroad, Minnesota, two Home Mission congregations calling a pastor, and all other congregations who are without a pastor and are seeking God's will in calling a new shepherd.

**Pray** for the continued health and safety of our missionaries and national workers.

**Pray** for the complete deliverance and Christian commitment of the Lozana family and for the salvation of Ramon, the husband of one of the ladies in the church at Aguas-

calientes, Mexico.

**Pray** for Rev. Thomas Olson and Rev. Brian Davidson as they negotiate for copyrights of songs to be used in the new hymnal.

**Praise God** for the well attended AFLBS Campus Days on March 12-14. **Pray** that young people throughout the nation will desire the Lord's best and seek His will for their lives.

**Pray** for the AFLC Boards and Committees as they make decisions in preparation for the annual conference in DeKalb, June 16-20.

**Pray** for AFLC President Robert Lee and all the staff and faculty serving at the headquarters and schools.

**Praise God** for life changing evangelistic meetings and seminars for numerous individuals in the Lake Stevens and Arlington, Washington area early in March. **Pray** for the congregations and pastors as they continue to follow-up with contacts and Bible studies.

**Pray** for the evangelistic ministry of Pastor John Abel.

## THE NEW HYMNAL

The end of the long process of preparation for a new AFLC hymnal seems to be in sight, according to recent committee reports, and it is possible to see them placed in the pews within the next couple of years. A complete listing of hymns has been approved, subject to copyright permission, and most of the material is ready for the typesetters. Two Wisconsin pastors, Tom Olson and Brian Davidson, have shouldered the bulk of the burden for this time consuming project, and our fellowship is greatly indebted to them and the rest of the committee for their leadership and service.

Yet obstacles still remain. Only a minimal monetary commitment has been necessary so far, and, since the conference last summer supported the committee's stand against financing the new hymnal with borrowed money, there needs to be an outpouring of generous gifts in the next few months if the project is to proceed on schedule.

Several suggestions have come from the committee to present the \$75,000 goal in a positive way that will encourage individual and group participation. For example, if 200 WMF organizations or other ladies' circles would contribute \$375, the entire amount would be raised. Or, to approach it in a different manner, many people might find it possible to donate \$80 to cover the cost of one page. Several memorial gifts have also been given, as some see in the new hymnal project a good opportunity to remember departed loved ones.

It will be good for the AFLC to have a common hymnal. The nature of our fellowship, of course, means that there will always be some congregations who decide that another hymnal best suits their needs ... or even no hymnal at all. But my travels during the past months have reinforced the conviction that the attempts to utilize two or three hymnals during a service is cumbersome for the faithful and downright discouraging for visitors. (Do we really expect people to turn from a hymn in the red book to an altar service in the blue book and then to a Scripture reading in their Bibles before returning to the blue book service ... and all of this while standing? Some of us are not co-ordinated enough for this sort of Free Lutheran worship!)

Let's stand together and dig a little deeper so that the dream of a new AFLC hymnal might become a reality. Past generations have provided us with a rich heritage that must be united with present songs of worship and praise, to be preserved for generations to come.

## MUSICAL PULPITS

The title of this editorial, which sounds like a possible name for a pastors' choir, has nothing to do with the theme of this issue at all. On the contrary, it comes from the title of a recent book about unhar-

nious relationships between pastors and their congregations, that often result in forced exits.

Surveys reported from various denominations are nothing less than shocking, with 78% of the congregations in one large church body having at least one forced termination of a pastor. A study of three denominations revealed that 34-45% of the churches where dismissals happened harbored conflicts among members before the pastor began his ministry, and 23% had forced out previous pastors. Congregational stress was singled out as a major factor in almost half of the conflicts, with struggles over values or beliefs (liberal versus conservative, charismatic versus non-charismatic, etc.) in second place, and poor leadership/authoritarian leadership tied for third. Another survey points to such causes for conflict as rigidity (pastor's inability or unwillingness to change), tenure, contentious members, loss of respect or trust, incompetence, etc. In other words, a pastor can be fired for just about anything.

The AFLC is not immune to the hire-and-fire mentality that motivates many congregations today. Scripture certainly suggests valid reasons why a pastor's ministry might be terminated, but all too often such action is taken without any sense of scriptural support at all. Pastors and their families are wounded, and congregations miss the chance for special blessing that comes through prayerful efforts to solve the conflicts that can arise. Stubborn and self-righteous shepherds are shipwrecked in their calling to ministry and stalled in their personal spiritual development because of their blindness to servant leadership.

There is no one solution that fits all situations, and these words are not intended to be a condemnation of any specific case that might currently involve an AFLC congregation or pastor. But a few admonitions do apply to any and all troubled parishes: (1) Be fervent in prayer. (2) Search the Scriptures, especially concerning the call and qualifications of a pastor. (3) Do a careful study of the doctrine of the divine call, and refresh your memories on the promises that were made before the Lord by both pastor and congregation during the installation service. (4) Seek a mediator from outside the congregation if the conflict seems to be escalating. (5) Love one another, and learn to forgive.

God still specializes in the impossible, and wants to turn our harsh games of musical pulpits into harmonious service. His word to the churches still stands: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock ..." (Revelation 3:20). Isn't it time to turn from our failures to find any lasting solutions to church conflicts, and invite Him to come in?

## Getting in Tune

**A** little oboe goes a long ways," noted our high school band director. He gave this reminder at those times, which were rather frequent, when the oboe section was out of tune. An oboe is not a loud instrument, and we only had two of them in the entire band. I would wonder occasionally, why they even tried to be heard in the midst of the many, much more powerful instruments. To our director, though, an out of tune oboe came through loud and clear. The expression on his face and the tone in his voice left no question that, to him, the disharmony was a very annoying sound.

Many times our lives are out of tune with God's Word. It seems like just a little thing that no one can notice. We figure we are not too far out of tune. It ought to be close enough. God has a perfect ear, however, He knows when we are not hitting the right note. It may seem close to us, but to the holy God it is a long ways from perfect harmony. He calls it sin and He can't stand it!

In Luke 18 Jesus has a conversation with a ruler who thought he was in tune with God. He asks Jesus in verse 18 what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus responds by listing the commandments. The ruler confidently replies that he has kept them since he was a boy. He is thinking, "This is easier than I expected." But then, Jesus shines the light on the area in the ruler's life that wasn't in harmony with God's perfect will. He called on the man to sell everything he had and give to the poor and come, follow Him. The man went away sad. He was unwilling to be a member of Christ's band, sitting under God's direction.

What is the area in your life that is out of tune? Maybe like the ruler it is a love for material possessions. It could be something else. Each human being is out of harmony with God in some way. Romans 3:23 says, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." We all hit the wrong notes. To us it may not sound bad. To God's per-

fect ear, however, it is a dreadful sound. He says that someone who is not in harmony with Him can't be in His band.

The disciples were amazed in Luke 18 when Jesus made clear that the ruler was hitting the wrong notes. Even if his playing wasn't always perfect, the disciples thought this man ought to be welcomed into the group. They wondered, "If he isn't good enough, how can anyone get in?"

In Luke 18:27, Jesus responds to their amazement by declaring, "What is impossible with men is possible with God." It is impossible for us to hit the right notes, but God can bring us into tune. The more we try to live the right way without God's help, the more we try to make ourselves good enough to be saved, the more we produce a sound that is wretched in God's ears. He calls on us to come to Him and admit that we are out of tune, it is our fault and it is impossible for us to get it right on our own.

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**"Our song is acceptable  
because it is no longer our  
song but Christ's."**

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When we give up foolishly thinking our own song sounds beautiful and ask Jesus to get us in tune, then He can bring us into harmony with God. Romans 5:1 says, "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Because of what Jesus has done in paying the penalty for our sins by His death on the cross, we can, by faith, be declared righteous in God's sight. Our song is acceptable because it is no longer our song but Christ's. "I no longer live." Galatians 2:20 says, "but Christ lives in me."

By nature, all of us are little, out of tune oboes that produce ugly sounds. When we admit that and come to Christ in repentance and faith, He changes us. He transforms us into one who is making beautiful music. Be sure that, through Christ, you are in harmony with God today. The beauty of the sound will amaze you.



— by Rev.  
Craig Johnson