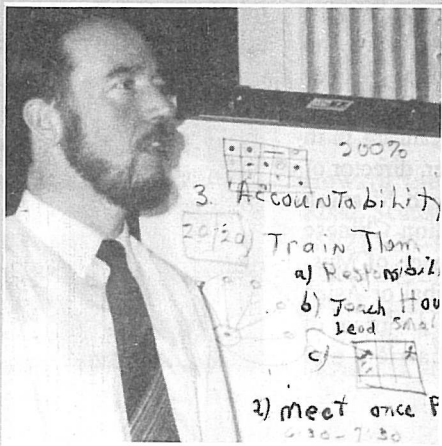
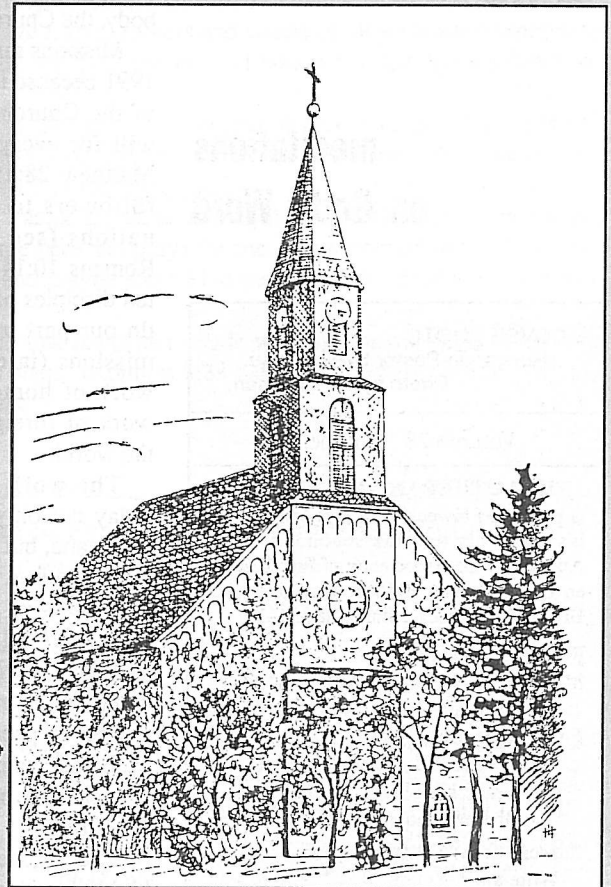
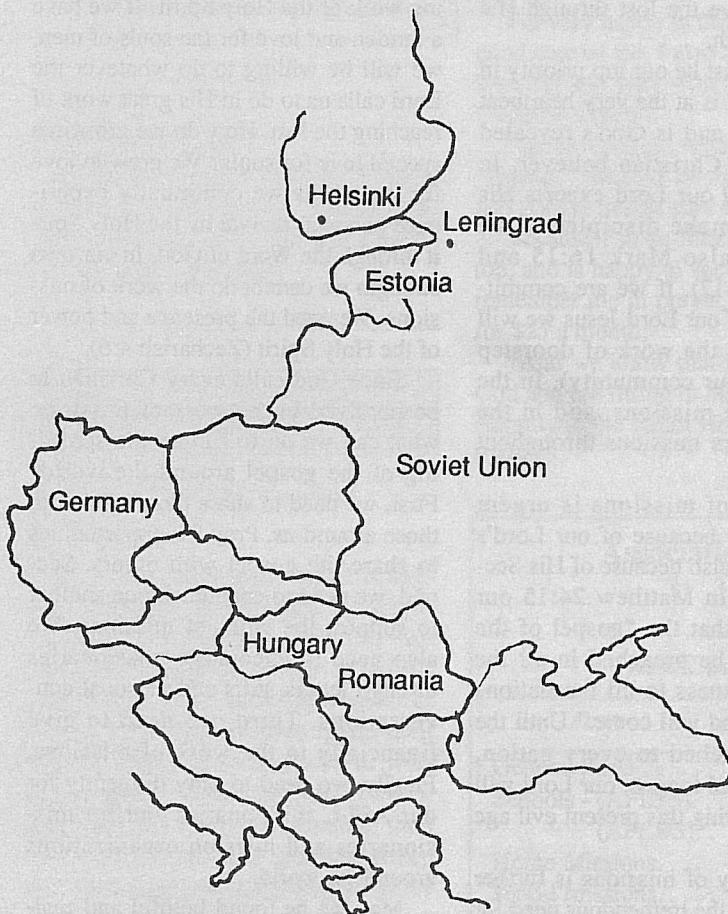


THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

December 25, 1990



THE CHURCH IN EASTERN EUROPE

LIGHT on the WAY

meditations on God's Word

COVER PHOTO

Hungarian Pastor Széll Bulcsú.
Photo by D. Richman.

Volume 28 Number 24

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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Rev. Robert Lee, Editor

Mrs. Wayne Hjermstad, Assistant to the Editor

Editorial Board:

Rev. Wendell Johnson, Chairman

Dr. Francis Monseth, Secretary

Mr. Robert Knutson

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Missions—Our First Priority

As we approach the year's end, we have a special opportunity to reflect on our priorities for the new year. What are we going to make our top priority for 1991? What will be our primary focus of attention? While many things battle for our allegiance, missions must be our top priority in the Church if we are to be obedient disciples of Jesus, bearing lasting fruit for eternity. Our Lord Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. And He continues to seek and save the lost through His body, the Church.

Missions must be our top priority in 1991 because it is at the very heartbeat of the Church and is God's revealed will for every Christian believer. In Matthew 28:19 our Lord exhorts His followers to make disciples of all nations (see also Mark 16:15 and Romans 10:14-17). If we are committed disciples of our Lord Jesus we will do our part in the work of doorstep missions (in our community), in the work of home missions, and in the work of foreign missions throughout the world.

The work of missions is urgent today not only because of our Lord's command, but also because of His Second Coming. In Matthew 24:15 our Lord tells us that the "gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations and then the end will come." Until the gospel is preached to every nation, tribe, people and tongue, our Lord will not return to bring this present evil age to a close.

The urgency of missions is further highlighted by the tremendous need for Christian workers in the mission fields of the world. Over 2.7 billion "hidden people" today have never heard the gospel. These people consist of over 16,000 different cultures and people groups where no single church is in existence. Dr. Ralph Winter, director of the U.S. Center for World Mission writes that "nearly a billion Chinese with about half a billion each of Muslims, Hindus and other tribal or Asian people, are locked within a mosaic of subcultures, language barriers and

social prejudices where as yet no viable Christian church has been founded." How our Lord yearns to see the gospel penetrate the 2.7 billion people. Indeed, "the harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few. Therefore, pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest" (Matthew 9:37-38).

In order to be a faithful worker for missions, we need a special love for souls through the reviving, empowering work of the Holy Spirit. If we have a burden and love for the souls of men, we will be willing to do whatever the Lord calls us to do in His great work of reaching the lost. How do we grow in a special love for souls? We grow in love for people as we continually experience personal revival by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God. In our own strength we cannot do the work of missions. We need the presence and power of the Holy Spirit (Zechariah 4:6).

Since God calls every Christian to be involved in the work of missions, what can we do to further the spreading of the gospel around the world? First, we need to share the gospel with those around us. Pray for opportunities to share the gospel with others. Second, we need to encourage one another to support the work of missions. We also need to encourage missionaries through letters, gifts and personal conversations. Third, we need to give financially to the work of missions. Finally, we need to pray diligently for our AFLC missionaries and for missionaries and mission organizations around the world.

May we be found faithful and zealous in our support and promotion of missions. Our Lord calls us to make missions our top priority in 1991.



—by Rev.
Mark R. Bateson

God heard the cries
of His people and
walls crumbled.

Exodus Revisited

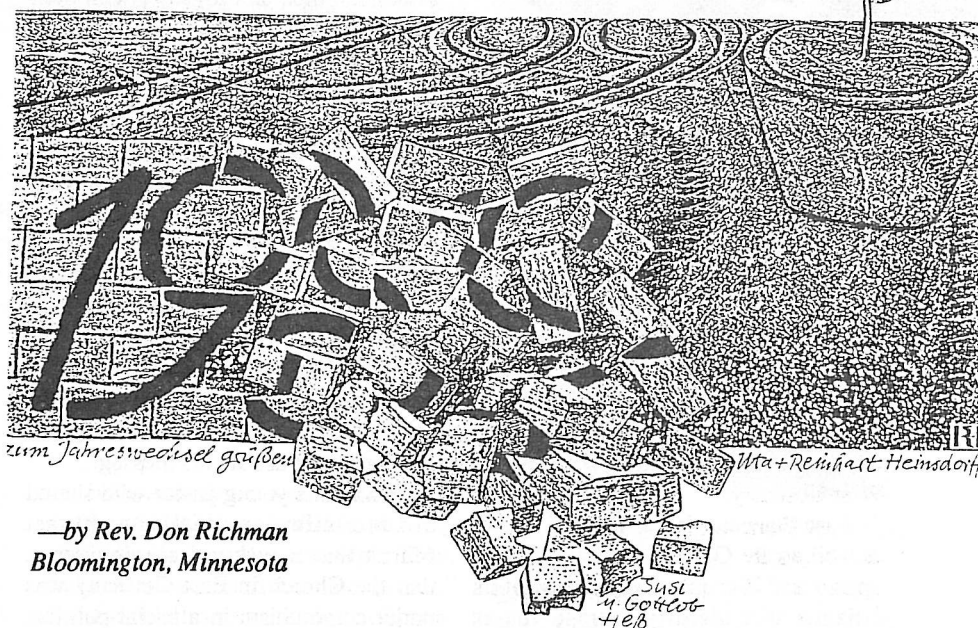
At the Romanian border, it seemed like the heavily armed guards would have liked to be friendly to the three rather nervous Americans from Emmaus Lutheran Church in Bloomington, Minnesota. But they were under orders to be cold, careful and distant as they searched our rented car from top to bottom for firearms, Bibles, drugs or pornography. Then, after carefully examining our documents, they raised the huge barrier across the road and waved us through.

The fear we experienced at the gate crept into our souls like fog on a dark, cold, damp night. It was for us, perhaps, an unwarranted fear. At the most, they would have detained us for a few hours of questioning, confiscating anything they wanted—including the car and then sending us back to Hungary and to our safe homes in free America.

For the Romanians, or for millions of others behind the Iron Curtain, fear was justified. They lived in fear, which was just as the government wanted. Fear was the chosen method of control in all of the Eastern European countries under communist rule. By and large it worked. Though people hated themselves for doing it, it was generally accepted that every third person in Romania was an informer. For 73 years in the Soviet Union and 40 plus years in other Eastern European countries, the people were cowed, controlled, saddened and broken by fear.

"Look among the nations, and see; wonder and be astounded, For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe even if you were told."

Habakkuk 1:5



—by Rev. Don Richman
Bloomington, Minnesota

Rather than the ubiquitous hammer and sickle, noble instruments of gainful employment, the system would have been better symbolized by pictures of walls, guard towers and fences on the blood-red background of the Soviet flag.

The double-high barbed wire fence, sowed with land mines and patrolled constantly, or the 15-foot-high cement walls were the outward symptoms of the inner walls of fear and hate.

The people of the wall, however, did not count on the prayers of the persecuted saints nor did they understand the power of God. In 1989 the walls came down. The fences were removed and the heavily armed guards sent to other posts.

The first wall to crumble was the invisible and paralyzing wall of fear. For the people in country after country in Eastern Europe, something became larger and more important to them than personal security, job or reputation. By the hundreds of thousands they stood up for the fact that there was a God. Standing for God meant standing against the cruel dictatorships. It meant they stood against imprisonment of the soul.

In those moments the dictators' bullets, tanks and torture chambers lost their power. The walls of fear crumbled. The fences around the countries were torn down. The world has seen that the mighty hand of God was not shortened.

Over 3,500 years later, the Exodus of God's people from the 400 years of bondage in Egypt still towers high in the memory of believers as a demonstration of His saving power. 1989 will be marked in all future history as a new Exodus with millions of people liberated from cruel dictatorships across the cold landscapes of almost all East European countries. It was a powerful demonstration of God hearing the cries of His people, His out-stretched arm sweeping across the chessboard of history, throwing great powers into confusion, bringing down powerful governments.

It came to pass again as Moses said to the people of Israel centuries ago, "... you shall remember what the Lord your God did to Pharaoh and to all of Egypt — the great trials your eyes saw, the signs, the wonders, the mighty hand, the outstretched arms by which the Lord your God brought you out. The Lord your God will give them over to you and throw them into confusion until they are destroyed" (Deuteronomy 7:18-19, 23).

East Germany, as we have known it for over 40 years, no longer exists. Now the vast majority of its nearly 17,000,000 citizens rejoice at their new freedom and merger with West Germany.

East Germany is the land of Luther as well as the German Pietists, such as Spener and Zinzendorf. Over half of its citizens still identify themselves as Lutherans.

Though large in "paper membership," it has a small number of faithful, committed Christians who continued for years to pray and proclaim the living Jesus. God's response to their prayer is history. Thousands gathered anew in the churches. It was there that the reality of freedom was lifted up and that the people found courage to stand.

Erick Honecker's call to Moscow to send the Army to quell the disturbance went unheeded. Communism collapsed and, ironically, for a time, the only place Mr. Honecker could find to stay was in the home of a Lutheran pastor—a believer in the God he tried to abolish. Now as before, for the most part, only the faithful remnant gathers for worship, prayer and to be taught and inspired from the Word of God. But through it all, the church gained credibility, especially in the eyes of young people.

A deaconess with whom I spoke by long distance telephone asked me to pray that people will turn to God and not to the materialism of the West.

Pastor Michael Schubert heads a church of about 1,200 members in the village of Mulsen St. Jacob. Both he and his wife, Katrina, are children of dedicated pastors. They are warm, committed Christians. Though their house is "old fashioned" by Western

standards, their life together with their family was a demonstration of the warmth, love and perception Jesus brings to people's lives.

On the Sunday I was there, they showed us the large, old church building. It was cold, unused and in disrepair. There were too few people to maintain it.

But the 65-70 people did meet in their little chapel at 3 p.m., worshiped with joy and excitement as Pastor Schubert led them in singing choruses and songs of praise before he taught them the way of salvation using the "Bridge" to illustrate his message.

It was this young pastor who shared at the conference in Hungary last March that it was not a coincidence that the Church in East Germany was under communism in a social-political "desert" for exactly 40 years. It was the same length of time Israel was in the Sinai Desert. Through that desert experience they had to learn that God's grace was sufficient even when many of the comforts and luxuries were stripped away and there was only a minority of real believers.

Now they have freedom; they can acquire Bibles, literature and many other necessities as needed. But it will still take faithful, patient work of winning people to Christ one at a time and incorporating them into the body of Christ, the Church.

The Berlin Wall, long a symbol of the nature of communism has been taken down. Some of it can be found in



Pastor Michael Schubert

little jars or boxes all over the world as souvenirs. For many, it will be a reminder of God's laughter at the kings of the earth who conspire against Him (Psalm 2).

It is my prayer that it become a symbol of the joy in heaven over many who repent and come to the knowledge of truth in Christ Jesus in East Germany. (D. R.)

(Ed. Note: Rev. Don Richman became interested in Eastern Europe several years ago when he began to pray for these captive nations. The former missionary to Brazil was given a special burden for Romania. God placed on his heart a desire to help in some way. In September, 1987, Pastor Richman, together with two members

Reflections on

—by Johannes and
Roselinde Pässler

Nobody was prepared for the great changes that have taken place! During the 40th anniversary observance for the German Democratic Republic (GDR, or East Germany), the leader quoted scripture — "For forty years I loathed that generation, and said they are a people who err in their heart, and they do not know My ways" (Psalm 95:10).

The surprising effect of human oppression was that people sought refuge in the church. They met on Monday at 5 a.m. The pastor had to consider whether or not to let them in. He did after they said that they would just pray for peace. More people joined them.

The climax came on October 9, 1989. Now there were four churches so overcrowded with people that there was not enough room. In Leipzig there were 2,000 people gathered. They knew that the state police had placed their people among the crowd to stir up emotion. But the pastor in charge was wise. He asked only for silent

"The surprising effect of human oppression was that people sought refuge in the church."

of Emmaus Lutheran Church, Ron Dahl and Kearney Frantsen, made his first trip into Eastern Europe. Return visits were made in June, 1988, and March, 1989, with a Brazilian pastor, Rev. Douglas Wehmuth. The Emmaus Mission Committee has been very supportive of these ventures both prayerfully and financially.)



Rev. Don Richman, Bloomington, Minnesota, (center) with two Romanian Lutheran pastors—Georg Schirkonyer and Gerhard Wagner.

the East German Revolt for Freedom

prayer—absolute silence—and people experienced prayers being answered!

At this time the military already in the city had been armed and were forming a circle around us with tanks. But our prayers had caused a peaceful demonstration! Other cities organized similar peaceful demonstrations, and some Lutheran pastors discovered anew that we are called to be salt and light! Tremendous opportunities opened up to us!

We are sorry to see this new liberty used to such a small extent. The open borders caused many to turn only to worldly things. Only in returning to Christ can people be renewed.

The watchword of the Berean brothers is Colossians 2:8. "See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world,

rather than according to Christ."

As much as we appreciate the changes, we must remain steadfast and be aware of the adverse effects that will come — materialism, humanism, New Age philosophies, etc. It would be a pity if we would give up our Christian values and doctrines!

(From a testimony presented at the International Conference of Lutheran Bible Institute Leaders in Helsinki, Finland, last summer.)



Sisters at a German carnival. Photo by D. Greven

(Ed. Note: The testimonies from the Estonian pastor and the East German couple were submitted by Rev. and Mrs. Don Greven, who attended the 1990 Conference of Lutheran Bible Institute Leaders, Helsinki, Finland, June 25-30. Thirty schools from fifteen nations and four continents were represented, and several speakers from Eastern Europe shared during this conference. The Grevens also visited Bible Schools in Sweden, Denmark, and Germany before returning to the U.S. AFLBS has invited the 1994 conference to our campus in Minneapolis.)

An Interview with Sergei
and Helena Metelsky
on November 23, 1990

— by Rev. Don Richman

Sergei and Helena Metelsky are the first Russians allowed to leave the Soviet Union to study religion. They are currently enrolled at the Seattle Lutheran Bible Institute, and would like to eventually start a Bible School in the city of Leningrad.

Helena was twelve years old when God first began to draw her to Himself. She occasionally attended Pushkin Finnish Lutheran Church in Leningrad, a church which was allowed to exist as a kind of Finnish cultural institute. It became the place of worship for the Lutheran remnant in the city. (Leningrad, formerly St. Petersburg, is located near the Finnish border, and traditionally has been the home of a sizable Finnish population. They experienced bitter persecution under Stalin, and many were sent into exile.)

At the age of seventeen, Helena was baptized and took the gigantic step of publicly committing her life to Jesus Christ. She then started attending the church regularly, the first of many young non-Finnish Russians to become Christians there.

Sergei was a sergeant in the Soviet army until last summer, attached to a very difficult special unit in which most of the soldiers were criminals. His mother, a non-believer, asked him for a Bible, which he says is a very popular book even among atheists. He got it from Helena who was a fellow student at the university.

Though he had been interested from childhood in "superior reasonings" like UFOs, fate or fortune, when Helena told him there was a personal God, Sergei became so angry that he nearly threw her out of a fourth-story window!

He eventually attended healing services conducted by visiting Finnish pastors. They prayed for him after a long conversation with one of them, and he testifies, "... I felt something happen inside of me that is impossible to describe. I knew that there was a God." Sergei was baptized just before Christmas, 1989, and became a member of the Pushkin Lutheran Church.

In a recent letter, Helena wrote, "When I came to church four years ago, there were only a few young people. Now more and more are coming. When I started going to church I ran the risk of being kicked out of the university and thereby bringing great shame on my par-

"Nobody would go to

ents." (Their beloved child had gotten involved in this "dangerous and suspicious thing — religion," which would bear the additional fruit of ruining her career.)

There continues to be a lot of confusion in the Soviet Union after freedom was introduced. Many continue to fear "religion." After all, they were taught for seventy years that there was no God. Now they are being told that this was all wrong. Many are very confused, and some choose any kind of "salvation." Others simply close their eyes and ears and hold fast to their atheism, which says that Christianity is a deception. Some found it a thrill to enter something new and dangerous by "plucking the forbidden fruit" and adopting Christianity as a new fashionable thing for their lives.

"For those who came to God before the new freedoms were introduced," Helena declared, "God ... really meant something. Nobody would go to church for the sake of tradition. The price was too high. No, unless we believe and know who Jesus really is, we wouldn't want to identify with the church. The price was too high."

People who come to God in the Soviet Union go through this internal struggle. Did Jesus Christ really live or is He an invented character as all of our beloved professors and scholars used to tell us? They could "prove" that it was all a lie with carefully crafted explanations.

"It is not easy to take it by faith. Oh, no, no sensible person would give up his life, his career, his good job, and receive the scorn of people just to accept something that the government and all the experts say is a deception of the priest," the Metelskys continued.

"Oh, yes, the Christians told us that God really does exist and will take care of you. But if He does not? This thought haunted us. Then, when by the grace of God the realization dawned on us that Jesus really does live and we really began to seek Him ('seek and you will find'), we took the risk of submitting our lives totally to Him. We passed through times of fear ... 'If I don't take care of this myself, Lord, how can I be sure that you will take care of it? ... maybe I had better turn back before the situation gets worse—can I be right in believing in God, everyone else wrong?' But in His way, God answered, 'I can because I AM.' Now with the apostles we can say, 'Lord, to whom else shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. For we have believed and come to know that you are the Holy One of God' (John 6:68-69)."

His eyes gleaming with joy, Sergei said,

A testimony from Soviet Christians

church for the sake of tradition. The price was too high."

"Now, when people ask me what gives me confidence in God, I can speak of my spiritual experience and hear His voice. He tells me what to do. Though they may say that it is a fantasy and a coincidence, I say there is no other way to explain that my entire self is being changed from day to day. For God is constantly doing the work of purifying my spirit—taking away dirty thoughts, desires and emotions from my soul."

"No," he continued, "God does not solve all our problems in this world, but He keeps showing the parts of our lives that need to be

corrected or even given up. He causes us to seek His will and keeps on teaching us, making us a new creation."

The young Russian concluded, "Now it would be impossible for me to live without Him. Who else could love me so much and comfort me in everything? Who else could be with me always, warning me against a wrong step and helping me, even doing the greater part in every good undertaking? He is with me. He is almighty. I love Jesus Christ! Praise God!"

"He would tell them God says, 'Even in the remotest place (like a Siberian prison) I am with you' (Psalm 39). Even then there was joy in his heart."

A Call to Prayer for Estonia

—by Pastor Esko Süvari

"Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:12-13).

I had a Christian mother who through my growing up years read from our only Bible to my eight brothers and sisters and me. Each day she would spend time praying for us. We had no other Christian literature to help us.

Atheism was taught in the classrooms with socialism and communism.

The spiritual movements of the past had passed their time of existence — there were very few places to meet together.

When I was four years old, I remember going to meetings. At an early age I received a vision for spiritual growth and development for my country — but people with such visions were deported to Siberia,

especially in the '40s. Many died and many were sentenced to prison for at least 25 years.

I remember an important pastor who was like a father to me and how he was sent to Siberia because of his spiritual life. He was on trial one time because the government found out he had translated Christian literature for young people into Russian. There were no other grounds for the trial as a man or a pastor. From a human viewpoint people said he has endured suffering in vain. But it worked out for good. People would ask "why does this happen to us" and the pastor would smile. People thought he had gone mad, but his spiritual life still continued. He would tell them God says "even in the remotest place (like a Siberian prison) I am with you" (Psalm 39). Even then there was joy in his heart.

The past has had an impact on our present time. When people came back from Siberia in the late '40s they agreed God would create something new when they got back to their home towns. Small groups of pastors and people gathered and began to speak of spiritual needs and how to develop spiritual life. In the '50s and '60s the situation was deteriorating; the people thought nothing could be accepted or understood but communism — but there were those with different views,

those who felt that the time was coming when people would be ripe again for repentance. A time would arrive when so many would come that they would have to ask them to return later. This has been fulfilled today and we are experiencing what we have so long prayed for!

Many people think political freedom means spiritual freedom — but I do not believe that. When a friend came back from Germany he wrote an article stating 13 out of 17 council members of Estonia's Parliament agreed that no change of state and church would take place. They are still against the church.

This strengthens my conviction that spiritual needs are not met by political changes. Spiritual needs are met by God Himself through prayer. Today it is a great joy for me to be here to thank my brothers and sisters who have prayed for us and trust for a better future for us.

Even today as we meet here in Estonia, a meeting is taking place to organize a Bible School. Two teachers have come from Finland. We have a wonderful beginning with 70-80 people in the course being renewed in their spiritual life! Pray for us!

(From a testimony presented at the International Conference of Lutheran Bible Institute Leaders in Helsinki, Finland, last summer.)

OUR PRESIDENT WRITES

ALL THINGS NEW

Averse that comes to mind as we await the rapidly approaching new year is Revelation 21:5. "And he that sitteth on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new." These are words of hope. They speak of the better and more glorious things that God has in store for His people on that day. Our hope, not only for a new year, but for eternity, centers in the coming again of our blessed Lord, who one day "shall sit on the throne of His glory."

Something new has a special appeal to most of us. Even the coming of a new year suggests for many of us that maybe some things, at least, will be different in the new year. In most cases, it requires more than just turning over the pages to a new calendar to bring about changes.

The new year does hold some changes for us in the AFLC. One of the most notable is in the plans for the new administration building. In recent weeks, the Finance Committee has suggested some changes that have also met with the approval of the Co-ordinating Committee.

Briefly, these are the changes that will be pursued in the coming year. We will try to reduce the cost of the building anywhere from 30% to 50% by going to volunteer labor. Adequate supervisory staff will have to be hired, but we believe that there are enough people in the AFLC who would be delighted to have the opportunity of contributing their talents in making this needed facility a possibility.

The Building Committee is being asked to work with the architect to revise the building plans and simplify them in order to reduce the cost.

With these proposed changes, the new administration

building could become a reality in the new year.

I want to address a matter that is not new for this last article for the year in our church paper. It may even sound like a broken record. But it is a matter of deep concern for all of our boards and administrative personnel. It is the matter of finances.

We have one month to go in the ingathering for our fiscal year. The big push to try and reach the budget as the close of the fiscal year approaches is as old as the AFLC.

January has always been one of our best months. On the average, about 15% of our budget comes in January. That is very good. But it has usually not been enough because we have always fallen so far behind in the earlier part of the year.

It appears at the time of this writing, that if both December and January prove to be average months as far as giving to the AFLC, we will probably be around \$250,000 short of the budget goal. That creates serious problems for those areas of the work that experience the shortfall in receipts.

Another interesting observance is that the AFLC now has over 20,000 confirmed members. It would require only an extra gift of \$12.50 per confirmed member to make it possible to reach our budget. That would be a "new thing" for us in this coming year. There are, among our readers, many who may not be able to give a gift of \$12.50. But there are many of us who are able to give so much more. Will you help us reach our goal in this new year?

We want to take this opportunity to wish all of you a most blessed and prosperous new year!

—by Richard Snipstead

RISE UP AND BUILD

—by Clifford Johnson, Director
"Rise Up and Build"

It is with heartfelt gratitude that we announce the decision of the Co-ordinating Committee to proceed with plans to begin construction of the administration building next spring. May God be praised for His abundant provision!

Certain developments have caused this decision, the primary one being the example of a new church being built at a cost of \$150,000 with volunteer labor. Conservative estimates of the cost using contractors is in the neighborhood of \$700,000. It became the conviction of the Co-ordinating Committee that we can build our own building, using volunteer labor, at a cost of about \$400,000. If we can do this, it would represent a tremendous savings.

Pledges and gifts received to date amount to \$240,000. Add to this the \$100,000 to be realized from the sale of the chapel building and we have the necessary three-fourths of the anticipated cost as mandated by the Annual Conference in 1989.

Please continue to pray! Pray that many will be moved to contribute, so that we will not have to even secure a loan!

Pray that many will come to give of themselves to build. Pray that we might experience a wonderful sense of unity as we labor together. Pray that the name of Jesus would be glorified in this project!

We will keep you fully posted as the work proceeds and informed as to needs as they develop.

EDITORIALS

FALLING WALLS AND OPEN DOORS

Fact can be stranger than fiction. Believe it or not. For who could have believed the unbelievable way in which 1990 would witness the unfolding of history in a strange and wonderful new chapter for humanity?

Our maps seemed to prove the power of communism as a global menace. A signpost at one of the Finnish/Soviet border crossings proclaimed: "We are living in an age in which all roads lead to communism," and many were afraid that it was true. The Iron Curtain stood as a solid wall between east and west.

But the wall was cracked. A worldwide movement toward democracy accelerated with astonishing momentum during the closing months of 1989. Communism had failed politically, economically and spiritually, and its empire was falling apart. This was a result, not of military might, but rather of a "revolution from below," in the words of a speaker at a rally in East Berlin. The troops and tanks of Soviet forces could no longer conceal the terminal sickness of Marxist faith.

The Berlin Wall, the symbol for a generation of communist slavery and oppression, became a new symbol of freedom as the borders between the two Germanys were opened wide. Crowds of people celebrated as they dismantled the huge mass of concrete piece by piece with hammer and chisel, and collectors can even purchase a portion of the wall as a memento.

The walls are still falling down. Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and the Baltic republics all seem to be taking definite steps in the direction of democracy. The reunification of Germany is a reality. We are learning, also, to distinguish the Soviet Union from Russia, as daily news reports document the dissolution of the communist empire from within.

Falling walls mean open doors. *The Lutheran Ambassador* is not a news magazine. The secular media does not need us to enlighten our readers on the political and economic perspective of events in eastern Europe. But it is important that Christians are informed about spiritual open doors. The evangelical dimension of these events is our special burden for this issue, published with the prayer that our spiritual borders might be broadened.

Rev. Don Richman, pastor of Emmaus Church, Bloomington, Minnesota, has visited the lands of eastern Europe and is in continued contact with Lutherans there. His help in the preparation of this issue has been invaluable.

Open doors mean opportunity. No one knows how long

the doors will remain open; perhaps the new freedoms will prove to be only an illusion. We are not always ready to believe everything that we read. There is a dark side to liberation, too, and the collapse of central authority can lead to dangerous, new problems. New walls rise as old ones fall.

Open doors mean a call to pray. Open doors mean that Bibles and other Christian literature must be dispatched without delay. Open doors mean person-to-person contacts with brothers and sisters in eastern Europe, to encourage and equip them to enter the special doors that God has opened there for evangelism.

The walls are down, the doors are open, and we must act quickly. "Lord, what do you want me to do?" (Acts 9:6)

OUR WRITERS OLD AND NEW

The concluding issue of 1990 is the time to thank two pastors who have been regular contributors to *The Lutheran Ambassador* during the past months: Rev. Henry Johansen, Willmar, Minnesota, and Rev. Mark Bateson, Colfax, Wisconsin. Pastor Johansen, author of the recent series "From a Pastor's Study," will be especially remembered for his unique use of memorable illustrations to highlight his very readable articles. Pastor Bateson has effectively led us into new encounters with old truths of Holy Scripture through his "Light on the Way" meditations.

Both men brought no little gift to the task, and responded graciously and faithfully to our deadlines in spite of their busy schedules. A debt of gratitude is due to both for their commitment to ministry through the pages of this publication.

The Lutheran Ambassador welcomes two new writers for 1991: Rev. Howard Franzen, Hastings, Nebraska, and Rev. Alvin Larson, Ogema, Minnesota. New to the AFLC, Dr. Franzen will be introducing himself to our readers through a series drawn from a lifetime of experience as a counselor and institutional chaplain. Pastor Larson, who will write the "Light on the Way" articles for the first six months of the year, has served as a missionary to Native Americans, as well as the director of Hauge Foreign Missions, Inc., and his heart for missions will no doubt be reflected in his devotionals.

Both men remain active in kingdom service in spite of having reached retirement years. We are grateful for their willingness to serve in this way, too, and look forward to blessings from God through them in the months to come.

Coming next time: Abortion—God's call to repentance and action.

HUNGARY

With a population of about 11 million people and less than half the size of Minnesota, Hungary is rich in fertile land and has a modern mechanized agricultural and industrial base. It also has a network of good, modern highways and, compared to Romania, is very prosperous with evidence of much building and progress.

Hungary, far more orientated toward the West than other East Block countries, has enjoyed much more freedom than her neighbors. Border crossing was relatively secure. There was much less evidence of heavyhanded oppression.

However, Christians were definitely under the control of the communist government. One pastor told me that, when he developed a successful youth movement in his church, he was forced to move.

The Lutheran Church in Hungary had over 400,000 members. I was privileged to meet several committed evangelical Lutheran pastors who clearly proclaim Jesus as the only Savior. Organized into a pastors' fellowship, they have a strong emphasis on conversion and experience of living relationships with Jesus Christ.

Because many of these pastors have large congregations with few people active, there is much discouragement among them. Many Lutherans are falling away.

The highlight of my ministry in Hungary was a conference of about 35 pastors from six different countries. It was held on March 5-7, 1990, in a comfortable hotel-conference center in the village of Szirak, about 50 miles northeast of Budapest.

Organized by Pastor Szell Bulcsu



from Budapest, Pastor Douglas Wehmuth from Brazil, and myself, it was held for the purpose of bringing Christians who had lived under oppression and persecution together for prayer, fellowship, study of Scripture and mutual encouragement. There was a good deal of discussion concerning methods of evangelism and church growth.

Although there is new and greatly appreciated freedom in Hungary, the Christians, together with most of the population, are going through a time of immense economic uncertainty. They have asked for prayer that they will be able to absorb into their already overburdened economy thousands of ethnic Hungarian refugees arriving from Romania. (D. R.)

ACTION BOX

The new found freedoms in Eastern Europe are in effect a call to action for Christians all over the world. The demonstration of God's sovereign power in that part of the world ought to convince us that His Holy Spirit is stirring and moving to draw people unto Himself.

The political and social uncertainties and the question of how long before the doors close and the walls go up again add a note of urgency to the ministry of the Gospel in Eastern Europe.

Christians there—and particularly Lutheran Christians—will need special encouragement. Thus we ought to consider the following possibilities to help them.

1. Pray for the countries of Eastern Europe and their leaders that they may be at peace and the Christians enjoy freedom.
2. Ask God to help you focus on one country. Acquire the names of specific congregations and Christians and pray for them regularly.
3. Consider adopting a sister congregation.
4. Consider sending an outreach team and establish supportive prayer links through them.
5. Consider becoming a missionary in Eastern Europe working under the leadership of national pastors—especially in the Lutheran Church.
6. Help send Bibles to Eastern Europe.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

With a population of about 24,000,000, located on the western shore of the Black Sea, Romania was known as the bread basket of Europe. The rich, black soil of the Transylvanian plateau along with the vast flat fields of lower southeastern Romania produced abundant supplies of grains and fruits.

Under the severe repression of Nicolae Ceausescu, Romania was driven to poverty and hunger. Lines are formed in front of empty stores — even to buy bread. The Romanian worker earns the lowest wages of any in the communist block. Suspicion and fear are a way of life. Romanian Christians have told me that they assume about every third person is an informer. People are bribed with offers of better jobs, apartments, vacations to inform on one another. Medical attention is very primitive.

In this repressive atmosphere, the Spirit of God has been at work calling people to Himself. As Pastor Wolfgang Rhener from the Lutheran Church in Sibiu explained: "People tried Fascism under the Nazis. They tried the glories of communism. Everything failed them. Now many are willing to try God."

As a result, where the Word of Jesus is being proclaimed with enthusiasm and clarity, there is a rich harvest for the Lord. The largest Baptist church in Europe is in Oradea in western Romania, about ten miles from the Hungarian border. After their pastor Josef Tson was exiled to the U.S., a medical doctor and a Christian psychologist became the pastors. This church is known in many parts of the world for its aggressive stand for the gospel of Jesus and refusal to be intimidated by the government.

Until the last few years, there were over 200,000 Saxon Lutherans located primarily in the central Transylvanian region. A German Lutheran church still using the German language is located in the city of Sibiu.

The revolution that overthrew the Ceausescu regime began with the bold proclamation of God's Word by Pastor Laslo Tokes of the Reformed Church in Timisoara in southwestern Romania.

He refused to be silenced even by his own bishop who had collaborated with the communists.

Instruments that God used to change the face of Romania, once the revolution began, were the thousands of people gathering in public squares and shouting over and over "We believe in God, God is with us." Tens of thousands of people gathered in the public square of Sibiu shouting, "The army is with us, the army is with us!" The thousands of young soldiers, who were deployed against the masses, laid their guns down on the street refusing to use them against their own people. Later they used their guns against the "Securitate" loyalists who began firing into the crowd from the roofs.

Unfortunately, the new post-revolution government of Romania is occupied primarily by "former" communists. Although there is much more freedom, people still fear the communists yet in power. Vast shortages still exist. The people of Romania continue to need our prayer as they face the very difficult and uncertain future.

Evangelist Luis Palau held crusades in major cities during 1990. Thousands of people heard the Gospel, according to Rev. Arthur Grimstad, formerly of Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota, who assisted with the Palau



In March, 1990, a friendly Romanian guard hands his gun to Pastor Richman in the hallway of the Reformed Church in Timisoara.

"In God's good time, He will cause that remnant to flourish..."



A memorial in Sibiu, to the Romanians who died in the revolution.

crusade. "The Lord's Army," a renewal movement within the predominant Orthodox church, is expecting to impact Romania as is the rapidly growing Pentecostal church.

The Lutheran Church in Romania, on the other hand, is diminishing. The worsening social-economic conditions are forcing them to leave for Germany where they are invited and subsidized by the German government. Many from the Hungarian Reformed Church left Romania for Hungary.

Despite the departure of so many, we can be confident there will be a remnant of Romanian Lutherans. In God's good time, He will cause that remnant to flourish with the opportunities provided in the new-found freedoms.

(D.R.)

Ideas for your Ministry

1. Start raising money for the 1991 Luther League Convention in Estes Park, Colorado. The theme of the July 15-19 Convention is based on Psalm 86:11, "After God's Own Heart." A Registration Fee of \$25 must be sent to Mr. Bob Halvorson, 8443 2nd Avenue South, Bloomington, MN 55420 by April 1. Costs are \$150 prior to April 1 and \$175 afterwards.

2. In 1992 there will be two FLY TEAMS leaving for both Brazil and Mexico. For information and application blanks, write Pastor Eugene Enderlein, World Mission Director at our AFLC headquarters in Minneapolis. Start praying about it now!

3. Take a day-long trip! Visit a mission like the Marie Sandvik Center in Minneapolis or the Pacific Garden Mission in Chicago. Visit one of our Home Mission congregations. Ask the pastor of the congregation to give a message on the work of the congregation.

4. Organize a work retreat! Right, a work retreat! Train yourselves to present the Gospel to others. Offer to go to various towns and cities to pass out brochures inviting others to our local AFLC congregations.

5. Conduct a peer counseling seminar in your youth group.

6. Learn how to do visitation in hospitals and senior citizens homes. Write AFLC Youth Resources for the booklet, "Visitation Suggestions."

7. Organize a welcome home event for those who are away to Bible School, college and the armed forces.

8. Have a brainstorm session to get ideas for your ministry. Meet at a local cafe or have breakfast in your church. Get your group to talk about the needs they would like to discuss.

9. Create T-shirts or sweat shirts which advertise the 1991 Luther League Convention in Estes Park. Wear your shirts to various youth events. Get others to join you. Have

a contest to determine which was most original, etc.

10. Write the men and women you know who are in the armed services of our country. Or, have a letter writing night when you write Any Serviceman, Operation Desert Shield, APO New York, New York.

11. Start a Luther League newspaper.

12. Go over the section in the book "Good Counsel For Counselors" having to do with the responsibilities of your officers.

13. Take a special offering to be sent to the Luther League Federation. Send it to Earl Korhonen, 38 Birch Drive, Esko, MN 55733. The goal of the Luther League Federation is to pay \$5,000 for youth ministry expenses each year.

14. Form a telephone brigade to call and invite inactive youth to your meetings. Don't give up on them.

15. Have a high society party. Play Monopoly or other finance games. Divide into famous families and play organized games. Write Martina Johnson, your Luther League Federation Secretary at Route 1, Box 21, Badger, MN 56714, for more information.

16. Purchase devotional booklets for your members and pass them out at a meeting emphasizing devotions. Make certain the inactive members have them, too.

17. Invite your parents to a valentine party. Have a good speaker, discussion or devotional. Put on some good skits. Have your parents bring pictures of when they were children. Have a contest to see who can guess who is who.

18. Do some hymn studies. Select a theme hymn to sing at your meetings.

19. When your congregation has special meetings, have the guest speaker meet with the youth. Make it a fun time. Make your own pizzas or ice cream sundaes. Select a topic for

Meet three staff members

Someone once said: "The wealth of a country is its working people." If that applies to the AFLC Schools, its faculty and staff make for great wealth. Most of our readers know who the Schools' deans are, but who are some of the people working behind the scenes? Let's meet three staff members.

Clyde and Pat Hendrickson

These Gonvick, Minnesota, high school sweethearts were married in 1956. After a move to Minneapolis,

Gospel Team Available

"Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone" (James 2:17). This is the theme verse for the 1990-91 Luther League Gospel Team from AFLBS. Calling themselves, "Faith on Fire," the team is led by Jason Coyle, a Senior at AFLBS.

The team is available primarily in the Minneapolis area, but may be able to minister to groups farther away.

If you or your organization is interested, please contact Jason Coyle at the Association Free Lutheran Bible School, 3110 East Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55441.

the speaker, one you believe he could really communicate on.

20. Invite someone to speak on stewardship. Include reports on how your congregation operates, as well as the AFLC.

21. Do the five meeting series "Five Days of My Life." This was sent out in a quarterly mailing. If you can't find it, write your youth director and he will send it out to you.

22. Have an exchange program with another League.

23. Have a gym night with a devotional or good discussion.

24. Send in your ideas to Pastor Dennis Gray, Youth Resource Director, Box 68, Greenbush, MN 56726.

They Serve at the Schools' Campus

Clyde worked in a machine shop, cleaning service, and served as a church custodian in the suburb of Coon Rapids. Then the call came from North Dakota's Red Willow Bible Camp for Pat to serve as cook and retreat hostess and for Clyde to serve as caretaker.

Sixteen years later they left Red Willow and "a ministry we'll never forget." In 1988, Clyde and Pat arrived at 3110 East Medicine Lake Blvd. where, according to Pat, "We feel a part of the circle." Clyde added, "From the president on down, we are all together. Nobody is different. It is a good feeling to belong to a group that makes everyone feel a part of them."

As head cook, Pat loves to make bread from scratch. Her ears perk up when a student walks by sniffing and says, "Is that what it's supposed to smell like?"

When one cooks for over a hundred teenagers every day, wisdom, patience and strength are in demand. Pat readily admits that it is God who has protected the kitchen staff from accidents and graciously provides in every way.

She uses thirty pounds of tator tots in a hot dish and "I still can't make enough. I can't believe this crew. They eat hot dish!" She uses twenty-four cups of chocolate chips for 240 cookies, which disappear in one meal.

Another special challenge in the kitchen is that Pat's student staff come from around the world. "Most of my international students are shocked at

Beulah Sunde

On the evening of September 29, 1990, the AFLC Schools' campus was truly lit up for the first time. Lamp posts had been installed along the campus driveway in memory of Norman Sunde, given by his wife, Beulah, now AFLBS dean of women, and their four children, Pam, Brad, Mary and Jim.

the way Americans waste food. One student thought we should have a pig in the back for all our scraps. Then come May, we could have a pig roast." Pat chuckled as she thought of more stories she could tell.

For Clyde, his days constantly prove challenging. There is a lot of building floor space to maintain besides the beautiful grounds to groom. He quickly gives credit to an efficient staff. "For example," he said, "I don't know what we'll do if or when Elaine Rentz leaves. She takes care of the housekeeping so well that it is no burden for me at all."

Whatever the request, from building cabinets to plumbing repairs, Clyde seems to accept it in his quiet manner and with a smile say, "Yes, I'll get it done," (rarely?) indicating he has a multitude of previous requests and expectations to meet.

Clyde's attitude can best be said in his own words, "We're just here doing a job and we can only do our best for the Lord."



It was September 29, 1986, that Norman Sunde died suddenly of a heart attack. For thirty-seven years he and Beulah lived on a farm near Frost, Minnesota. Besides their own children, the Sundes took in forty-eight foster children — mostly babies. "We would've had more if we had the space," Beulah chuckled. "But we really did not have a big house."

Their first foster baby arrived when he was five days old. "When they brought him to us, they said he would not live ... we adopted him and now he is twenty-eight, married with two children." Beulah became misty-eyed as she continued, "Each one was really special. I often think of these kids ... sure wish I could see them now."

The difficult times were there, too. Beulah was in a three-legged race one time during VBS. She fell and broke her shoulder. They had three foster infants at the time and Pampers had not yet been invented.

Giving of herself to meet the needs of others continues today in her ministry as dean of women at AFLBS. After her husband died, her children did not want to see their mother alone on the farm. "I didn't want to live in Minneapolis," Beulah admitted, "yet I knew the Lord had opened the door." Since March of 1987, Beulah has lived on the second floor of the girls' dorm. "Now this is my home," smiled Beulah, "And the campus driveway is lit up just like Norman would have wanted it to be."

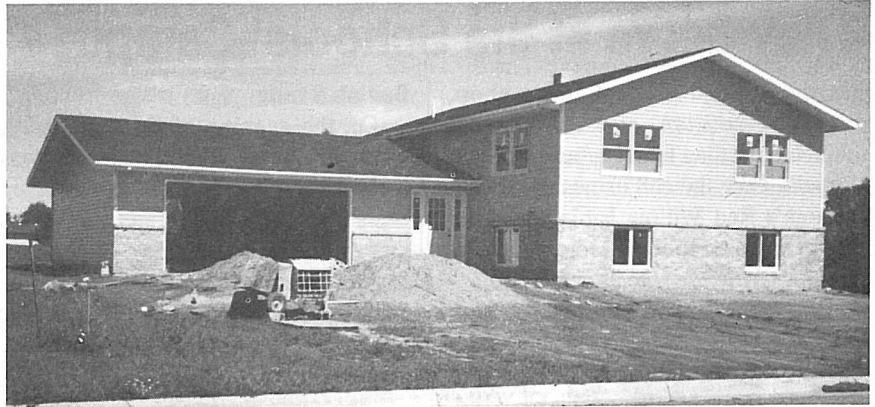
—by S. Hjermstad



Cokato, Minnesota Church Helps Pastor Build House

What does carpentry work have to do with ministry? At Good Shepherd Free Lutheran Church, Cokato, Minnesota, they seem to be working together to carry on ministry in the kingdom of God.

This summer I built a house for our family, with the help of the congregation. On May 14, work began and the basement was dug for our new home. By the end of May, the masonry contractors had the basement up and ready for framing to begin on May 31, when we officially moved to Cokato. Living temporarily with one of the church families, time flew by as I directed the building and Linda brought in meals. Men and teens from the congregation aided me as we worked throughout the summer. They wired, did the furnace work, helped with plumbing, while



ladies waited to paint and varnish.

You might wonder how a pastor can build a home and be ministering at the same time? Well, our arrangement was that I would preach on Sundays and lead Bible studies on Wednesday nights; otherwise, I could use my time to complete the house. The congregation was so good about this arrangement throughout the summer and even when it took six more weeks than originally planned.

On Friday night, October 12, the joyous occasion arrived. Around thirty people helped to move us in. The men headed out to load up all our belongings into farm trucks from our temporary residence ten miles away, while the women, armed with vacuums and rags, enthusiastically cleaned everything before Linda allowed it in the house.

On Monday, October 22, I started pastoring the congregation full-time.

California Church has Anniversary

Celebrating her first anniversary, Shepherd's Church of the Valley, the AFLC Home Mission congregation in Murrieta, California, is continuing to see people coming to know the Lord, grow in Him and seek His direction.

A Sunday morning adult class on cults has been taught by Mr. Norm Carl, an elder in the congregation, with approximately 15 people in attendance. Rev. David Skordahl, pastor of Shepherd's Church, plans to teach the next class using the AFLC textbook, "Congregational Life and the Bible."

Election of officers, church council and ministry boards has taken place, and these chosen leaders are prepared to follow the path of the Lord as He desires for His people. There are presently about 75 who worship together in a triple-wide mobile church home every Sunday. This temporary facility provides a worship area, a kitchen, a nursery, and three rooms for offices and Sunday School classes. Plans are being made to remove a half-wall to increase seating space in the sanctuary. A fenced children's play area outside is being prepared, as well as a volleyball, shuffleboard, and horseshoe game area for teens and adults.

This new congregation asks for the prayers and support and encouragement of other churches in our fellowship. We are thankful to be a Home Mission congregation of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations.



(L-R) Mr. Dick McAndrews, president of the congregation, his wife, Joan, Pastor David Skordahl, and attorney Mark Hiepler presenting the church's incorporation papers.



(L-R) Mildred Freeman, Donna Carl, Lou Ann Carl (church hostess), and Kim Harris sharing kitchen fellowship.

How good the Lord is to allow us to serve a congregation where we can work together on our home and now work together on building the Body of Christ. Our earthly dwelling places will deteriorate, burn, and one day be gone, but how good to have an eternal purpose in the Church; the pastor equipping lay people to minister. To this end we work together here in Cokato. May God's work go forward in the church, in our homes, and where our people rub shoulders with the world every day.

—by Pastor Lyndon Korhonen

In Memoriam

Andrew Sigward Nelson, Everett, Washington, passed away October 18, 1990, at the age of 87. He was a member of Calvary Lutheran.

letter to the editor

AFLC Church Needed in Phoenix

For some time now we've recognized the need for an AFLC congregation in the area around Phoenix, Arizona, where several people of AFLC background have taken up residence and an increasing number spend their winters. Most of them desire to worship in a Bible-believing Lutheran congregation, but without a church of their own in the area, they are like sheep without a shepherd and attend a variety of churches. Therefore, the need for an AFLC congregation is great indeed!

This fall and winter season, 1990-91, we intend to do everything possible to get something started. At present, it appears that the east Phoenix area (Mesa, Scottsdale, Apache Junction) would be the most likely location to begin, but we want to contact all interested persons living or wintering in the greater Phoenix area before a definite decision is made.

If you know any interested people in the area, please contact either Mr.

from the Miriam Infant Home



home so that I could have a better chance in life.

I'm very happy in the Infant Home. I have two mommies who love me and take good care of me. I also have many brothers and sisters of all sizes and shapes who love me and play with me and pray for me and take me to the Association Free Lutheran Church.

Pastor Oseias, who is my guardian, is like a father to me. He calls me "Peanut," because he says I look like one. What do you think? He's good to me and always makes sure that I'm well taken care of.

Because I'm so little, Pastor Dyrud is writing this letter for me. He loves me, too, and is happy to see me here and prays for me. But he would like to have you remember me in prayer, and maybe some kind person could adopt me financially for \$25 a month.

"And we know that all that happens to us is working for our good if we love God and are fitting in his plans" (Romans 8:28 LB).

Happily in the Infant Home,
Ricardo

Hi! My name is Ricardo

I was born August 2, 1989. My mommy is a teenage drug addict. My daddy abandoned my mommy when she became pregnant with me. My grandma took care of me the first few months of my life. Then my grandpa died and grandma had to work, so I was passed from home to home until grandma gave me to the juvenile judge.

When grandma gave me to the judge and passed me on to the "Free Lutheran Miriam Infant Home," she cried a lot and pleaded with the pastors to raise me in a Christian

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences - February 1 - November 30

FUND	TOTAL BUDGET	REC'D IN SEPTEMBER	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	%* TOTAL
General Fund	\$ 223,110.00	\$17,834.56	\$149,814.80	67
Schools - (AFLTS) . .	136,822.00	9,888.47	57,614.94	42
(AFLBS) . .	186,850.00	13,059.82	89,480.12	48
Home Missions.	433,616.00	26,294.43	225,187.66	52
World Missions.	366,197.00	29,618.30	187,166.49	51
Capital Investment . .	30,000.00	1,157.64	17,732.82	59
Parish Education . . .	64,970.00	6,124.79	37,369.61	58
TOTALS	\$1,441,565.00	\$103,978.01	\$764,366.44	53
1989 - 1990	\$1,308,281.00	\$113,862.72	\$734,885.66	56
*Goal 83%				

Howard Lieder, 7607 E. McDowell Road, Scottsdale, AZ 85257, telephone (602) 837-9344; or Pastor Robert Giles, 3032 Cole Circle, Tucson, AZ 85713, telephone (602) 883-9698.

We promise that everyone whose name and address we receive will be

contacted by phone and letter, as well as a personal visit. Our commitment is to get something started! Please help us, and be a part of the beginning of a new exciting work for the Lord!

Pastor Robert D. Giles
Tucson, Arizona

THIS YEAR ALSO

—by Rev. Henry Johansen
Willmar, Minnesota

Cut it down! This was the terse command of the owner regarding the fruitless fig tree in his orchard. Three years earlier he had taken note of the barren tree. The second year, no return of investment. All he found was leaves, yet he allowed it to remain. The third year was just as dismal. "Cut it down; why does it use up the ground" (Luke 13:7 KJV)?

The orchard keeper was reluctant to carry out the sentence. Much labor had been expended on behalf of this particular tree since the day of planting — watered during dry seasons, shaded from the heat of the blazing sun, cared for as a mother would an ailing child. Though fruit was not realized, he still had hope. "Sir, let it alone this year also." He had a new method of husbandry to try. If that doesn't do it, then "you can cut it down" (Luke 13:8-9).

One more trial year, the last one. The sentence was stayed. The patience of the owner prevailed as the keeper interceded on behalf of the tree. Would there be a favorable response to the digging and fertilization of the soil by the fourth anniversary? Jesus didn't say.

Who knows? Perhaps you, too, are living out your last year of trial. 1991 faces us. It is given for repentance. "Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?" (Romans 2:4). Many trees will be cut down in the Lord's orchard this year. The command has been given. The axe is already laid to the trunk. Has this thought entered your mind that when this year is over, you, too, may be felled? The Lord has watched for fruit from you! What kind of fruit has He watched for? Has He watched in vain?

From conception you have been in the Keeper's care. In infancy, your parents brought you to Him in baptism. In childlike trust you placed your hand

into the Lord's. You joyfully sang.

Jesus loves me! this I know, for the Bible tells me so;

Little ones to Him belong, they are weak, but He is strong.

Jesus loves me! He will stay close beside me all the way;

Thou has bled and died for me, I will henceforth live for Thee.

You were transplanted into the grove. Through His faithful servants, the Lord has expended a lot of energy to bring you to be a fruitful member of His Church.

Not even one day of your life has been away from the watchful care of Jesus. You are precious to Him. This is why you are still protected among the trees in the grove, though His investment in you may have resulted in more heartache and trouble than joy. Perhaps you would have been cut down by now, save for the intercession of the Keeper before the Father (Hebrews 9:24; 7:25; I John 2:1). How has this time of grace been used? Days, months and even years have passed since you made vows for service. Yet little fruit, perhaps none has been borne for the Lord and His Kingdom. The patience of God is indeed beyond understanding. Amazing, isn't it, that you are still standing? This is a word of warning! Do not play around with the time of grace given to you by God!

Usually there are two responses. A "so what" attitude, or, like Noah of old who "... being warned of God of things not seen yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house ..." (Hebrews 11:7). The Christian who is sensitive to the issues of

life, death and the will of God, often-times grieves over the apparent uselessness and fruitlessness in his life. He digs down his life roots ever deeper into the blood-soaked ground at the foot of the cross of his Savior. His soul is nourished with the fruit-producing freshness of the Lord. Perhaps for you, child of God, the decision has been made, "This year also." I believe (in the context of the parable) that the fruit the Lord is looking for is that which indicates that repentance has truly taken place in our lives. John the Baptist told the religious leaders of his day to bear "fruit in keeping with your repentance" (Matthew 3:8). Repentance and faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord opens up the possibility of the fruit of the Holy Spirit manifesting itself in our lives (John 14:7; Galatians 5:22-24). Then when life's work is ended, the Owner will give charge to the Keeper to move you up to bloom eternally in His glorious presence.

Perhaps you are still growing in the wilderness of sin, nowhere near the Lord's orchard. It may be that repentance is a strange word to you. It means to turn around from the direction that you are going, to change your mind about God and His Son, Jesus Christ, about sin and its penalty, about confession of sin and receiving God's forgiveness in Christ. Won't you turn to Jesus in living faith, trusting in Him alone for your salvation? Then you, too, will be "... like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" (Psalm 1:3).