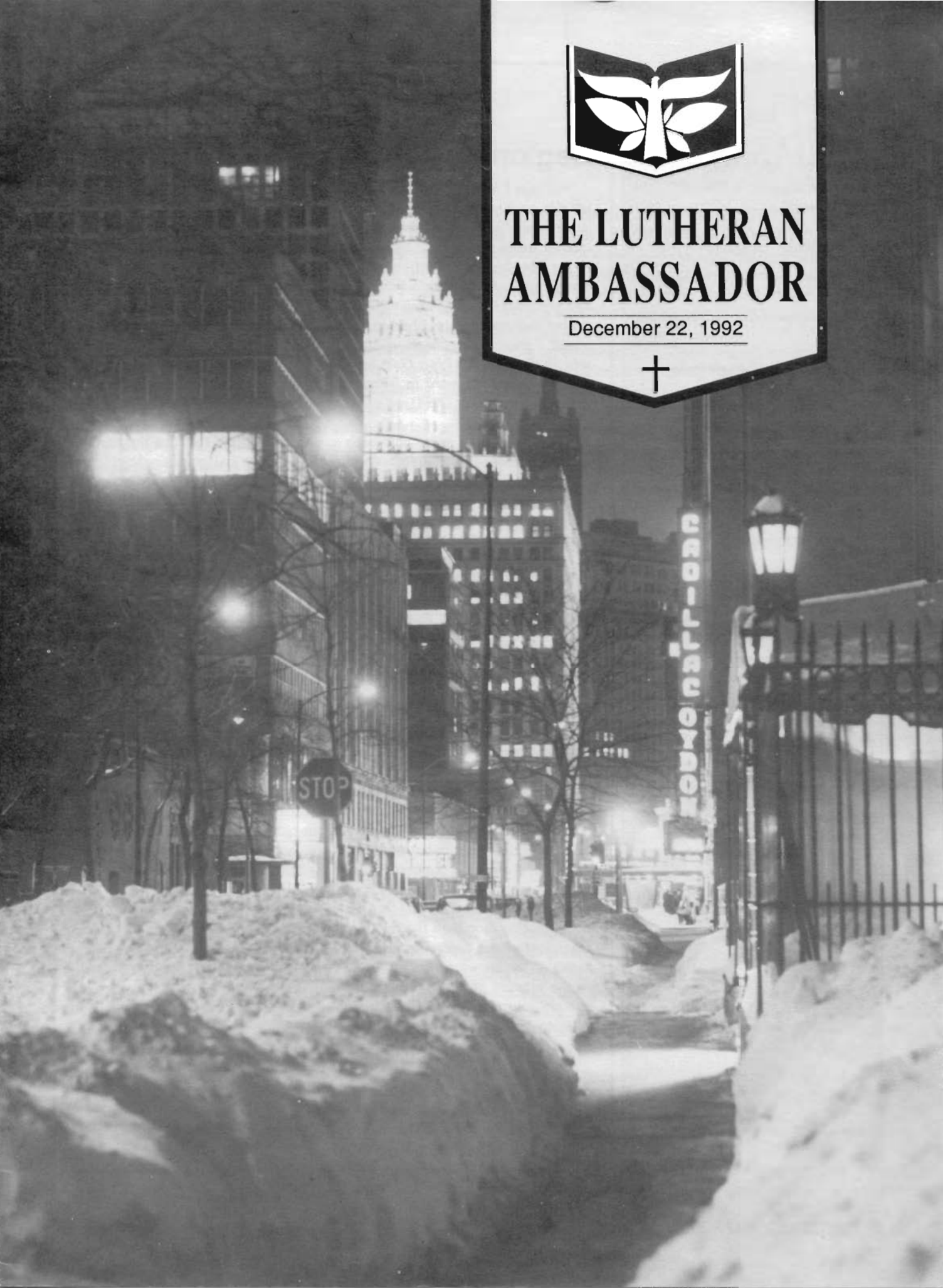




THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

December 22, 1992



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CONTENTS

Hope For 1993	p. 3
I Have A Dream	p. 4
Anna, The Daughter Of Phanuel	p. 6
The Life Of A Poor Child In Brazil	p. 10
Heaven	p. 16

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Beginnings

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brethren, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it, but one thing I do forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize of which God has called me heaven ward in Christ, Jesus (Philippians 3:12-14).

It is the custom of some with each passing year to take inventory of their lives. As we change our calendars, it is good to take time to review, reflect and plan for the future. This planning often takes the form of a list of resolutions or goals for the future.

The Apostle Paul reflected on his life as recorded for us in his letter to the Philippians. As he looked back, he was painfully aware of failures. He also realized that he was still growing and learning more about his God and Savior.

As did Paul, we also make these same discoveries from time to time. As Christians, we too are in the process of "becoming." Theologically it is called sanctification. Paul once called himself the greatest of sinners and an honest look at ourselves causes a realization of similar imperfection. There never is a point in life when we can truthfully say: "Now I have arrived." Sooner or later we come face to face with the fact that regardless of our successes, achievements or honors we will never arrive at the plateau of perfection in our earthly journey. In the Christian's journey of faith, we need to only come to the crossroad where we

pause to take inventory and check our "map."

Many of us have seen young people graduate from school and feel they have arrived and possess the ticket to success. Some wake up disillusioned with life because they have been duped with this success oriented thinking.

In the Christian life there is never a place for complacency. Paul came to grips with the fact that he must "press on" in life. As Christians we must accept the fact that our earthly destinations and goals are temporary and our victories tend to fade into the distance. We can never become self-satisfied in our journey. We have been created in such a way that we must grow. It is healthy both physically and spiritually to struggle with things in life. Out of the struggle comes growth. We need these times to remain vital, healthy and alive.

This struggle is part of living. Paul understood this, too. So then, in light of these verses which give us a glimpse of Paul's struggle, let us approach 1993 as a new beginning. While taking inventory, resolve to live one day at a time seeing each day as a challenge to grow closer to Christ. Then as Paul did, press on toward the goal to win the heavenly prize for which God has called you and me in Jesus Christ.



— by Rev.
Larry Severson

HOPE FOR 1993

LAMENTATIONS 3:19-27

Once again we are setting foot into a new year. We know that a new year has in store many unknown experiences. We have desires and aspirations together with fears and questions concerning the months ahead. It is interesting to look back at the year past and take account of what has happened. That period of time known as 1992 is gone forever. We have only the memories. There were problems and failures, as well as successes and pleasant experiences. There were things left undone, as well as things that shouldn't have been done. But now in a new year it is our privilege to start anew.

The trend of the age seems to be downward and demoralizing. It appears to be gaining speed as we consider such things as inflation, crime, morals, breakdown of family values, unrest among nations, natural calamities, etc. It is sometimes a dismal and bleak outlook. For many in the world today hope is fading. Jeremiah must have felt much of the same heaviness of spirit. In verse 19 and 20 of our text he says, "Remember my affliction and my wandering, the worm wood and bitterness. Surely my soul remembers and is bowed down within me." Was the weeping prophet a chronic complainer? I don't think so. I believe he was simply overwhelmed with both the political and spiritual condition of the people to whom God had sent him to preach.

He had witnessed years of religious apostasy and political weakness. Idolatry, immoral living and disappearance of social virtues were part of the appalling sinfulness which Jeremiah knew God would have to judge. It is very possible that he felt his time of preaching had been wasted; that it wasn't any use to continue to speak and stand for what was right. His ministry had not gone as he had hoped or planned it would when God called him. Yet, in spite of the disappointments he says, "But this I call to mind and therefore I have hope."

Perhaps there are some of us today, as God's people, who feel as Jeremiah felt. Perhaps there are those who feel "What's the use? We don't seem to be making much headway in winning a lost world to Christ, our influence on society seems so small and

insignificant as compared to the blatant openness of sin and its effect on the world today. Is there any hope at all for us in 1993?"

Note how Jeremiah's focus changed in verse 21. It turns from looking and dwelling on the negative to looking to the Lord. His hope was in an unchanging God. The writer of Hebrews states that fact so well in chapter 13, verse 8 where he says: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever." Because He is unchanging Jeremiah knew that he could rely, first of all, on God's love. That love is steadfast. It's strong and sure. That love for us was the very reason He gave His Son. Jeremiah says, "It never ceases." Like himself, God's love never ends. It's never cut off or withheld. Jesus said, "Greater love hath no man than this."

Second, Jeremiah speaks of the mercy or compassions of God. That mercy is God's willingness to strive with man, day after day and year after year. In Ephesians 2:4, Paul speaks of God as being rich in mercy, a richness and fullness that makes His mercies new every morning. They are not simply old mercies oft repeated.

Third, the prophet focuses on God's faithfulness. He was confident that his God would return a remnant just as He had promised. It is apparent that Jeremiah had a relationship with God. There had been and there continued to be, a living relationship with the God of love, mercy and faithfulness. His hope rested in his God. He was patient to wait upon God for his salvation, knowing His goodness not only in his waiting, but also in his seeking God and bearing the yoke of that relationship.

As we proceed into a new year there are many unknowns, even as there were for Jeremiah, although they may be very different. The one thing that is not different is our God. He is the same. He is our only real need. There isn't anything that might happen in 1993 that is too much for our God. He is able to do far more than we ask or think. We need only to make Him our hope, focus our eyes on Him, accept His forgiveness, make Him our portion and wait on Him with patience. May His faithfulness be great unto us as we willingly bear His yoke in the year ahead. Amen.

"His hope was in an unchanging God."



— Rev. Elden Nelson
Home Missions
Director

I HAVE A DREAM

As I scanned the agenda of our day-long board meeting, item "J" caught my attention. Along with the day's priorities, 20 minutes had been set aside as "Time to Dream." Our agenda planner had scheduled some time to let God speak to us about what He would have us to be. I'm no longer on that board, but I have often thought of how that agenda item guided us to increase our vision for that ministry. God's people should be looking forward to what His future plans are for us.

Often, however, our committees and board meetings are consumed primarily with reacting to past and present concerns, leaving little time to "dream" about the future. While there is superficial security in such an agenda, this approach will limit the group's creativity and discourage the freshness of new ideas. Take a few minutes to reflect on the last committee meeting, council meeting or congregational meeting that you attended and ask yourself if it generated much excitement for the future. Was

anyone moved to stand up and say, "I have a dream ...?" If someone had done so, what would the group's reaction have been? Would there be apathy, hostility or affirmation? Are "dreamers" taken seriously in your group?

As we approach 1993, and the years beyond, let us take some time to envision what our ministries might become. Allow me to "dream" with you and seek to understand the process.

Dreaming In The Context Of The Past

A right understanding of the past helps to put our dreams in perspective. I have seen many times where a new committee member shares a dream only to have it harpooned by the establishment because it was out of the context of the group's history. In such a situation, both sides could and should be more sensitive. The new member could try to better understand the group and its history and the existing members could be less rigid and entrenched in their mind-set. The new and the established could work together to shape the dream and jointly own it. If the past can be seen as a stepping stone rather than a millstone to sink any new idea, then all believers can plan together in the framework of the past.

Any discussion of the past must deal with the phenomenon of nostalgia, a "homesickness" for the way things used to be. Nostalgia is a distortion of the past which draws us backward rather than leading us forward. The presence of nostalgia may be signalled by comments like: "I wish we were back ... I remember when ... Back in the good old days ..." While the concern about the drift from our moorings might be legitimate, it becomes constructive only when we move from mourning about what we have lost to envisioning what we again by God's grace might become.

A constructive view of the past will put the dreams of God's people in perspective.

Dreaming In The Context Of Prayer

Prayer is a two-way communication with God. We speak to Him and He speaks to us. Oftentimes His voice comes to His people through His inspired Word. He also directs our thoughts as we pray, bringing to mind intercessory needs and Kingdom concerns. One of the



ways God may increase our vision as we pray is illustrated in Luther's explanation of the Third Petition, "Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Luther asks: "How is this done?" He answers: "When God destroys and brings to naught every evil counsel and purpose of the devil, the world, and our own flesh ..." On a personal and societal level, that spawns numerous prayer goals as God leads us to envision what we individually and collectively need to see happen.

The practical expression of this truth in our "time to dream" may be the simple prayer: "God what do you want our church to be?" Do we dare pray that and expect God to guide us? Allow time for prayer in the process.

Dreaming In The Context Of Partnership

We need to be free to share our dreams with one another. Creating a climate of acceptance and affirmation in our meetings will encourage such a free expression. Schedule the next meeting so that time is available to stimulate one another to the good work of envisioning what your church is called to be. You may need to

plan a special meeting or a retreat to make time, but it will be time well spent.

As you take time to dream together, practice the basic rules of brainstorming. Acknowledge every idea. No rebuttal is allowed at this point and encourage everyone to contribute. You may have to muzzle the "nay-sayers" for a time until they get used to the procedure! Seriously, just encourage the biblical principle of building up one another.

Provide a piece of paper for each one with this prompter on top: "Five years from now, I hope and pray that our church will be..." As each thought is shared, record it on a board or transparency and then give opportunity for building upon one another's dream. Allow the group to prioritize and then come to "own" their corporate dream.

Translating the dream into reality is another essential step in the process. We will not elaborate on that in this article. As we begin 1993, may we challenge one another to take time in our groups to dream so that the "I have a dream" might become "We have a dream ..." Together may we become all that God has called us to be.



*Rev. Kenneth Moland
Kirkland, Washington
AFLC Vice President*

New Lessons On Old Paths

It is a good thing to return to places that were once familiar. To remember forgotten things.

I had the privilege of growing up next to a river. Our neighbor's sons and I spent many hours there. We hunted, trapped and skated in the fall and winter. We walked its banks during the spring run off, watching the ice floes go by. Summer evenings were used up in the swimming hole by the bridge. Dad often observed that a mess of fish would go goof for supper. That was my signal to be off to the "fishing places" while he took an after dinner nap. Usually I was successful. Mom cleaned the fish while Dad and I went back to the day's work on the farm. There is nothing quite like a supper of fresh fish from a cold river, new potatoes, fresh vegetables and greens from the garden along with plenty of cold milk, fresh bread and home made butter!

My wife and I recently spent a day

on that same stretch of river. We picnicked with our son and daughter-in-law. We even caught some fish. The same rocks are there that I had stood on when I was a youth. The fish were still biting in the same "fishing places." The fall drumming of the ruffled grouse echoed through the woods. The water still gurgled as it went over the rocks at the rapids. Frogs still hopped out of the way. Some of the trees were gone that I knew as a youth, others grew in their stead. One birch remained. I was amazed at its girth, but then, if it had eyes, it would have been amazed at mine as well! Both of us are older.

I thought of Jeremiah 6:16a: "Stand ye in the old ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." The way of the cross of Christ is a path tried and true.

The Old Testament saints walked it in expectation of the promised Messiah's coming. David confessed, "Good

and upright is the Lord; therefore he instructs sinners in the way. He leads the humble to justice, and he teaches the humble His way. All the paths of the Lord are loving kindness and truth to those who keep his covenant and his testimonies," (Psalm 25:8-10).

In this day of grace we have the same call and privilege. Prior to His death on the cross for the sins of men, Jesus told them of the many dwelling places in the Father's house. Thomas inquired about the way to this place. Jesus answered, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through me," (John 14:6 NASB). That path never changes. Christ is the only way. Through living faith in Him, by His grace we can be obedient to follow the command of Isaiah 30:21b, "This is the way, walk ye in it," May David's prayer be our prayer. "Teach me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path, because of my enemies," (Psalm 27:11).

—by Rev. Henry Johansen
Willmar, Minnesota

ANNA

The Daughter Of Phanuel

**"Yes, Lord, I
have seen Him,
the promised One!"**

**A Sketch Based On
Luke 2:36-38**

—by Hildegard J. Schwarz

Deep in thought, Anna sat at the window of the temple veranda. How long had she lived in the temple courtyard? "It has been so long," she sighed, "that I have stopped counting. The city of Jerusalem lies at my feet. Oh, Jerusalem! To you shall come the Prince of Peace. In you, salvation shall be proclaimed. You, holy city, shall become the habitation of our Lord and our God!"

Anna rubbed her eyes. "Hurry!" she said to herself. "Hurry, for the Lord is coming. He is coming **now**! There's no more time to be lost!"

Anna looked at the bundle at her feet: her sleeping mat, a covering, a few clothes, a dish for her food and a basin. She had only these few essentials for her daily needs, all clean and packed neatly together. She began trembling with excitement.

Many people already had begun to gather in the courtyard. They had come here as pilgrims for the festivities at this timely morning hour. Anna searched the crowd with eager eyes. There were business people, but also many housewives. Here were many young people with little children; there was a group of young men headed for one of the other verandas. They were disciples and scholars of the high priest, eagerly discussing their lessons. "And they call this the school of the prophets," Anna smiled.

Anna had searched for the truth in the ancient writings and the Scriptures. She looked toward heaven and awaited whatever the Lord spoke to her in her heart. "O Lord, my God, how have I deserved it that You come to speak with me?"

Many years ago no one had noticed her. She was so young back then when she came to Jerusalem with her father. The tribe of Asher lived in the northern provinces which included Galilee. This was a border region, not many of whose people ever came to Jerusalem. It was as though these border peoples had accepted the strange religions of the foreigners across the border. But Anna's father, Phanuel, served the one and only God, the Almighty, the Creator of heaven and the earth, the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.

Things hadn't always gone smoothly in marriage or in business. His wife was sickly; most of their children had died young. Then one day someone had stopped by, a pilgrim who invited Phanuel to come along to Jerusalem with him — or so her father had said. There in the temple of the living God, Phanuel was to pray to the Creator God whom the forefathers had trusted. Surely He would hear!

So, all together, they set out for Jerusalem. There they separated. Phanuel's way led toward the temple. He did not see his friend again.

While in Jerusalem, Phanuel often thought of his wife and how she must be faring back home. Would the child she now was expecting be a healthy child and stay alive? Would it be the son he had waited for so long? he was not a little astounded when he heard his own voice speaking to God: "O Lord my God, this child shall belong to You. If this child lives and my wife is healthy and gives me sons, I will bring this child back here to Your temple so that it may serve You as soon as it has grown up!"

When Phanuel came home, he found his wife well and without any difficulties. Anna was born thereafter, coming into the world a healthy, strong child. Things went better in business, too. God had heard Phanuel's prayer and Phanuel trusted Him and served Him.

In the intervening years Anna learned all her mother had to teach her. She was not quite 16 when her father got ready for another journey. "This time Anna comes with me," he explained. All wondered: "Why Anna instead of one of your sons?"

Lost in thought, the father looked up: "I now have to fulfill the promise I made in the temple in Jerusalem. Anna will serve the Lord in the temple just as I promised."

When they entered Jerusalem and Phanuel told the priests why they had come, they laughed. "Yes," they said, "if she had come from the tribe of Levi this might be arranged. But a priestess or a servant to priests from the tribe of Asher? That's too funny for words! Go home girl and help your mother with the laundry and the cooking. You'll be better off there!"

But the father had made a promise. Here in the temple she was to serve and Anna must obey. Every evening they had to make her leave the temple courtyard; every morning when the huge gates were opened she was already there. One day she was hauled before the high priest and ordered to give up her plan to serve in the temple.

The temple guard who had accompanied her to the high priest said to her: "You have to obey or worse will happen to you. They consider you an irritation. Yet I can see that you are sincere and loyal. I am a servant from the tribe of Levi. I like you. Will you marry me?"

And thus Anna had become the temple guard's wife, living with him seven years until he suddenly died.

The voice of the Lord became more and more pronounced to Anna. "But I am no Samuel, Lord," she had said. "Is this reality and not just my imagination that I actually hear the voice of the Highest, the almighty God and His angels? Ok, if only I had a sign so that I might not doubt. I long for a sign that will make clear to me that this is the voice of our God and no one else!"

The voice she had earlier perceived now resounded: "Why do you doubt? Have I not said that I am He, the everlasting God? May I not choose among My creatures when I look at them? Did I not also choose Hannah, mother of Samuel? Or an Esther who would rescue My people? Do you, Anna, daughter of Phanuel, think that I did not

know when your father prayed in the temple that you were a girl and no Samuel? Do you think any of this has been concealed from Me? Am I not the all knowing Creator of all things, and all powerful? Repent, for you have doubted Me, the Holy One of Israel. And do penance for the sins of my people, for among them and in this city shall the salvation of the people become reality. For behold, the One long promised is coming!"

And so Anna continued her daily trip to the temple to pray. The people she met there were soon asking: "Anna, Anna, pray for me!"

The news got around quickly: "Anna has made the Lord's will known to me. Anna is a prophetess! ... When Anna prays for you, miracles happen!"

Out of gratitude people began bringing food and clothing to Anna. "You've done so much for us," they said, "let us help you as much as we are able." From then on Anna remained continually in the temple, no longer leaving it at night. "Let me remain in the house of my Lord our God to serve Him as He has commanded!"

But not so with Anna, she marveled and prayed that she might come to understand this sign, learning whether or not all this talk was true. One day a maid came from the court of the high priest.

"Anna," she said, "my master did not send me, but my mistress Elizabeth is expecting a child even though she is already well on in years. She doesn't know what to make of it, and she has asked me to have you pray that all may go well and that our God has His hand upon her!"

Anna laid her hands upon the little girl's head. "Don't be alarmed," she said. "The Lord does have His hands upon your mistress. She was singled out especially for this purpose, because the child she will bear will be a sign for the people of God. Worry no more. Keep your eyes open so that you will perceive the voice of the Lord in all these happenings!"

Now Anna knew with certainty that the time was near. He, the Savior, was coming. Every day she kept watch and searched the faces of the people who came to the temple.

Now Anna knew with certainty that the time was near.

And so the father's promise was fulfilled. Anna served day and night. Whenever people had no particular cause to bring to her, she knelt or stood with her hands raised to heaven in repentance for the sins of the people: "Forgive them, Lord, and wipe out their guilt so that the way may be prepared for Thy Redeemer!"

Years later Anna heard of the fate of the elderly Zacharias, priest in the temple. "An angel came to him, and his wife is going to have a child!" The people laughed. "But she's almost as old as he is!" "That old priest wouldn't believe it, so he was struck dumb — he can't talk any more. That's how something comes true in history, all right!"

For many years now the aged Simeon also had been living in the temple. Many years ago he, too, had been pursued by an inner voice. This voice had answered his longing for truth and the recognition of the promised one. "Look," it had said, "your eyes will behold the salvation of Israel, and you will not leave this earth without seeing this promise fulfilled. For you have believed, and it shall be as you have believed."

Soon Anna and Simeon met, entrusting to one another what the Lord had made known to them. Yet Anna remained outside in the court while Simeon gained admission even
(continued next page)

ANNA

into the inner temple precincts. Yet she soon noticed that Simeon, too, was becoming impatient with time.

When people came to her for advice, she told them now: "Repent, and sin no more, because the promised one of Israel is at hand." She sent a boy down into the city to fetch her a bundle of clean clothing. She wanted to be prepared when He, the Lord, made His grand entry!

Then one morning it seemed that the mood was especially expectant. There was something in the atmosphere. Out of the corner of one eye she had noticed something. A young couple was out there who appeared not to be local people but someone from the country, maybe from another province. The wife was still painfully young, reminding Anna of how young she had been when she had accompanied her father here. She was almost still a child! She was carrying a child in her arms, a child possibly a week old. She was probably going to bring this little boy into the temple for a blessing!

As she surveyed the crowd for a moment, Anna saw that the young man was holding a small cage with two young turtledoves. Anna nodded. Yes, these were intended for the thank offering! She began following the young family at a distance.

She had almost reached the gate to the inner court when she saw Simeon. The old man had turned his face toward heaven; it was shining as though lighted by a special star. His right hand was out stretched as his left had rested upon the child's little head while the young parents stood by, speechless. Suddenly, Anna understood: "Simeon has seen Him, the promised one!"

She drew near enough to hear him saying: "Mine eyes have seen Thy salvation! Now I may depart in peace!"

Anna gazed and gazed, first into the illuminated face of her old friend, then to the young couple and their infant. Now she saw what Simeon

had seen. The glory of the Lord shone around the child, and she knew:

"This child is He who is the Holy One of Israel, the holy God, the redeemer of the people. He will free the nation, and Jerusalem in His city! He is my Lord and I am His servant! Lord God almighty, Creator, God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, unto Thee be honor and praise and thanks from eternity unto eternity!"

The young woman thanked Anna with tears in her eyes. The father of the child shyly looked aside. With a sigh the young mother pressed the child closer to her, and Anna remembered what Simeon had told her: "But you, O mother of sorrows, a sword will run through your soul." Now Anna, too, saw something which brought tears to her eyes.

Instead of the golden crown upon the head of a proud young man who would enter Jerusalem as victor within its walls, she saw a face full of suffering with a crown of thorns pressed deeply into the forehead! She saw arms, held out as though in love, but nailed fast to a cross with great nails. And she heard words which resounded not as a victor's acclaim but as outcries of hate: "Crucify! Crucify!"

"This is indeed the Redeemer of Israel! said the voice of the Lord's angel, a voice she now knew so well and which had never lied. "This is He who will redeem humankind, redeem them from their sins. For it is sin which has held them in bondage."

And Anna, daughter of Phanuel from the tribe of Asher in the land of Galilee, turned around, crept back to her corner of the veranda, fell down and wept for the Child, the Redeemer of the world.

"Yes, Lord, I have seen Him, the promised one!" she cried. "For that I give Thee thanks, for unto Thee must go the honor into all eternity! Amen."

—from "Kirchliches Monatsblatt"

July-August, 1977

translated by

Pastor Edward A. Johnson
DuBois, Indiana

Pastorally

Last winter I had a very unusual visitor in my home. The visitor arrived about 5 p.m., January 10. He stopped at Hope Lutheran Church and knocked on the door of my pastor's study in the church. I had not expected a visitor, but said, "come in."

When no one entered, I went to the door and opened it and there he was — a man in his mid-twenties, with shoulder-length hair, a long beard, stocking cap, huge boots, wearing a dirty looking snowmobile suit, and bearskin gloves to his elbows. He looked to me like someone who perhaps had been in the woods too long. He said he needed to ask a favor of a place to stay for the night. I thought to myself, I'm not sure I'm ready to invite him to my house for the night."

I invited him into my study and asked him about himself. He told me how he had come from France and had been bicycling for the last two years around most of North and South America. He had covered 36,000 miles from New York to New Orleans, to the southern tip of South America, to Alaska, and now was biking back to New York (planning to make it by the end of February). He told of how he spent the last night outside in Baudette because no one invited him into their home.

"He looked to me like someone who perhaps had been in the woods too long."

Still not sure if I should believe him, I called my wife, Jean, and asked if it was alright if someone came over for supper and spent the night. It was, and I invited him over. After seeing his bike and hearing more of his travels, I felt I must believe him, bizarre as this all seemed.

Speaking

He came with me to the basketball game that night. Several people noticed him, a few talked with him. Back at my home after the game we sat up and talked. He told us of his travels and of the wide variety of responses he'd received from people he met. We talked of many other things as well.

In the morning after breakfast, he got on his bicycle and rode away. It wasn't until then that it hit me — what a truly unusual visitor this was! I felt somewhat stunned by the whole event.

As I thought about it that day, something else struck me. There was another truly unusual visitor — the Son of God visited this earth. A divine being was born in a manger. He grew up to be a man who did truly amazing things. He healed people! He calmed storms with just His word! He taught thousands of people at once! He died, and then three days later he rose from the dead! He ascended back into heaven. Jesus Christ truly was a most unusual visitor to this earth!

I had a hard time believing my visitor from France at first, but as I examined the evidence, I saw that it must be true. The evidence was strong. He dressed like he must have come from Alaska. He bike was well packed and equipped. He knew his geography and could speak several languages. He wrote his name, Philippe Masseus, and his home address and phone number (from France) in our guest book.

Perhaps some of you have a hard time really believing the story concerning Jesus. Before you reject it, have you examined the evidence? The Bible contains eye witness accounts with vivid details of His visit. Have you read them? Have you considered the truly amazing things spoken concerning Him in the four Gospels?

You can accept or reject my story concerning Philippe, the bicyclist from

The Catalytic Confrontations of The New Testament

Perhaps the single most instructive verse on worship in the new Testament is Matthew 28:17: "When they saw Him, they worshiped Him." Genuine worship was their unrehearsed response to seeing Jesus.

Matthew records many examples of responses people had "when they saw Jesus." Here are a few:

7:28 — Crowds amazed by His teaching.

8:27 — Disciples amazed by His power on the sea.

9:8 — Citizens filled with awe and praised God because the authority Jesus displayed.

9:33 — Citizens amazed by His teaching.

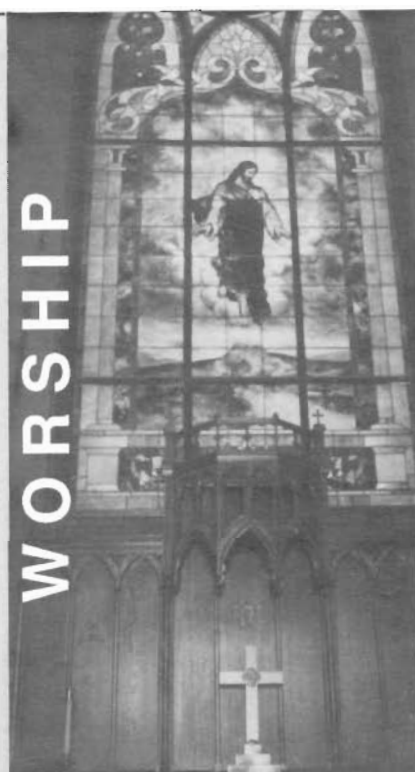
14:33 — Disciples worshiped when He quieted the sea.

22:33 — Crowds astonished by His teaching.

These passages illustrate something that is basic to genuine worship: their worship was a response to something they had seen.

The previously atheistic, agnostic, rebellious individuals who come to mind when we read Philippians 2:10-11 will suddenly not have a problem worshipping! Why? Because they are going to have a confrontation with the Son of God in all His glory. Worship will be their "natural" response.

Because of historical, traditional or even personal expectations, we may make the mistake of aiming for



a response of worship when, in fact, we have not taken the time to see Jesus.

I lead singing when our congregation is worshipping. Now I need to be worshipping at that time — not just singing. I need to take the time to "see Jesus" before I start, because if my singing and playing are not a response to what I have seen of Him, they do not constitute worship.

"When they saw Him, they worshiped Him." This is the factual description — past, present and future — of what happens, and the order in which it happens, when people see Jesus Christ.

We will worship when we see Him!

— Sharon Torgerson
Mojave, California

France. There are no consequences either way. But if you reject the word concerning Jesus, and it is true, you

have your soul to lose! Philippe was a fascinating visitor to meet, but Jesus is too important a visitor to miss. Your eternal address depends on your response to him!

**"Philippe was a fascinating visitor to meet,
but Jesus is too important a visitor to miss."**

— by Pastor Lloyd Quanbeck
Northome/Mizpah Lutheran Parish
This article was taken from The
Northome Record, Jan. 20, 1991.

The Life of a Poor Child in Brazil

I have cried until the tears no longer come; my heart is broken, my spirit poured out, as I see what has happened to my people; little children and tiny babies are fainting and dying in the streets.



Rachael was two days old when she arrived at the Home.

"Mamma, Mamma, we want food," they cry, and then collapse upon their mothers' shrunken breasts. Their lives ebb away like those wounded in battle. (Lamentations 2:11-12, Living Bible).

In our country (Brazil) we live in much the same situation as seen in the above text. We have at least seven million abandoned children and adolescents that ramble around on the streets and parks in our cities looking for livelihood. We have 35 million children and adolescents that live in absolute poverty.

What is the future of these children?

Health: In Brazil about 400,000 children 0-5 years old die yearly of sicknesses that could have been controlled by existing vaccinations. Of every thousand children that are born, 84 die at birth. One in four children suffer from malnutrition. Every minute

there are eight abortions, about four million a year.

Education: We have 30 million people who cannot read or write, six million of these are school aged children (7-14 years). One of every two children remain semi-illiterate. Of every 100 children, only 13 complete eighth grade. The reason for this is because there is a lack of schools as well as ill prepared teachers. Besides this, the children are forced into the work world prematurely.

Work: The Brazilian child must work very early in life. This hampers their cultural involvement. Three in ten adolescents from ages 10-17 years of age work, that totals 7.6 million little ones are working today, which contributes to ten percent of the working force of Brazil.

Violence and extermination: Violence practiced against children and adolescents has grown astronomically. There are, on the average, three violent assassinations daily in Brazil. Many of



Chester Dyrud with three year old Wagner at the Miriam Infant Home.

Court Dismisses India Mission Claims Against AFLC

A federal judge in St. Paul recently dismissed a trade name infringement claim against the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations (AFLC) by the Rev. Bhushana Rao Dasari, Plymouth, Minnesota, allegedly acting on behalf of the Bible Faith Lutheran Church of India (BFLC).

U.S. District Judge Richard H. Kyle granted on October 30 the AFLC's motion to dismiss plaintiff's claim for trade name infringement and declared that a counter claim could proceed to trial. About eight other claims brought by Dasari in his own name or in the name of the Indian church were previously dismissed.

The court ruled that Rev. Dasari does not have the right to use the

name Bible Faith Lutheran Church of India, and cannot make a claim on behalf of the church since he is not the legitimate leader. Judge Kyle determined that amendments to the BFLC's bylaws in 1989 effectively removed Dasari as the director. "The group that presently identifies itself as 'BFLC affiliated to AFLC' holds the right to use the name 'BFLC,'" Judge Kyle stated. The leaders of the affiliated group include the president, V. Benerji Raju, and D. Satyanandam, Dasari's brother.

The decision confirms the AFLC's position that Dasari's autocratic control over the Indian church before 1989 was illegal. Furthermore, the court's opinion states, "Whatever the cause of the conflict between Dasari and the (BFLC's) Executive Council, the Council legitimately restructured the Society to conform with (Indian law) and to effectively remove Dasari from

these deaths are practiced by specially trained groups to exterminate the children.

(The above information was translated from a tract printed by "The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Confession in Brazil").

The non-Christian thinks abandoned children are a hopeless problem. Many politicians in the third world countries think abandoned children would be better off if they were eliminated or in other words exterminated. Our neighbor in Campo Mourao got mad at me two years ago when I asked him if we could buy more land from him to build a children's home. He said: "Pastor, you didn't create the problem of abandoned children, nor did I, therefore, it's not our business to take care of them." By the way, he died three weeks later of a heart attack.

The Scriptures teach quite differently about our responsibility to take care of the abandoned children. "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after



Iglesia Evangelica Luterana Getsemani is building a new church. This congregation in Celaya, Mexico, is pastored by Milton Flores.

orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world," (James 1:27 NIV).

I thank the Lord that our AFLC, in the States and Brazil, is practicing what the Bible teaches and is reaching out to the abandoned children in Brazil.

The Miriam Infant Home in Campo Mourao will be dedicated January 15-17, 1993, at our AFLC Annual Conference. The church in Brazil and the missionaries extend an invitation to you to come and participate in this joyous occasion.

—Missionary Connely J. Dyrud

his position of absolute authority."

Judge Kyle said that the AFLC is entitled to tell donors that it is affiliated with the Moriah Children's Home in Guntur, India, because "the group desiring affiliation represents the legitimate authority of BFLC."

The AFLC's counter claim alleges that the BFLC, acting through Dasari, fraudulently misrepresented its organizational structure by concealing the bylaws granting absolute power to Dasari. The counter claim further alleges that Dasari impeded the AFLC's investigation of the facts regarding the establishment of the BFLC.

Rev. Eugene W. Enderlein, AFLC World Missions Director, reacted to the court's decision by declaring, "We are grateful that the court has validated the Mission Committee's decision to accept reaffiliation with the BFLC in 1989. He continued: "We obtained legal counsel from an Indian advocate, as well as from our attorneys in Min-

nesota, and the court relied upon the same advice that we received."

AFLC World Missions has sent \$450 monthly to India since January, 1989, for the support of gospel workers. Regarding future support, Rev. Enderlein commented, "We plan to begin sponsoring the ministry of an ordained Indian pastor, in addition to the lay gospel workers."

Mary M.L. O'Brien, the AFLC's chief defense counsel, stated, "We firmly believe that Judge Kyle's ruling will be sustained if appealed, since it is based upon established Indian law." Morley Friedman, who represents the AFLC regarding counter claim, said, "We are pleased that the judge allowed the AFLC to pursue the counter claim. We will again attempt to resolve it through negotiations."

The BFLC and Dasari have filed actions in India seeking determination whether he remains the legitimate director. The AFLC is not a party to

these proceedings. The right to possession of the Moriah Children's Home and other church properties may be determined by these actions.

The recent decision by Judge Kyle was the culmination of a lawsuit filed in 1990 and amended in 1991 by the BFLC under Dasari's direction, which sought to enjoin the AFLC from sending money to India in the name of the BFLC, and seeking damages for international interference with business relationships, interference with prospective advantage, misrepresentation, and defamation.

Dasari has been supported by the Bible Faith Lutheran Ministries to India, Inc., a Minnesota corporation that he formed in 1986 after severing relations with the AFLC.

(Copies of Judge Kyle's 28-page decision are available from the AFLC Mission Office.)

Inter-Term 1993

Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary

COURSE OFFERINGS

History and Aims of the AFLC

January 4-8

Consideration is given to the history of the AFLC, its unique position in American Lutheranism, and its vital mission in these days of apostasy and unbelief. Special attention is given to the "Fundamental Principles" in its discussion of the nature of the local congregation.

Robert Lee, Instructor

Youth Ministry

January 11-15

Attention is given to the foundation and development of a Word-centered youth program in and through the local congregation. Resources for youth ministry will also be surveyed.

Dennis Gray, Instructor

Seminar in Church History

January 4-29

This course will essentially be a brief overview of our heritage as Lutheran pietists. It will trace Pietism from its post-Reformation roots in Europe to its later planting in this country. Characteristics and criticism of the movement will also be discussed.

Craig Jennings, Instructor

Thesis Preparation

January 4-29

Consideration is directed toward the planning, preparation and writing a thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for completing the Master of Divinity program at AFLTS.

Ralph Tjelta, Instructor

Expenses

Registration Fee:	\$15
Tuition Fee:	\$35 per credit hour (\$100 for 3 credits)
Auditing Fee:	\$25 per credit hour

AFLTS Inter-Term Registration

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Home Church _____

Please Check:

- ☐ History and Aims of the AFLC (1 credit)
- ☐ Youth Ministry (1 credit)
- ☐ Seminar in Church History (1 credit)
- ☐ Thesis Preparation (1 credit)

Mail Registration to: Office of the Dean, AFLTS
3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard
Minneapolis, MN 55441

AFLBS Campus Schedule

January 4.....	Students Return
January 31	
February 3.....	Missions Conference
February 25-28	Quarter Break
March 12-14.....	Campus Days
March 27	
April 12	Easter and Choir Tours
May 21, 8 p.m.	Spring Concert
May 22, 1 p.m.	Commencement

AFLC Annual Mission Conference Announced

The Bible School and Seminary of the Association Free Lutheran Congregations will hold their Annual Mission Conference starting on Sunday, January 31st, and concluding on Wednesday evening, February 3rd. The guest speaker will be Rev. David Abel, missionary to Brazil who is home on furlough. The theme for the Conference is "Ready, Willing and Able." All sessions will be held on the Schools' campus at 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, Minnesota. The evening services start at 7:30. For more information call (612) 545-5631.

letter to the editor

To the Editor:

I am writing this letter in response to the Letter to the Editor written by retired public school teacher Carol Mears in the October 27 issue of *The Lutheran Ambassador*. Her letter was a reaction to an earlier issue regarding education options for Christians.

Having been a public school teacher for the past 25 years, I was very much heartened by Mrs. Mear's letter defending public schools. I enthusiastically agree with her remarks and am thankful for them.

I have been a member of an AFLC congregation since 1983. Since that time I have sensed an unjustifiably negative (I might even say hostile) attitude toward public schools from some AFLC people.



The Parish Education Department's new mail room in the Administration Building has provided the badly needed space. However, due to its expansion, a computer and a large counter top for filling orders are needed. Also pray for Katha Tjelta, Director, and the two curriculum teams working on new kindergarten and first grade material.

The 30th Anniversary Book, "Growth and New Challenges," is available.

Order today!

Anniversary Book
3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.
Minneapolis, MN 55441
For only \$18!

To be sure, Christians have every right to enroll their children in alternative education programs, such as Christian schools and home-schooling. Even though it may seem desirable to receive Christian education in the shelter of one's home or in the company of other Christians in a Christian school setting, aren't we as Christians expected to interact with, witness to, and serve as examples to all?

I am proud to be a member of an AFLC congregation, and I am also proud to be a Christian school teacher in a public school. All educational instructions — public and parochial — need prayers and support.

Gary J. Schultz
Canton, South Dakota

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 generous gifts from individuals and congregations to AFLC ministries!

Praise God for the two Home Mission congregations completing their building projects: a new addition to the church in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and a parsonage at Pine City, Minnesota.

Pray for our AFLC chaplains. The Tim Skramstad family is facing a move to Fort Sam Houston in Texas, and the Mark Antal family returned to the U.S. from Belgium this month, and he will begin parish ministry in Leeds, North Dakota, in January. Mike Crowell is spending Christmas with his family at Fort Hood, Texas, after a rewarding time of ministry with the troops in Kuwait.

Pray for Home Mission congregations seeking a pastor: Canton, South Dakota; Spokane, Washington; and Warroad, Minnesota. Continue to **pray** for the new congregations in Monroe, Washington; Tucson, Arizona; Cambridge, Minnesota; and Topeka,

Kansas, as they organize and develop their ministries.

Pray for Pastor Robert Lee as he travels to Brazil to attend the annual conference of our sister church on January 15-17.

Pray for the Pastors' Conference on January 19-21 at the ARC, and for the Home Mission pastors as they meet for their retreat on the 18-19.

Pray for the 1993 World Missions Conference, which will be held January 31-February 3 on the AFLC Schools' campus, Plymouth, Minnesota.

Praise God for the safe return of missionaries David and Janet Abel and family from Brazil. **Pray** for them as they begin their furlough year, and for Jonathan and Tamba Abel as they take over the ministry in Espirito Santo.

Pray for Evangelist John Abel as he conducts special meetings and training seminars in our congregations.

Pray for Ernest Miedema, Director of Development, and Leslie Galland, Business Administrator.

1993 AMBASSADOR SCHEDULE

The following schedule includes the deadlines and themes for the 1993 issues of *The Lutheran Ambassador*.

The monthly WMF Bible studies will appear in the first issue of the month before they are used.

Please send all materials to: *The Lutheran Ambassador*, Solveig Hjermstad, Assistant to the Editor, P.O. Box 423, Faith, SD 57626 (FAX 605-967-2382).

Date of issue	Editor's deadline	Special emphasis
January 5	December 9, 1992	Evangelism
January 19	December 23	Sanctity of Life
February 2	January 6	AFLC
February 16	January 20	Campus
March 2	February 3	Lent
March 16	February 17	World Missions
March 30	March 3	Easter
April 13	March 17	Music
April 27	March 31	The Pastor
May 11	April 14	Pre-Conference
May 25	April 28	Family Life
June 8	May 12	Bible Camp
June 22	May 26	Citizenship
July 6	June 9	AFLC-Canada
August 3	July 7	Conf. Review
August 31	August 4	Youth
September 14	August 18	Parish Education
September 28	September 1	Home Missions
October 12	September 15	AFLC Schools
October 26	September 29	Reformation
November 9	October 13	Stewardship
November 23	October 27	Thanksgiving
December 7	November 10	Advent
December 21	November 24	Christmas
January 4, 1994	December 8	New Years

Vivian Forsberg, Everett, Washington, has retired after serving the Lord in the Philippines for nearly 40 years. She worked with Wycliff Bible Translators. She is a member of Calvary Lutheran Church, Everett.

Osceola, Wisconsin — The 1993 AFLC pastors' conference will be held January 19-21 at the Association Retreat Center (ARC). The theme for this year's sessions will be evangelism, and the quest Bible teacher will be Rev. Arnold Hagen, Camrose, Alberta, Canada. Rev. Lyndon Korhonen, Cokato, Minnesota, will speak on "The Pastor as Evangelist," and workshop leaders include John and Ruby Abel, Bruce Koester, Jim Ritter, Barbara Skeie, and Mike Brandt.

Rev. Robert Lee will speak at the opening communion service on Tuesday evening, and Dr. Steven Lombardo will be the banquet speaker on Wednesday night. A closing prayer hour on Thursday morning will be led by Rev. Laurel Udden.

AFLC President Robert Lee, in response to an invitation from the AFLC-Brazil, will travel to South America next month in order to attend the annual conference of our sister church body, January 15-17. He will also officiate at the dedication of the Miriam Infant Home and the new girls' dormitory. The trip was made possible by a special grant from the Women's Missionary Federation (WMF).

Houston, Texas — Crown of Life Lutheran Church, which celebrated its first anniversary in October, was received into the AFLC by the Coordinating Committee during their November meeting. **Rev. Gordon L. Waterman**, pastor of the congregation,

Furniture, bedding, etc., are needed immediately for the David Abel family who will be living in the Minneapolis area during their furlough year. Please contact the world mission office if you can help.

Rescue The Perishing, Care For The Dying

First Lutheran Church of Camarillo, California held a Beach Bible Barbeque the last Sunday in August at Thornhill Broome State Beach Park down the coast from Camarillo on the Pacific Coast Highway. The children and adults who attended, did so in anticipation of a good "tin can dinner," a beautiful sunset over the ocean and an inspiring Bible study led by Walt Lusk.

The "tin can dinner" tasted even better than expected, the sunset was gorgeous and at the end of it, Walt started the Bible study. Suddenly, Walt said, "There's trouble up by Mugu Rock (a favorite place for rock climbers, fishermen and foolish people who don't know enough not to climb out on it without taking proper precautions). Let's stop and pray for whomever is in trouble." Loud voices were heard in desperation and helicopters were flying overhead. The group could feel their prayers going out to where a rescue was taking place. Esther Kildow started singing "Rescue the Perishing, Pray for the Dying," as the group joined in.

Several days later, Myrtle Wilken, one of the members of First Lutheran Church received a phone call from a

friend down south in Pacific Palisades. Her friend asked her if she wasn't terribly proud of her two sons, George and Richard. On Sunday afternoon, George and Richard and Myrtle's 11-year-old grandson, had come up to do some work around the house for her. On their way back, they stopped at Mugu Rock to try out some rock climbing equipment the grandson had gotten. Little did they know that this equipment would aid in the rescue of a man who fell off of Mugu Rock into the ocean, hitting his head on the rocks below. The people in the water couldn't find him, so George climbed up on the rocks to where he could see, and directed the rescuers in the water. The man was not breathing when pulled out of the water. Richard had recently completed a CPR course and was able to revive the man. By the time the rescue personnel arrived, the man was talking to the people around him.

As Esther Kildow put it, "No matter where we are, we should always be alert to things we can pray for."

Some may say it was a coincidence. I don't think so!

—Submitted by Karen Cozatt
First Lutheran Church Secretary

was also approved after a colloquy interview for the Fellowship Roster. This newest member church of the AFLC presently meets for worship in the Lakewood Resident's Club, 15006 Lakewood Forest Drive. Pastor Waterman's address is 14007 Crescent Drive, Tomball, TX 77375; phone (713) 351-8001.

Ishpeming, Michigan — Hope Free Evangelical Lutheran Church held special meetings September 25-27, with Dr. Craig Jennings, AFLC Schools professor, as the guest speaker. He led seven sessions on the study of Elijah from I Kings 17-18. In reflecting on the meetings, Pastor Harvey Jackson commented: "We were truly blessed, realizing the encouragement given for people living in dark and difficult days."

Looking for more news in *The Lutheran Ambassador?*

We need your help. Send us your Parish Newsletter for starters.

We will consider news items, clear and sharp photographs (color is fine) and any story idea or testimony you submit.

Please help us. Send your information to Solveig Hjermstad, Box 423, Faith, SD 57626. FAX (612) 967-2382.

ANNUS HORRIBILIS

1992 is not a year on which I shall look back with undiluted pleasure ... it has turned out to be an "annus horribilis."

Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain expressed these sentiments in a classic understatement which was part of a personal speech delivered at a banquet last month in honor of her 40th year on the throne. Her "horrible year" is no secret to anyone exposed to the media, including the twin tragedies of family scandal and personal loss.

To say that the AFLC cannot look back on 1992 with undiluted pleasure is an understatement indeed. The illness of our former president, followed by his resignation and removal from the clergy roster last spring for "moral failure," was a blow from which we are still recovering. The aftershock of this crisis seemed to unleash a critical spirit that had been largely restrained, and unprecedented calls for investigations and audits surfaced at the annual conference, as well as in letters and conversation.

The dean of our seminary was accused of false teaching by an AFLC pastor, who was temporarily suspended from the clergy roster in a disciplinary action that had never been applied in the history of our church family. The marriage relationship of a young pastor was broken before it really began. A few pastors have resigned from parish ministry, sometimes under pressure, and congregations have been weakened or wounded in the process.

We do not have to be reminded, either, that last enemy is still active, for death has claimed three of our retired pastors and three pastors' wives during this "horrible year," and it is not always easy to see any light through the darkness of our loneliness and sorrow.

The next paragraphs could balance the previous words with positive expressions of blessing in the midst

of buffeting, peace in the midst of pain. God has sheltered our church family through the months of storm and stress in a miraculous way. He has been strength in our weakness, comfort in our sorrow, rest in our striving, healing in our brokenness.

It is true, also, that 1992 was a year of advancement in the life of our church. The Word of the Lord grew among us, as sinners were saved and saints strengthened. New congregations and pastors applied to affiliate with our fellowship, and our administrative offices moved into a fine, new headquarters building that was 75-80% paid off before we occupied it.

Yet the truth is that life is not a matter of mathematics, in which the good things that happen to us subtract from the bad, eventually and hopefully cancelling them out all together. I recall the words of a widower in one of our congregations: "Don't ever tell people who have lost their partners that they aren't alone when they have Jesus! When I come home and walk into the door, the house is empty, even though I do know the Lord." The emptiness is real, and the Lord gives us strength to endure it.

The reality is that God still reigns. This does not mean that we will escape the "horrible years," nor that we should minimize the pain that they produce in our lives, even in light of God's protection and provision. He frees us to be honest as well as faithful when we pass through the fire. The theology of the cross is infinitely more powerful than any theology of glory.

Praise the Lord of the "annus horribilis!"

Rev. Kenneth Wilsdon, Elbow, Saskatchewan, has accepted a call from the Stillwater Lutheran Church, rural Kalispell, Montana. He began serving his new parish earlier in December, and his family will join him in mid-January. Pastor Wilsdon, previously a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC), was approved after colloquy with both the Canadian and U.S. Co-ordinating Committees, and has been included on the AFLC Fellowship Roster. The former pastor of Stillwater Church, **Rev. Jeff Swanson**, moved with his family to Newark, Illinois, during the first week in December, where he is serving the Helmar Lutheran Church.

The new address for the Wilsdon

family is: 950 Rhodes Draw, Kalispell, Montana 59901. Phone (406) 257-2178 or 257-4614.

Rev. Richard Anderson, Lakeville, Minnesota, submitted his resignation to Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran Church, Lakeville, where he has been the pastor since 1984, in order to accept a staff position with TENTMAKERS, a youth ministry training and support organization. He will continue to serve Minnesota Valley Church on a part-time basis as plans for future pastoral supply are considered.

Thief River Falls, Minnesota — Our Saviour's Lutheran Church has purchased 6.3 acres of land on the corner of Highway 59 and Sorteberg Drive. A Building Committee is

preparing specific plans to present to the congregation in the near future.

Elbow, Saskatchewan — Bethel Lutheran Church, which withdrew from the ELCIC earlier in the year, voted overwhelmingly last month to affiliate with the AFLC-Canada. Organized in 1904 by Norwegian settlers as the first Lutheran Free Church congregation in Canada, Bethel affiliated at the time of the 1963 merger with the ALC, becoming a part of the ELCIC in 1967 when the Canadian district became an autonomous church body. Trygve F. Dahle Sr., and Carl I. Ostby, two pioneer AFLC pastors who are now at home with the Lord, both served the Elbow parish during past years, and Rev. Ken Wilsdon was the most recent pastor.

The Last Word

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

Second-Class

Heaven

Revelation 21:1-8

When you get tired and weary, think of heaven! Is that what you do when things become taxing and difficult? We should think of heaven much more often than we do. You see heaven is not only a destination but a motivation! Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people and during times of real revival heaven seems so much nearer.

As you are aware, Scripture clearly states that sincerity, good works, religion and a multitude of other "good" things will not get you into heaven.

In Matthew 25:1-13 we are told of people who were similar as they all waited for the Bridegroom. They went forth to meet Him. Each one had lamps that at one time all burned and yet some of them did not enter into the Marriage Feast. What a tragic surprise and disappointment! They were so close but did not have a right relationship with the Bridegroom. **They were lost for eternity!**

In contrast, God calls "wise" those who have an inherent distrust of themselves and are often terrified by the Word of the Lord. They experience failures in so many areas of their lives, but they lay everything before the Saviour and take refuge constantly in His finished work and Word!

Justification is the gracious act of God whereby He, for Christ's sake, acquits a repentant and believing sinner of his sin and guilt and looks upon him, in Christ, as though he had never sinned. **Justification is a legal act that occurs in heaven.**

In Revelation 21 we find God speaking of the new Jerusalem as a bride adorned for her husband. He speaks of extravagance, meticulous preparations and elegance as a bride before her husband. We think of God's greatness in creating the world in six days and what this world must have been like before sin entered. God Himself is the architect and builder of heaven. Revelation speaks of heaven in

cubic dimensions of approximately 1,400 miles in each direction. Walls of shining jasper, a city of pure gold and of every kind of precious stone describe some of the beauty of heaven. When heaven is so beautiful on the "bottom" (under) side, how beautiful it must be on the top side. Heaven evidently is so great that God uses negatives in order to give us a glimpse of positives. There will be no tears there, no sickness, sorrow, separation, death and not even a chance of a sinful thought. But more important than all of the wonder of heaven is: **make certain that you and I arrive there!** Isn't it something that so few people have time for Jesus in this life and yet hope to spend all eternity with Him! Only those who are washed in the blood of the Lamb will be in heaven!

A pastor came to the bedside of a dying saint who was close to the pearly gate. The pastor said: "I will not weary you long, but will read the sweetest verse in the Bible, John 14:1-2." As the pastor was kneeling in prayer, the dying man asked him in a whisper to read on. So the pastor read verse 3. The dying man said: "That's it. It is not so much the mansion that I am looking forward to, but **Jesus!**"

Are you homesick for heaven? In the mean while our Lord says: "Occupy till I come" and "What manner of people we ought to be" (II Peter 3:10-18). If the delights of our earthly treasures are so attractive that we lose sight of God's purpose for putting us here, something's wrong. Sometimes

the things that look best to us — are the worst for our soul (Matthew 6:21). Treasures of earth can keep us from laying up treasures in heaven!

The glories of heaven that await the child of God are beyond our comprehension. Nevertheless what we can grasp about heaven should excite us with great anticipation as we travel in this earthly pilgrimage.

The story is told about some Christians who were traveling in the Middle East. They heard about a wise, devout, beloved, old believer and went out of their way to visit him. When they found him, they discovered that he was living in a simple hut. All he had inside was a rough cot, a chair, a table, and a battered stove for heating and cooking. The visitors were shocked to see the few possessions the man had. One of them blurted out: "Well, where is your furniture?" The aged saint replied by gently asking: "Where is yours?" The visitor, sputtering a little, responded: "Why, at home, of course. I don't carry it with me, I'm traveling." "So am I," the godly Christian replied, "So am I."

May we be found faithful in prayer and concern for one another that none should be missing when the role call is taken. Will I meet you in heaven?



— Pastor
Rodney Stueland