



# THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

December 7, 1993



**Living  
in  
Light  
of His  
Return**

# THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

December 7, 1993 • Vol. 31, No. 23

## THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

is published biweekly (except for the second issue of July and the second issue of August) by the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441.

## CONTENTS

Relating to People While Waiting for Christ's Return	p. 3
Living in Light of His Second Coming	p. 4
Advent Alphabet for Family Devotions	p. 6
Introduction to the 1994 Bible Studies	p. 13

Subscriptions: \$15.00 year, U. S.  
\$18.00 year, International

Write to:

*The Lutheran Ambassador*  
3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

Send all communications concerning this magazine to: Solveig Hjermstad, Assistant to the Editor, Box 423, Faith, South Dakota 57626. Phone (605) 967-2381. Fax (605) 967-2382.

USPS 588-620 ISSN 0746-3413

Second-class postage paid at Minneapolis, Minnesota, and additional mailing office.

Postmaster: Send address changes to *The Lutheran Ambassador*, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441.

Rev. Craig Johnson, Editor  
Mrs. Wayne Hjermstad, Assistant to the Editor

Editorial Board:

Rev. Wendell Johnson, Chairman  
Dr. Francis Monseth, Secretary  
Mr. Robert Knutson

## Protection

**W**hen you were in a doctor's office or when you read a paper relating to medicine, did you notice a symbol with a snake entwined around a staff? That symbol with the snake at the center is on the official seal of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Did you ever wonder where that symbol came from?

In Greek and Roman mythology Asclepius was the god of healing. He was the son of Apollo. Some have regarded him as the first physician and with his miraculous cures he soon earned immense renown. He became the object of great veneration in Greece. He had six children, one of whom was named Hygieia.

It was believed that Asclepius had the power to restore life to the dead. A snake is supposed to have told him how to do that. The snake was the ancient symbol of health because it could shed its skin and appear young again. In art, Asclepius is pictured as a strong young man holding a snake-entwined staff.

Another snake related story takes place hundreds of miles from Rome or Greece where the Israelites had wandered in the barren wilderness for 38 years heading for the promised land of Canaan. The sand was hot and it burned their feet. They were weary and depressed. They had no water and they detested that miserable manna they had been living on (Numbers 21:4-9).

They not only complained against Moses, they also complained against God: "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the dessert?" they asked. "Then the Lord sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died."

The people acknowledged that they had sinned and begged Moses to ask the Lord to take the snakes away. God did not promise to take the snakes away. He did promise, however, to provide a solution to their problem. "Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live. So Moses made a bronze snake

## Light on the Way

and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, he lived."

The first of these two snake stories is a myth; the second is the truth.

When Jesus was talking with an Israeli teacher by the name of Nicodemus, Jesus brought up the subject of the snakes: "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life" (John 3:14, 15).

There are spiritual snakes that we would probably be happy to have the Lord take from us. In fact, we may have pleaded with Him to do just that. But He has not taken them away. They keep on destroying people around us, maybe even some people close to us. As He did with the Israelites, Jesus has not promised to take the snakes away; but He has promised a protection from snake bites for those who will accept it. In that very intimate prayer between Himself and His Father, Jesus prays for us: "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one" (John 17:15).

As the Israelites had to, we also have to live among the snakes. We deal with the poisonous snake bites of sin which are capable of inflicting eternal death. However, we too have protection against the bites. Our protection is in Jesus Christ who was put up, not on a pole, but on a cross.

Praise God for the true, not mythical, solution to spiritual snake bites which we have in the Son of God, Jesus Christ.



— by Rev.  
Walter Johnson

Christ has no more precious possessions on earth than the souls He has redeemed with His blood.<sup>1</sup> Those souls are the people we contact in our everyday life. They include the neighbor across the street, the farmer who lives down the road, or the classmate who sits in the desk next to us in study hall. "You must know then, what He expects of you ... He expects that you,

# Relating to People While Waiting for Christ's Return

from the love of souls, utilize every opportunity in the service of their salvation ... He asks you to counsel them, guide them in the matter of their salvation, hand them a good book, and do whatever your judgment and tact indicate. Only see to it that the love of Christ constrains you."<sup>2</sup>

Consider the love of God for these souls. Jesus said, "God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son ... I am the good Shepherd; the Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep ... and other sheep I have which are not of this fold; **it is necessary for me** to bring these also ..." This is the "divine compulsion" of the heart of God: He so loved. In His compassion, He shaped all of history to bring about the redemption event of the cross. Christ, the all powerful Creator of the heavens and the earth became flesh. Because of His love for people, the Creator suffered the indignity of human birth, the Creator became a helpless child in the arms of His mother, the Creator became tired and rested at the well in Samaria, the Creator wept at the grave of Lazarus, the Creator suffered at the hands of brutish unbelieving men. This One in love knelt in the gar-

den and sweat drops of blood, had the crown of thorns pressed upon His head, the nails driven into His hands and feet. This One God made to be sin for us ... and He died ... and He rose again. Why? "God so loved the world ..."

This means then that the souls of people around us are souls that are loved by God and have been redeemed by Christ. The ultimate price has already been paid for them, the blood of Christ has been spilled for their sake, they have been reconciled to God through the death of His Son (II Corinthians 5:14, 19). In other words, those souls are not spiritual "flotsam" that pass us by, to be retrieved if it is convenient or if we see something of value. Rather, they are those whom God held so precious that He purchased them while they were yet sinners, yet enemies of God. These precious souls, bought with such an enormous price, will go lost for eternity if they do not hear the Good News and come to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. Thus, the ministry of the true believer is the ministry of reconciliation; we are called to proclaim the word of reconciliation to those souls for whom Jesus died.

The question for the believer never, ever has been whether we should go with the Good News. We must ... we do, or we are no believers at all. Christ, our Redeemer, is the One who commands, "Go, and make disciples of all the nations ... lift up your eyes, and look on the fields that are white already unto harvest." Compelled by the love of God for sinners, it is our privilege to go and make the delightful announcement of the gospel, that people would hear; and hearing, would believe.

**That's the heart of god.  
That's what we do as we  
relate to people ... until He  
comes again.**

<sup>1</sup>C.O. Rosenius, "A Faithful Guide to Peace With God" (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1923), p. 287.



—Rev. Philip Haugen  
Culbertson, Montana

# Proper Priorities

**S**imeon had understood Scripture. He had received a promise from God that he would not die until he first saw the Savior, God's Son. I believe that was a special blessing from God because Simeon was a faithful one. Simeon saw that the time for the coming was near. On this side of His life on earth, we now understand that Jesus' birth as a baby was His first coming; though in truth He had been here all along.

## Living in Light of His Second Coming

### Only Temporary

**I**t's only temporary, the Call Committee assured us as they ushered us into the little house that was to be our home for the next months. All of our furniture and most of our personal belongings had been packed in storage while a new parsonage was being built. In the meantime, this run-down little house next door to the church my husband had been called to serve as pastor had been partially furnished with some discarded furniture donated by members of the church.

I looked around in dismay. How would we manage here with our three children? There was no door on our bedroom which opened into the living room. The upstairs area where the children were to sleep resembled an attic more than a bedroom. There was but one closet, and only some odds and ends of dishes in the kitchen cupboards.

"It's only temporary," my husband reminded me. I made our list of things that I "couldn't live without" — a rug for inside the door, some drapes, and other "necessities," but he wouldn't hear of it. If we were going to spend money, it would be for the new house — an investment that would have lasting significance, not just something temporary.

But as the new house began to take shape, I thought less and less about the problems of doing without my usual conveniences and began to think about what I had to look forward to. The house would be wonderful with everything we had hoped for and more. I thought about it every day, planning how I would decorate it and where we would place the furniture. Whenever I was inconvenienced by something in the house we lived in, I would remind myself that it was indeed only temporary. Someday I would live in the beautiful new house down the street.

We know that because now we have the promise that He is coming again. Here we are, waiting with another promise. We know that the promise is true. He really will come again. That is the Second Advent.

With that knowledge, how should our lives be different (II Peter 3:11)? How should we set our priorities in the light of the Second Coming? John Wesley White, an evangelist with the Billy Graham Association, wrote a book titled "Re-Entry." White cites a Professor Duffield as describing the Apostle Paul urging in his epistles purity, patience and service in light of Christ's Second Coming.

### Purity

In I John 3:3, the Apostle John says: "Everyone who has this hope in him (being like Christ when he appears) purifies himself, just as He is pure." Till death we are inescapably in this world. But just as surely, we are to avoid a love of the world and what it holds. (I John 2:15). The fact of the Second Coming should be a driving force in us to practice daily holiness. How freeing it would be if each day we were to seek as Isaiah the purifying coal from the altar to sear those impurities in our lives. Let's be pure for Him to use.

And then one day it happened! The president of the church council called and said it was ready! On Saturday, in just two days, we could move in! It was the day before Christmas. When we got there they had decorated a tree for us, and hung a wreath on the door. That evening I sat by the tree in the new house, tired but happy.

I soon realized that God had been teaching me a very important lesson during the months I lived in the little house. It was as if he was telling me, "Audrey, that's how your life should be. Your focus should not be on your life down here. Those problems you face are only temporary. You see, I'm preparing a new house for you. And the new house will be so far superior to what you have here, that you can't even imagine it. Someday I will come and get you and bring you here to be with me."

When we focus on the fact that one day — and perhaps soon — Jesus Christ will return for us, it affects the way we look at the problems we face.

First of all, it changes our perspective. God knew I needed the lesson of that little house, because there would indeed be problems to face; problems in that church as well as in our personal lives. But they were only temporary as are the

## Patience

The writer to the Jews speaks of the certainty of God's promise and of Abraham's patience in Hebrews 6. Thirteen years had passed between Ishmael's birth and the appearance of the Lord to Abraham recorded in Genesis 17. Even in the face of "Impossibility" with any remaining hope fading as he aged yet further, Abraham waited patiently for the promise. Years earlier, Abraham had foolishly taken his wife's advice and attempted to force consummation of the promise on his own timetable and in his own way. Now, though he laughs to himself about the thought of Sarah having a child, he waits patiently for its fulfillment. God is patient, not wanting any to perish (II Peter 3:9). My attitude is not patient at times. Sometimes I could not care less about the lostness of much of this crazy world. "Let it burn," I think. Shame on me. Let's look at each day as one more opportunity given by God to capture an eternal soul for His Kingdom. Let's be thankful for His patience and adopt that attitude as our own.

## Service

Since our adoption as sons, we have an obligation: Serve. A Sunday School teacher of mine

frequently says that he is listening for two things: "Well done, good and faithful servant," and "Enter into the joy of your master" (Matthew 25:21). Few things are as satisfying to me as working hard with my body. I love to sweat and then end the day with a refreshing shower and the feeling of accomplishment from the day's work. Somehow, it is easier for me to put my back into "my work" for "my kingdom" than it is for me to sweat for His Kingdom. It should not be that way. The Father is always at His work (John 5:17). Let's use both our intellect and our physical strength to get His work done.

No doubt about it; He's coming back! The only reason He has not done it yet is because the Father hasn't said, "It's Time." Acts 1:7 tells us that only the Father knows the time. Till He gives the word and the Lord returns, let's live with great abandon for Him. Since we believe He is coming, we must **not** be silent! Once He comes, our opportunity to spread the gospel and make disciples will be **past**.

In the light of His Second Coming, let's spend ourselves on the only thing that will last: the eternal souls in those around us.

— by John Sessions Talley  
Helmar Lutheran Church  
Newark, Illinois

**"... let's live  
with great  
abandon  
for Him."**

problems I face today. That problem I'm dealing with, no matter how severe, is not the focus of my life.

In II Corinthians 4, Paul talks about his "light and momentary troubles" which he describes earlier in the chapter and elsewhere. As we read about what he went through, his problems seem far from being "light" or "momentary." Yet he says they are "achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, as we study God's Word we come to realize that our problems are preparation. We are being prepared for life in the Kingdom of Glory. We are the bride of Christ and He wants us prepared for Him when He returns. I realize that I need a lot of work if I'm going to be a fit bride for Christ. "He who began a good work in (me) will carry it on to completion until the day of Jesus Christ."<sup>2</sup> Suffering produces perseverance which produces character which produces hope.<sup>3</sup> And, finally, when we are living in anticipation of Christ's return, and realize that the problems we are going through are getting us ready for that fantastic event, we begin to see

our problems as privileges. This is a giant step of spiritual maturity. No unbeliever or immature Christian would have the audacity to consider his problems "pure joy"<sup>4</sup> or to "rejoice in (his) sufferings"<sup>5</sup> yet that's what the Word of God tells us to do. Why? Because we know that those problems are helping us become what Christ wants us to become.

Our problems are "only temporary." One of these days Jesus will return. And, as the hymn writer put it,

*"There'll be no sorrow there, no more burdens to bear,*

*No more sickness, no pain, no more parting over there;*

*And forever I will be with the One who died for me —*

*What a day, glorious day, that will be."*<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>II Corinthians 4:17-18

<sup>2</sup>Philippians 1:6

<sup>3</sup>Romans 5:3-4

<sup>4</sup>James 1-2

<sup>5</sup>Romans 5:3

<sup>6</sup>Jim Hill, Copyright Ben J. Spear

— Audrey Gilmore  
Christ is Lord Lutheran Church  
Onalaska, Wisconsin

**P**art of getting ready for Christmas is decorating our homes. Simple, traditional symbols can convey the truth of Jesus' birth on an Advent calendar hung on the Christmas tree or somewhere else around the house. Jesus often used simple things such as seeds, trees and soil to help us understand and remember His truths.

An Advent calendar is an effective way to prepare for Christ's birthday. Create your own calendar to aid your family in focusing on the real meaning of the Christmas season. I was asked to give an Advent program one year and came up with this idea inspired from an article in "The Christian Reader." I used the ABC's and basic symbols for each day beginning on December 1. A 4x6 foot calendar was made of heavy cardboard, construction paper and magic marker. A symbol was made for each day of the month and covered with a lettered sheet of paper which I removed as I presented each day's symbol.

December family devotions will be enriched as you look up Bible verses and select related songs. It is meaningful and fun! For my program, I used the Living Bible. Note Matthew 1:18, II Timothy 2:8 and Matthew 1:21b. God's Word is trustworthy and gives the facts of Jesus' birth, death, resurrection and the purpose of His coming.

**1 — A** Aromas symbolized by a Pine Bough or other fragrance. God desires a special fragrance from us (Ephesians 5:2, II Corinthians 2:14).

**2 — B** Bells may be in church, school, dinner or fire. Think of their purpose. When we hear a bell this Advent, let's stop and hear God's call and direction (Matthew 4:17; 11:28).

**3 — C** Candle, even a small candle gives light in a dark place. Christ's coming drives away the darkness of evil (John 1:9; 8:12; Psalm 27:1, 119:105).

**4 — D** Decorate with a garland as King Solomon described in Proverbs 1:8 (RSV). May we adorn ourselves with our Lord's teachings.

**5 — E** Eating Christmas cookies is a big holiday tradition. May we daily hunger for Jesus Christ and His Word

# Advent Alphabet for Family Devotions

(I Peter 2:3, Psalm 107:9). He is the Bread of Life.

**6 — F** Friends as shown by a shepherds crook representing Jesus (Psalm 23:1, 4b NAS). The rod is used for discipline and protection (Psalm 139:23-24). The shepherd's staff symbolizes the Spirit of God comforting, guiding and drawing us to Himself (Isaiah 30:21). Shepherds in a dark field heard the message of Jesus' birth and immediately acted upon it. They believed the message.

**7 — G** Greeting cards are a common way of saying "Merry Christmas." Send cards with a Christ-centered message. When we receive cards, read one or more at each meal and pray for the sender. We anxiously open and read cards. Do we do the same with God's Word? (Colossians 3:16).

**8 — H** Home, a place where people are welcomed in Christ's love during the holidays. (I Corinthians 3:16; 10:31; 11:1; Hebrews 13:14).

**9 — I** Individuals, each person must decide to make room in their heart for Jesus and accept His gift and follow Him (Ephesians 3:17-19).

**10 — J** Jesus symbolized by the Cross reminds us that Jesus was born to be our Savior (I Peter 18:20). Do you believe it or not?

**11 — K** Kin are special at Christmas. Jesus had a family too (Mark 6:3) God is our father, we are His children. Let us honor and obey Him (Romans 8:15).

**12 — L** Love is the heart of Christmas (John 3:16). His love never ends. What do we give Him (John 14:21, 23)?

**13 — M** Music is a universal language that touches hearts. Isaac Watts complained about the poor quality of hymns in church so his father suggested he produce something better. Eighteen-year-old Isaac said he already had and showed his father "Joy to the World." The congregation sang it and requested and received a new hymn from Isaac Watts for the next 222 Sundays!

**14 — N** Nativity scene featuring the Cradle which was a prelude to the cross. A young girl was moving the manger around many times while setting up a nativity scene. When asked

**Create your special Advent calendar.**





why, she replied: "We want to be sure that Jesus shows."

**15 — O** Ornaments make a tree beautiful but they can not be seen in the dark. The beauty of ornaments comes from the light they reflect (Matthew 5:14, 16).

**16 — P** Present from God is Jesus, the world's greatest gift. What message is on the gift tag? How is the gift wrapped and where can we find it? How can we respond (Luke 2:11, 12; John 1:12)?

**17 — Q** Questions asked can be valuable. The Wisemen asked a question too (Matthew 2:2). When and how do we worship Christ? What do we tell people who ask about Jesus?

**18 — R** Red represents Jesus' blood. Bethlehem's Baby was born to be crucified.

**19 — S** Stockings representing our lives stuffed by God with more blessings than we can count. Pray that God will fill our lives with his love, His peace and His words so we can pass it on.

**20 — T** Trees at Christmas remind us of Eden's forbidden tree from which Adam ate and the tree which made the cross on which Jesus died for our salvation.

**21 — U** Unwrapping an open box shows we have found the gift inside. Have we opened God's Word and found god's gift of salvation? During this Advent season, do we unwrap or unravel?

**22 — V** Vacation days from school and children's excitement grows. Toy departments flourish with activity. Do our children think more of Santa than the Savior born in Bethlehem?

**23 — W** Wreaths are a complete circle with no beginning and no ending. And so is God's love toward us.

**24 — P** and **X** are the first two letters in Greek for Christ. Do we celebrate CHRIST-mas or X-mas? X-tensive shopping, x-citing parties, x-cessive feasting, x-alting Santa Claus and x-cluding Christ?

**25 — Y** Yule log was traditionally lit on Christmas Day and kept burning for 12 days. Let that remind us that if we accept God and His Word, our lives will glow with His love and will radiate to others.

## Plan Now for the 1994 Free Lutheran Youth Leadership School

**T**he 1994 Free Lutheran Youth Leadership School will be at the Association Free Lutheran Bible School July 18-22. Registration will begin at 3 p.m. on Monday. The event will end at noon on Friday.

The theme for the conference is based on I Corinthians 3:11, "Foundations for Life." Brochures will be available at the Pastors Conference in January.

Associate Youth Director **Bob Halvorson** will teach the **Son Life Ministry Basic Foundations Seminar**. **Rev. James L. Johnson**, newly elected president of the Free Lutheran Youth will be the evening speaker and **Rev. Dennis Gray**, Youth Ministries Director will teach Romans 1-8.

The seminar is open to all youth. It is not limited to only ten youth per congregation! Pastors and youth workers may send as many youth as they wish. The cost is \$150 for the entire week, including a Twins game!

It is suggested that congregations pay the way for the entire group of officers and other leaders. Students who are potential leaders are encouraged to attend. Pastors and youth directors will receive much for their ministry in the local congregation.

**26 — Z** Zillions of times God forgives our doubts and sins. We owe Him a zillion thanks! He will return someday. May we not be sleeping (Mark 13:35-37). Can you say honestly: "I'm ready?"

Lord, make my life a gift to you, let me be:

A mind through which Christ thinks  
A heart through which Christ lives  
A voice through which Christ speaks

A hand through which Christ helps.

— *Arlene Lee*  
*Good Shepherd Free*  
*Lutheran Church*  
*Menomonie, Wisconsin*

## YOUTH

### Fall Youth Rallies

**Badger, Minnesota** — On October 9 Badger Creek and Oiland youth hosted the Northwestern Minnesota District Rally. **Rev. Richard Anderson**, Lakeville, Minnesota, spoke on the theme, "On Target." Forty teens enjoyed the day filled with sessions, recreation and a pizza party. **West Coast District** youth met in Astoria, Oregon for a weekend retreat on November 5-7. The **Southwest Central Minnesota District** youth gathered at Faith Haven Bible Camp for a retreat during October 29-31. **South Dakota District** youth met at Pipestone, Minnesota on October 23 for a rally for the eastern part of the district. On October 10, Reva, South Dakota hosted a rally for the western congregations in the district. The **Illinois District** rally was hosted by Helmar Lutheran Church in Newark, on October 22-24. The theme for their rally was "Geared to the Times: Anchored to the Rock."

### Have You Heard?

**Pipestone, Minnesota** — Sixteen youth from Christ the King Lutheran Church BASIC (Brothers and Sisters in Christ) are headed for the Rose Bowl Parade with the Pipestone-Jasper High School Band.

**Milford, Illinois** — St. John's Schwer youth sponsored a meeting on November 14. **Mark LeVine** of their congregation spoke on the growing gang and occult activity among teens. **LeVine** works with family therapy and adolescent counseling. He encouraged parents to provide the love and identity needs of teens at home so they will not look for that elsewhere.

**Everett, Washington** — The confirmation class of Calvary and Monroe Lutheran Church took a special weekend retreat during November 12-14 to Arch Cape, Oregon.

## AFLBS Homecoming Held October 8-10

### AFLBS Representative Program Underway

The AFLBS Congregational Representative program has begun. Dean Donald Greven has met with Bible School alumni or friends representing congregations in districts from Illinois, Michigan, South Dakota and Minnesota. By the spring of 1994, the dean hopes to have personally met with these AFLBS representatives in the rest of the districts.

The purpose of the program is to develop a nucleus of people praying daily for the ministry of the Bible school. These congregational representatives will receive a monthly newsletter from the dean's office informing them of current prayer needs and answered prayers. The representatives are being asked to share a brief monthly report to their congregations. The program also encourages a personal visit from either a faculty member or a student organization annually in each congregation.

Finally, the program encourages alumni and friends of AFLBS to promote the school with their own young people.

### Fall Quarter AFLBS Student Body Officers

President — Kyle Torfin, Bemidji, Minnesota  
 Vice President — Shawn Adrian, Bismarck, North Dakota.  
 Secretary — Stephanie Johansen, Bismarck, North Dakota.  
 Treasurer — Karina Greene, Grand Forks, North Dakota.  
 Chaplain — Lars Dyrud, Thief River Falls, Minnesota.

### Basketball Season Begins

AFLBS men's and women's basketball season gets underway before Christmas. Wendy Qualley and Jon Greven are the teams' new coaches. Both are recent graduates of AFLBS.

On October 8 a certain excitement was noticeable on the hill overlooking Medicine Lake in Plymouth, Minnesota. Bible school students hustled around setting up booths for the Friday evening fellowship time for the opening of another AFLBS Homecoming weekend. It was a new idea and current students and the 1993 Homecoming Committee led by Reuben and Deb Quanbeck, '76, of Grand Forks, North Dakota, were hoping that there would be a good turnout.

Eight o'clock came. The faculty had their ice cream booth completed and ready to serve. Current AFLBS students had designed a fish pond booth that was sure to be popular with children of the returning alumni. Other booths were ready and the smell of fresh popped corn filled the campus cafeteria. As the evening progressed it was obvious that alumni and their families were having a good time and that the current students were joining in the fun and fellowship. Three times during the evening the Puppet Ministry Team

put on a skit for the children.

According to Rev. Don Greven, AFLBS Dean: "The weekend was unusually well attended by both alumni and students. The new Friday evening schedule was conducive to intermingle and fellowship in an informal way. The children of the alumni had fun. The whole weekend was well organized."

The annual alumni business meeting on Saturday morning elected new officers and were introduced to the new Alumni Executive Director Terry Claus, '84. He replaces outgoing Director Kari Lane, '87. The new alumni president is Greg Schmitke, '80. Other officers are Matt Greven, '91, vice president; Mary Beth Enderlein, '92, secretary; Deb Nelson, '84, treasurer; and Jon Bylka, '92, chaplain.

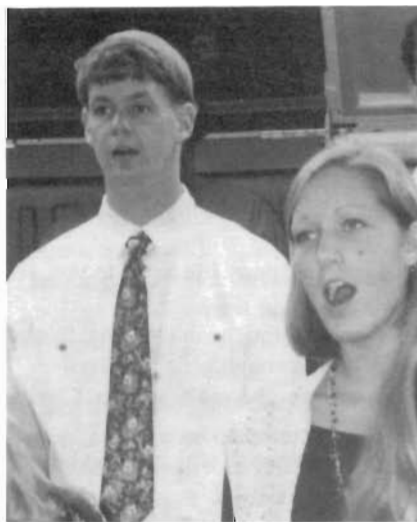
On Saturday evening, a reception for the five honored classes preceded the annual pizza supper. The class of '73 was the largest group represented. A testimony and sharing time followed the meal.

## School's Christmas Concert

December 12, 4 p.m.

At the campus chapel

3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, Minnesota



AFLBS Choir rehearsing for the festive Christmas Concert.

### Grant Monies Received from AAL

The Association Free Lutheran Bible School has been awarded grants totaling \$7,500 from Aid Association for Lutherans.

The majority of the grant will be used to fund a West Coast concert tour for the school's choir in April 1994. The choir will spend 14 days performing 16 concerts in Minnesota, North Dakota, Montana, Canada, Washington and Oregon.

The remainder of the grant will be used to enable the dean of the school to attend the Christian Management Institute in Anaheim, California, and meet with AFLBS congregational representatives at the same time.



## Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary Inter-Term 1994

### Course Offerings:

**Christian Education** — January 3-7 — A study is made of basic principles and methods of Christian education in relationship to the whole congregational program.  
— *Rev. Richard Anderson, Instructor*

**Youth Ministry** — January 10-14 — 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.  
— *Rev. Dennis Gray, Instructor*

**Seminar in Systematic Theology** — January 24-28 — A study of the consistent relationships that exist among the various doctrines that comprise Lutheran theology. Reference will be made to Calvinism and Arminianism as historic Protestant alternatives to the Lutheran position.  
— *Rev. Omar Gjerness, Instructor*

**Thesis preparation** — January 2-28 — 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.  
— *Prof. Ralph Tjelta, Instructor*

### Course Costs:

Registration Fee: \$15

Tuition Fee: \$50 per credit hour

Auditing Fee: \$35 per credit hour

For registration and more information, contact the Office of the Dean, AFLTS, 3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard, Minneapolis, MN 55441; phone 612-544-9501.

## Partners In Prayer



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

**Praise** God for the Lord's strength and protection of the seminary faculty during this year of added responsibilities due to the sabbatical of Dean Dr. Monseth. The additional part-time faculty members have worked together to provide a smooth ongoing ministry.

**Pray** for the ministry of the ARC as they continue to host retreats and camps that, through these times, souls will come to know their Savior and people will be encouraged to walk faithfully with the Lord.

**Praise** God for the opportunity for evangelism during the Friday night Bible studies led by Dr. Monseth in Latvia.

**Pray** for the safety of the missionaries as they travel from church to church and on visitation. Theft and

other criminal activities are on the rise and the missionaries are increasingly aware of their need of God's daily protection and mercy.

**Pray** for the Schools' Board of Trustees as they continue to deliberate on the need to add a faculty member. **Pray** for the January 1994 board meeting and the crucial decisions to be made at that time.

**Praise** God for the numerous donations of labor, supplies, and financial gifts given to the ARC during 1993.

**Pray** for the young Home Mission congregations in Menomonie and Mondovi, Wisconsin, as they seek God's will regarding future pastoral service.

**Praise** God for the six new students at the Bible school who have enrolled for the Winter Quarter.

## Baltic Bulletin No. 3

**M**erry Christmas! In our first Christmas away from the United States, we are working with people who express that greeting in at least four languages. The Latvians say, "Priecigs Ziemasvetiki;" in Estonia it is "Haidjoulupuhi;" the Germans say, "Frohlich Weihnachten;" and in Russian the transliteration is "Srazhdistvom Khristovym!" How very interesting it is to observe the differences in languages as well as in customs in this part of the world!

Unlike the heavy emphasis on Christmas shopping in most of the western world, there are only a few hints that Christmas is approaching in the stores and shops. One may see, for example, three or four variations of Christmas cards in a quiet corner of a store. In that same corner may be six or seven choices of wrapping paper and some ribbon. Otherwise, business is as usual. There are no signs in the store windows promoting special Christmas merchandise. For various reasons, including the bleak economic condition of many people, the commercial aspect of Christmas is rather low key.

Most people wait until about two weeks before Christmas before putting up a tree. That tree may stay up in some homes until well into the new year as I observed last February in an earlier visit. It is only since Glasnost and now independence that Christmas trees have been permitted. Perhaps the people are making up for lost time by keeping them up so long.

Music occupies an important place in the lives of many eastern Europeans  
(continued on next page)

**Pray** for President Robert Lee and his family.

**Praise** God for the generous giving throughout the AFLC as the 1993 fiscal year closes on December 31. **Pray** that the needs of individual departments might be met.

**Pray** for the new Bible study groups and the continued contacts for prospective congregations in Texas. **Pray** for Pastor Joseph Schultz of Tulia as he leads a Bible study group in Amarillo.

## World Missions

### Students in action

At the Brazil AFLC Bible School, Pastor Benvindo Laertes de Oliveira is the evangelism training professor. He also serves as the evangelist for AFLC Brazil. Before coming to the Campo Mourao campus, Pastor Benvindo spent many years as a hospital chaplain, most recently at the Evangelical Hospital in Curitiba.

He has mobilized the students in various evangelistic endeavors.

The following is a review of some activities during a two-month period in 1993:

**Local churches** — This assignment included door to door invitations to churches, helping with a regular program, special conferences, home visitation and follow-

up on decisions for Christ.

**Jardim Modelo Church** — during the two months, there were 268 visitors to this congregation and 64 decisions for Christ.

**Lar Parana Church** — 142 visitors attended a service and 56 souls asked Christ to save them.

**Central Church** — 82 people visited this congregation and 30 people made a decision for Christ.

**Public schools** — The evangelism classes visited five schools during these two months. Over a thousand pieces of literature were handed out. The visits to the schools included invitations to conferences, speaking in classes, musical programs with testimonies and films being shown.

**Hospitals** — Three hospitals were visited at seven different times. The students contacted 173 individuals and 98 patients asked Jesus into their heart. Literature was given to 228 people.

The people the students reached were unchurched. Now the local AFLC



Pastor Benvindo

congregations and students are seeking to disciple these new converts. Please remember Pastor Benvindo as he guides the students in this vital education and ministry of the Bible school.

— Carol Knapp  
Willmar, Minnesota

### BALTIC

and this is especially true at Christmas. There are many orchestral, choral, and instrumental concerts featuring some of the best loved music commemorating the birth of our Lord. The concert halls as well as the cathedrals have full schedules and full houses during this season. The huge pipe organ at the Dome Cathedral (Lutheran) in downtown Riga is a favorite with Latvians especially at Christmas. We have thrilled at the sound of this mighty organ filling every corner of this great edifice.

One of the main themes of the music of Christmas which is derived from its central message is peace. The words of the angels in announcing the birth of our Savior were, "Peace on earth, good will toward men." And yet, as another Christmas has come, the absence of peace is all too apparent everywhere. The song writer responded, "There is no peace on earth, I said."

Ethnic and religious strife, tribal warfare, and racial conflict have been

recently reported at an all-time high at least in recent history. We have all been shocked by gruesome and heartwrenching reports of atrocities in Bosnia, Somalia, Liberia, Haiti, Ireland to name but a few. Cruel and vicious acts of violence are committed against citizens from one's own country.

In the Baltic states, there are deep tensions as accusations are being traded back and forth between people of Baltic descent and those of Russian descent. These charges regard the alleged denial of human rights as well as discrimination in regard to citizenship requirements. In the Riga area, there are more Russians than there are Latvians. One often becomes aware of feelings of bitterness and resentment between these groups. From a human standpoint, one can certainly understand the feelings of the natives here after 50 years of communist domination and repression. It is difficult to forgive and forget when a dear family member has been taken away and never seen again, or when one's property or one's job has been simply seized and

occupied by foreign newcomers.

It is in this atmosphere of resentment and incrimination that the message of peace, peace in and through Christ, is so sorely needed. That message centers in the forgiveness of sin provided through the shed blood of Christ on Calvary's cross. It is in the strength and power of that forgiveness that one can forgive those who have wronged him. As we have talked with believers in the Baltic states, we have witnessed the difference Christ makes as He empowers those whom He has forgiven to forgive those who have hurt them, no matter how deeply.

But there are so many more who need this Christmas message, the message of peace in Christ. Pray with us that the precious news of forgiveness of sin through Christ's shed blood may spread and bear much fruit here in the Baltics and around the world.

— Dr. Francis Monseth,  
Dean Free Lutheran  
Theological Seminary  
On teaching sabbatical  
in Latvia

GOD'S PROVISION - FIRST SACRIFICE

13. What a hopeless situation man had gotten himself into! "Fig leaves" just wouldn't work to cover sin and shame and guilt. But God had mercy. He made the first sacrifice for sin.

- a. What did God do? Gen. 3:21 \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Think about it: What had to be done in order to get skins? \_\_\_\_\_

Try to imagine how Adam and Eve felt as they realized their sin was the reason that one of the animals (they had been given to care for) had to be slain to provide their coats. The pure relationship between God and man was now broken because of man's disobedience.

14. So right from the beginning of creation, what is God clearly illustrating for us? Heb. 9:22b \_\_\_\_\_

God reached down in love and mercy and gave the promise of a Savior and provided a sacrifice.

\*\*\*\*\*

**MAKING IT PERSONAL:**

Have you been set free from the curse of sin by personally accepting the free gift of salvation? God has provided His robe of righteousness for you. If you are clinging to "fig leaves" today, you must throw them away (repent) and put your complete trust in Jesus as your personal Savior. He is YOUR sacrifice (I Peter 1:18-19).

*SACRIFICES OF THE BIBLE*

WMF BIBLE STUDY # 1

JANUARY, 1994

*FROM THE BEGINNING*

You and I were created to have fellowship with God! What an exciting thought! Yet a problem arose right from the start which separated all mankind from our Creator. That problem is the same today: SIN. But God in His great wisdom and love made a way for us to come back to Him and enjoy a personal relationship again. Why was a sacrifice necessary? Let's see.

CREATION

1. How was man created?
- a. Gen. 1:26,27 & 5:1 \_\_\_\_\_  
What does that mean?
- b. Gen. 2:7 (1) \_\_\_\_\_  
(2) \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Psalm 148:5 \_\_\_\_\_
2. Why and how was woman created?
- a. Gen. 2:18 (1) \_\_\_\_\_  
(2) \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Gen. 2:21-25 \_\_\_\_\_

PROVISIONS OF CREATION

3. In a few words, list how God provided and/or what He intended for man and woman:
- Gen. 5:2a 1. \_\_\_\_\_  
5:2b 2. \_\_\_\_\_  
2:24 3. \_\_\_\_\_  
4. \_\_\_\_\_  
5. \_\_\_\_\_  
2:25 6. \_\_\_\_\_  
1:28 7. \_\_\_\_\_  
8. \_\_\_\_\_  
9. \_\_\_\_\_  
1:30 10. \_\_\_\_\_

4. What was the truth about all that God had made? Gen. 1:31 \_\_\_\_\_

Mankind was created in the perfect and beautiful setting of the Garden of Eden, with everything they could want or need, and best of all, no sin or evil. (Think on this for a minute.)

### ONE RESTRICTION

5. In this special place that God had provided for mankind, He had only one restriction: Genesis 2:17a \_\_\_\_\_

6. God also clearly told them the punishment for breaking this restriction, so there could be no misunderstanding on mankind's part: Genesis 2:17b \_\_\_\_\_

### MAN'S FALL INTO SIN

7. In spite of all this, man and woman chose to disobey God and thus suffered the terrible consequences. List the steps in Satan's temptation to Eve. The same is true for us today.

SATAN'S TEMPTATIONS:		VIEW OF GOD'S WORD
Gen. 3:1 a.		DOUBT
3:3 b.		CHANGE
3:4 c.		DENY
3:5 d.		TURN AWAY

Discuss how that can happen - even to Christians.

8. Notice the steps of Eve's fall into sin (4 verbs):  
Genesis 3:6 \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

9. a. How did she rationalize that the fruit was o.k.? Genesis 3:6a

(1) \_\_\_\_\_

(2) \_\_\_\_\_

(3) \_\_\_\_\_

b. Discuss how we are also tempted and why we need to be so careful about what we allow our eyes to see, our ears to hear, etc. because it then enters our mind and can be used by Satan.  
10. Adam committed the same disobedience, but in a different way: knowingly. Summarize the difference by comparing II Corinthians 11:3 to I Timothy 2:14.  
\_\_\_\_\_

Have you made a wrong decision and were crushed and defeated because of it?  
\_\_\_\_\_

11. Now both Adam and Eve had a knowledge of evil. Their eyes were opened and they knew they were naked.

a. What are some of the results of sin in our lives, as was true for Adam and Eve?  
(1) Gen. 3:8 \_\_\_\_\_  
(2) Gen. 3:10 \_\_\_\_\_

b. What is the response of our flesh when we know we have sinned?  
(1) Gen. 3:7b \_\_\_\_\_  
(2) Gen. 3:12-13 \_\_\_\_\_

c. What are some of the "fig leaves" that people today try to use to "look right" before God and other people? \_\_\_\_\_

12. The result of sin was a curse that came upon all mankind. List some of these effects of sin:

a. Gen. 3:14 - Serpent \_\_\_\_\_

b. Gen. 3:15 - Satan \_\_\_\_\_

c. Gen. 3:16 - Woman \_\_\_\_\_

d. Gen. 3:17-19 - Man \_\_\_\_\_

e. Gen. 3:19b - All Mankind \_\_\_\_\_

# Introduction to the 1994 Bible Studies

## Sacrifices of the Bible

## WOMEN

This year we are going to take a deeper look at the sacrifices God gave us. In these lessons we will learn what our holy and loving God wants and expects in a sacrifice. We will see that our need of God is fulfilled only as we heed His instruction to us regarding our desire and attitude in our worship of Him. As we come before Him and realize His holiness and our sinfulness we will acknowledge our need for His blood that was shed to cover our sins.

As we study the five different sacrifices or offerings in the book of Leviticus we will see that they bring us before God in different ways:

**First The Trespass** — the realization we are actually committing sins.

**The Sin Offering** — from our first parents we are born with sin.

**The Peace Offering** — the reconciliation we now have by His taking our place and blotting out our sins and our thankfulness for what He has done for us.

**The Grain Offering** — because He has freed us from the power of sin we have the privilege and the desire to serve Him.

**The Burnt Offering** — we now dedicate our lives more completely to Him.

I desire that through these lessons each of us will realize anew that we are born sinners and in ourselves can do nothing. But God provided the perfect sacrifice in Himself, His Son Christ Jesus. He completely fulfilled all the requirements of sinlessness, perfection and holiness. Out of love He takes our place. But it doesn't end there. Christ Jesus is our *living* sacrifice. He is now in heaven with His Father God, covering our sins. He strengthens and protects us; He guides us through His Holy Spirit. He is our advocate and He is preparing our eternal home.

I thank Him for the privilege of preparing these lessons and for the blessings I have received. I pray that they will draw each of us a little closer to our Saviour as we realize the price He paid and what a great gift He has given us. May the results be an even greater need on our part to praise, worship and thank Him by completely dedicating our lives to Him.

— Beryl Jalonen

Calvary Free Lutheran Church  
Even, Michigan

## letter to the editor

To the Editor:

What a joy it is to learn of Dr. Francis Monseth's open door of opportunity to share his love of the Lord and keen insights with seminarians in Eastern Europe.

For so long we have prayed that the barriers in Eastern Europe would be broken down. How very appropriate it is for the AFLC to lend one of their best to assist our brothers and sisters in helping to evangelize their beloved homelands.

Truly in these days II Timothy 2:1f is being fulfilled, "You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to each other." (NIV)

I look forward to more news on how the Lord is using Pastor Monseth.

Dale M. Stone

Maple Grove, Minnesota

**Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — which is your spiritual worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.**

Romans 12:1,2 (NIV)

## Women's Missionary Federation

*In memoriam gifts*

Mrs. Osmond Tønnesdal, Decorah, Iowa  
Carroll Ohnstad, Summit, South Dakota  
David Dahl, Solo, Minnesota  
Julia Oberg, Argyle, Minnesota  
Olga Melby, Badger, Minnesota  
Ann Utne, Ortley, South Dakota  
Mrs. Hjalmer Hanson, Winger, Minnesota  
Nova Hefler, Morris, Illinois  
Hazel Messelt, Winger, Minnesota  
Minnie Helland, Cooperstown, North Dakota  
Selma Helland, Cooperstown, North Dakota  
Winnie Bergquist, Shevin, Minnesota  
Esther Dannenbring, Freeman, South Dakota  
Edith Blikre, Tioga, North Dakota

*Blessed are  
those who die  
in the Lord*



## PEOPLE and PLACES

**Mrs. Dorothy Olson**, Yorkville, Illinois, a member of Helmar Lutheran Church, recently celebrated her 90th birthday in a special way. Amidst all her celebrating with family and friends, she gave a party for 75 of the residents of Pleasant View Lutheran Home in Ottawa. After presenting an inspirational program, she and several friends served a lunch of her homemade bun sandwiches and kringlas. This is an annual event. Mrs. Olson began volunteer work at the home in 1964 and in the 70s started the tradition of giving her birthday party each October. She also continues to be very active in her local congregation and in several community organizations. She hosts a weekly Bible study in her home. Her enthusiasm for life and her desire to help others with what God has given her are the secrets to her staying "forever young."

— Beth Talley

**Rev. Tim Hurley**, Opelika, Alabama, has resigned from Salem Lutheran Church, Salem, Alabama, where he has served since April, 1992. He has accepted a call to Grace Lutheran Church, Bruce, South Dakota, and begins his ministry there on December 12.

**Student Pastor Collin Hauck**, Edmonton, Alberta, has accepted the call to Solid Rock Free Lutheran Church in Camrose, Alberta. He plans to begin his ministry there on January 1, 1994.

**Lutheran Bible Institute of Seattle**, announced that the position of president will be open in the summer of 1994. Nominations and applications are now being accepted. LBI of Seattle offers degrees in Biblical Studies, Youth and Family Ministry, Missions, and Christian Education. It is accredited by the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges. For more information, contact Martha Gilthvedt, Office of the President, Lutheran Bible Institute of Seattle, 4221 228th Ave. SE, Issaquah, WA 98027; phone 206-392-0400.



**Warroad, Minnesota** — Pictured are northwestern Minnesota area AFLC pastors, Warroad Free Lutheran Church deacons and their new pastor Rev. Gaylord Gartman, along with AFLC President Rev. Robert Lee at the Installation Service of Pastor Gartman last August. The afternoon service was followed by a banquet during which community members could meet Pastor and Mrs. Gartman who had joined in ministry with Warroad Free Lutheran Church earlier in the summer. The congregation had been without a pastor for one year. They appealed to AFLC congregations for short-term financial help and are extremely grateful for the loving response.

**Astoria, Oregon** — Bethany Free Lutheran Church recently donated money to purchase computer equipment for *The Lutheran Ambassador*. A special thanks to those individuals within the congregation who gave this generous gift.

**Spicer, Minnesota** — Green Lake Free Lutheran Church began the Advent season on November 28 with a "Hanging of the Greens" fellowship supper and a time of preparing the church building for the Christmas season.

**Leland, Illinois** — St. Petrie Lutheran Church hosted its first Missions Festival on Sunday, October 24. The 4-5:30 p.m. Missions Celebration Service featured Rev. Jeff Swanson, Newark, Illinois, speaking on the Partners in Mission Outreach program and Rev. Mel Meyer, Norway, Illinois, sharing on the mission opportunities in the Baltic States. Missionary Jeff Donowue of Bolivia, shared on behalf of the Cup of Cold Water Ministries. Christian musician Judy Dagraedt led the praise and worship time. The evening dinner was an ethnic food feast. At 7 p.m. the evening service began with the keynote speakers being Rev. Todd and Barb Schierkolk of Evergreen Park, Illinois. They are missionary candidates to the AFLC mission field in Mexico.

**Rev. Steven Ruechel**, East Grand Forks, Minnesota, has resigned as pastor of Christ The King Free Lutheran Church, and is available for call.

## In Memoriam

**Hanna Vaagenes**, St. Paul, Minnesota, passed away on November 8, 1993. Born on April 8, 1893, Mrs. Vaagenes served 38 years as a missionary in Madagascar with the Lutheran Free Church. She was preceded in death by her husband, Rev. Morris G. C. Vaagenes.

**Rev. Clemmence E. Dyrud**, Silverton, Oregon, passed away on June 30, 1993. He was born October 1, 1908, to Petter A. and Marie Dyrud in Climax, Minnesota. After graduation from Augsburg College and Seminary in 1941, he served parishes in Grenville, South Dakota; Silvana, Washington; Pelican Rapids, Minnesota; Silverton, Oregon; Kathryn, North Dakota and Almira, Washington.

In addition to his full-time parish ministry, he was active in the wider work of the church. He was chairman of the Board of Trustees of Bethany Home for the Aged, Everett, Washington, and chairman of the Board of Regents of Oak Grove Lutheran High School, Fargo, North Dakota.

He was preceded in death by a son, Paul, and his wife, Mae. Rev. Dyrud is survived by two sons, David and Dennis; two brothers, Rev. Amos of Minneapolis, and Harvey of Newfolden, Minnesota; one sister, Edel Gast of Argyle, Minnesota, and three grandchildren and many nieces and nephews.



## Do You Believe?

**D**o you believe Jesus will return before the year 2000? The question was asked of me in the midst of a normal conversation, but it caused me to stop and think, "Do I really believe it? Do I expect He will return before this decade is over? Am I going to be surprised if I am still living life somewhat as it is today in the year 2001? If I truly believe it is going to happen, am I living in a manner that reflects that belief?"

The conviction that Christ may return any day is something God's people have held dear throughout the ages. How that belief should affect our actions, however, is an issue that often may not receive enough consideration.

So much of our time, energy and resources is spent on things that have very little eternal significance. How much stuff we have and how many awards we have won will not mean a thing when Christ returns. What will matter is how many people know Jesus.

The fact that the Lord may return at any time should spur us on to sharing with people the good news that they can be ready today for His return whenever that may be. We have the great opportunity of letting people know that, "Now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation" (II Corinthians 6:2).

Reflecting on Christ's return also reminds us that many of the things we worry about do not deserve the attention we give them. The troubles of the present day are only for a season. The problems that perplex us will soon pass. "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).

One summer when I was going to college, I had a job that I really did not like. If I had thought that job was my lifetime master, it would have been tough to continue. I knew, though, that it was only for the summer. I could make it, knowing the end was in sight.

The knowledge of Christ's return should encourage us in whatever trials and difficulties we may face. This is not how things will be forever. The end is in sight! "He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming soon.' Amen, Come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20).

## The Credit Crunch

**N**ow they even call on the phone. Someone else has a credit card that, according to them, I need. The interest rates are low, the credit limit is high; go, take the plastic and spend, spend, spend.

Credit cards can be very convenient and handy, but also dangerous. It is so painless. Just let them look at the card and they give you what you want. You even get the card back. It is simple, too simple.

Many have built a house of cards that is one step from collapsing. They buy today and expect to find a way to pay for it tomorrow. When tomorrow comes they can only make the minimum payment and, thus, the amount owed keeps rising and rising.

Christmas is an especially tempting time. "It would make them so happy. Let's buy it. We will worry later how to pay for it." Before you do that, ask yourself some questions: If you can't afford it now, how do you expect you will be able to later? What is really necessary to experience joy at Christmas? What is the best way to show someone you are thinking about them and you care?

What people need the most at Christmas can not be purchased with a plastic card. They need to know joy and peace that lasts more than a season. They are longing to know they are loved. They are looking for reasons for hope. What they need is to have someone share with them in words and actions the message of Christmas: The Messiah has come!

Romans 13:8 says, "Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another." A goal for our church body has been to be "Debt Free in '93" with "No More in '94." That is a goal for us to consider striving for, as far as possible, as individuals and congregations as well. Reaching that goal begins with reminding ourselves that what we need the most is found in Christ. Nothing that a credit card can purchase can come close to matching the riches of life with Jesus. At time, we may be amazed at what we can have because of the plastic. Let us be much more amazed at what we have because of Christ. "Those who seek the Lord lack no good thing" (Psalm 34:10). Let us be sure we give to others and receive ourselves the greatest gift of all: the love of Jesus Christ our Lord.

**1994 AFLC  
Pastor's Conference**  
January 18-20  
at the Association  
Retreat Center (ARC)  
Osceola, Wisconsin

Rev. Richard Gilman, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, will begin a part-time interim service to Redeemer Free Lutheran Church, Canton, South Dakota, at the beginning of the new year. Rev. Gilman recently retired from Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Beresford, South Dakota. He is the father of AFLC pastor, Thomas Gilman, Milford, Illinois.

**Williston, North Dakota** — Emmanuel Free Lutheran Church hosted their special meetings on October 17-20 with Rev. Philip Haugen, Culbertson, Montana, as the guest speaker. On November 14, the congregation combined their new membership Sunday with a special Praise Sunday Worship Service followed by a fellowship dinner.

**Austin, Texas (EP)** — Atheist leader Madalyn Murray O'Hair told the *Austin American-Statesman* that she believes she is losing her battle to keep religion out of American public life. She expressed concern about the June "March for Jesus" which attracted over 20,000 people in Austin, where her atheist organization is based. "They have 20,000 out in the street, whereas when (atheists) were here for the convention, we got 300 or 400 out in the street in Austin — you can't have that."

**Detroit, Michigan (EP)** — Officials of a Detroit high school decided October 1 to allow students to form a Christian club. School officials had previously forbidden the club, but changed their decision after attorneys with the Rutherford Institute intervened on behalf of the students who wanted to start the club.

"The school already had the policy and practice of allowing non-curricular clubs to meet on school grounds during non-curriculum times. Cass Technical High school's denial of the proposed Christian club was discriminatory," explained Rutherford Institute attorney David Melton.

The controversy began on Jan. 15, 1993, when Regina Werts, 17, a senior at Cass Technical High School in Detroit, approached her principal for approval to organize a Christian club in the school either before or after school hours. Werts presented the principal with a written plan for the club and a list of 70 students who petitioned for the club. School officials cited separation of church and state, and told Werts that the creation of a religious club at school was unconstitutional.

On September 24, 1993, Melton sent a ten-page letter to the Board of Education of the City of Detroit, demanding that Cass Technical respect the students' constitutional and Equal Access rights to form a non-disruptive Christian club on school grounds during non-curriculum times.

"The Rutherford Institute stood ready to file a lawsuit if necessary on behalf of students who wanted to organize the Christian club. It's unfortunate

that an ultimatum had to be issued to persuade school officials to allow this club which was entirely within the law. They waited until the 'eleventh hour' to make a decision on this important matter," said Melton.

**Chicago, Illinois (EP)** — Human sexuality should be expressed only in loving, committed relationships — but not necessarily limited to heterosexual marriages, according to a report released by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). The 21-page report, a first draft of a proposed social statement for the church, endorses homosexuality and suggests that marriage, though desirable, is optional for committed couples.

The report presents the perspective of "those of us who are gay or lesbian Christians," and calls on the church to "challenge stereotypes" of gays and lesbians, and to challenge the idea that all homosexual activity is contrary to God's law.

Biblical passages condemning homosexuality are addressed in the report, which dismisses them either by arguing that they refer only to abusive homosexual activity, or that they fail to take into account the modern concept of an immutable "sexual orientation."

Recognition of committed couples who live together without the benefit of marriage is urged. "It is the binding commitment, not the license or ceremony, that lies at the heart of biblical understandings of marriage," says the

report. "In those circumstances where a legal marriage is not feasible, communities of faith may need to consider other ways of publicly affirming and communally supporting a loving, binding commitment between two people."

The report commits the church to support gay rights, opposes pornography, presents masturbation as something that is "generally appropriate and health," and sees sex education, including information on condom use, as a moral imperative.

The report, sent to 19,000 pastors and church leaders in late October, has drawn sharp criticism from the conservative wing of the 5.2 million member denomination.

The Rev. Thomas Parrish, president of the Great Commission Network, an organization of conservative Lutheran pastors, condemned the report's "sloppy exegesis." He said, "In the name of grace and understanding, this task force is not being biblical. They need a basic course in Bible study."

Parrish said conservative and evangelical pastors in the ELCA "feel betrayed once again by the leadership of the ELCA." Task forces in the church, he said, are dominated by "the same people with ultra-liberal agendas." He added, "Their hidden agenda is not to be honest biblically but to make the church acceptable to a very secular society. Instead of leading the way, the church merely becomes the final voice of approval for the secular agenda."