



THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

February 18, 1992



**Lord,
Teach
Us To
Pray**

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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COVER ART

Wayne Brown, Fridley, Minnesota

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Rev. Robert Lee, Editor

Mrs. Wayne Hjermstad, Assistant to the Editor

Editorial Board:

Rev. Wendell Johnson, Chairman

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Light on the Way

The Law And Our Best

"I will not hire a man who says to me, 'I will try my best,'" said the speaker at a banquet I attended in South Dakota. "I want a man who says, 'I will do it,' when I give him an assignment." The crowd was impressed by this motivational speaker and burst forth with approving applause. What a confident man we had standing before us. I wondered if his omnipotence would inspire the same in those who were now so enthusiastically cheering or if they would end up comparing their lives to what his appeared to be and feel more like failures than ever. Most of all, I wondered how God fit into the picture of a "successful" man that this speaker portrayed for us.

The second commandment says, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord Thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain." We are all painfully aware of how those in the word "... curse, swear, conjure, lie and deceive by His Name ..." But we often forget to look at ourselves in light of this command to see if we break it by what we neglect. To maintain a consistent and vital prayer life is often one of the biggest struggles in our lives. When we do not "... call upon Him in every time of need and worship Him with prayer, praise and thanksgiving," we break this command. Instead, we find prideful self-reliance and self-glory to be a problem for us. James tells us how wrong we are to make plans as though we, by our own decision and strength, can carry them out (4:13-17). A prayerful dependence on God for all our needs, great and small, is called for by this command. To worship God is one of the greatest works we are called to do and we must not neglect it.

The third command speaks of our relation to God's Word. As Luther explains it, the real offense which makes many "... despise God's Word

and the preaching of the same ..." is not the Law so much as the Gospel. The laws in God's word are called "high moral standards," making them at least objects of respect to most. Many are not offended by the idea of Jesus being a great teacher. But "... the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing ..." and "Christ crucified: a stumbling block ..." (I Corinthians 1:18, 23).

Yet there are many who count God's Word as "... holy and gladly hear and learn it." God's Word is that which does the work in our hearts of bringing us to repentance and faith. Through His Law we see our sin and despair of self effort. Through the Gospel we are brought to faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ our Lord and hope comes alive. Through God's Word we become "... a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light." (I Peter 2:9).

This Gospel is despised by those perishing because it calls for the loss of all hope in self and a reliance on God alone for the gift of righteousness. It is precious to believers because God's Law leaves us helpless in producing our own righteousness but the Gospel provides the righteousness of Christ freely for us.

May God in His grace humble us through His Law that we may begin to rejoice in hearing and learning the message of His Gospel!



—by Rev.
Jon Wellumson

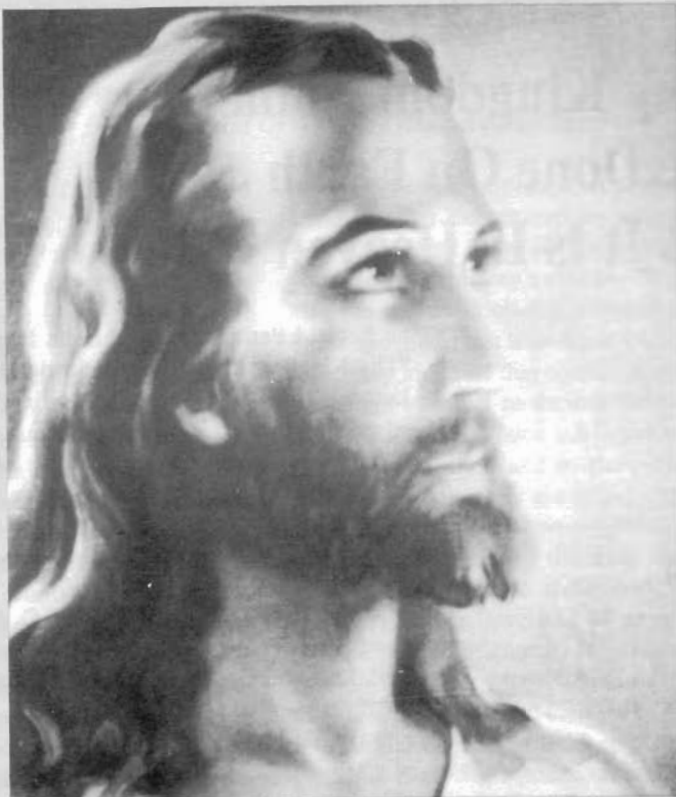
Our Father Who Art in Heaven Hallowed Be Thy Name

The Lord's Prayer was given to us in response to a request the disciples asked Jesus, "Lord, teach us to pray." They had noticed a difference in Jesus' prayers and their own. When Jesus prayed, God answered. That is still the reason we study the Lord's Prayer.

First of all, Jesus told us to pray to our "Father in Heaven." There is much that this term teaches us about our relationship to God, but let us think for a moment on something not as often mentioned. I believe the image of "Our Father in Heaven" teaches us something about the nature of God. In Christian theology we teach that God is separate and distinct from Creation. If you have been paying attention to some of the New Age teaching that has been popularized in recent years, you have heard things like, "seek for god within yourself," and even "I am god." People with a New Age theology can say these things because they believe that God is part of everything and in everything. to say that "I am god" makes perfect sense to someone who believes that God is everything, but thinking of God as your **Father in Heaven** helps keep us from believing in a falsehood.

The Bible chooses to portray God in only masculine terms. Jesus reaffirmed this in the Lord's Prayer. Compare this with pagan religions that describe God as both Father and Mother. One obvious difference is that there can be no natural generation between a lone Father God and His creation. Christians may call themselves God's children, but they know they do not share the Divine nature. We are all adopted sons. There is only one who shares the nature of God and can claim the title of a Begotten Son.

The distinction between God and His creation is reinforced by the next petition. "Hallowed Be Thy Name." Holiness is a word that could take a long description. But briefly it means to be set apart, different from the ordinary. God is different from us in His attitude toward sin. We quickly learn to tolerate what is evil and wrong, but God never learns. When we say that God is holy we are confessing that in the character of God there is an intolerance of evil. God cannot coexist with sin. If we are to pray to a Holy God, we cannot come in our sins. We must appropriate the forgiveness that He has provided in Jesus or



*Lord,
Teach Us
To Pray*

our prayers will not be heard, worse, they are an affront to His character.

When we pray it is important to remember the difference between us and God, but this should be an encouragement to us. Often we meet with difficulties far beyond anything we are capable of handling in our own strength. But when we pray we are calling on someone who is greater in power and holier in character than anything we encounter in this world. We know that we are praying to someone who not only can answer, but will answer in the best possible way. When we meet with trials that are far beyond our ability to cope with, isn't it good to know we can pray to "Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name."



— Rev.
Stephen Snipstead
Kalispell, Montana

Thy Kingdom Come, Thy Will Be Done On Earth As It Is In Heaven

The Second Petition in the Lord's Prayer, "Thy Kingdom come" is explained thus in Luther's Small Catechism: "The kingdom of God comes indeed of itself without our prayer; but we pray ... that it may come to us (to you and to me) also. (It comes) when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His Word and live a godly life here on earth and in heaven."

The Kingdom of God is the **rule** of God. It comes and lives in receptive human hearts when His Word, Law and Gospel, is taught in its truth and purity.

We pray that the kingdom of God's grace may be established here on earth **in** and among all people. This implies evangelization — active Gospel mission work at home and abroad.

In the Larger Catechism, Luther says: "all this is simply saying: Dear Father, we pray give us first Thy Word, that the gospel be sincerely preached throughout the world and we pray that it be accepted in faith to work and live in us; so that through the Word and the power of the Holy Spirit Thy Kingdom may prevail among us to the defeat of the devil's kingdom, so he shall have no claim and power over us and at last shall be utterly overthrown, and sin and death ... be destroyed, that we may live forever in perfect righteousness and blessedness."

The Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Christ, and the Kingdom of Heaven, are the same Kingdom and refer to the heavenly government of God in Christ here on earth **and** in heaven. In this life it is a militant kingdom, the Kingdom of Grace; in the life to come it is a triumphant kingdom, the Kingdom of Glory; but it is the same Kingdom, because it has the same King. And all who have accepted Christ as personal Savior are citizens of this Kingdom.

In the third Petition of the Lord's Prayer we pray, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

Part of its explanation says: "The good and

Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread

It has been my experience in confirmation, when I ask the students "What does this Fourth Petition of The Lord's Prayer mean to you," invariably their response is "I think it means we are to ask God to give us food, so we don't die, we're too young to die!" They are correct in answering that way, because they see life as being very important to them. Naturally we all need food to sustain life.

Often in our daily life we are so involved in many activities that we don't have enough time to accomplish what we want to do. The only time we do think about the Lord's Prayer is on Sunday mornings in closing the Worship Service. I don't have a great spiritual insight to the Fourth Petition of the Lord's Prayer, but I do have two words that might develop a better attitude to this petition.

The first word is **acknowledgement**. To acknowledge that all that I have to sustain life is from God. My God has always been faithful and will continue to supply my needs for He cares for me. In one of my trips with Pastor Gabriel

Mercado to the congregation near Obregon, Mexico, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, we were invited to his uncle's home for a meal. This is a family of 14 children with ten still living at home. Gabriel's uncle took the fatted pig, butchered it, prepared it and served it to us, and made sure we were first satisfied before he or his family sat down to eat. This pig was being raised for future nourishment for this family of ten and he was so willing to share it with us. This is not a rich family and what they did was a great sacrifice. Just recently this same uncle of Pastor Gabriel suffered a very severe heart attack and is not doing too well. Please pray for him and his family. During the meal I made the comment you didn't have to do this for us this meal is fit for a king. His response, which I can still vividly remember, "God has blessed us so much and He has been so good to us we want to share with you some of God's blessing." Now that is acknowledgement of God's blessing in a situation where I thought you wouldn't hear a remark like that. As I got to know more of the believers in that church that Pastor Gabriel pastors, they all have the same attitude as his uncle. What a joy to be around fellow believers, they

gracious will of God is done, indeed, without our prayer, but we pray that it may be done **by us also.**"

Every time I read the statement that the Kingdom of God will come without our prayer, and His will will be done without our praying for it, I am deeply impressed. You see, our awesomely great God can easily get along without us **if** we don't listen to nor obey His Word and gracious call — call to repentance of sin, obedience and service. The fact is that the ones who will not listen to, nor obey God's word and His call are left out, left behind, excluded from His Kingdom for time and eternity.

The will of God is done in the realm of nature insofar as it is not affected by the sins of man. It is done perfectly and fully in heaven, and that is what makes heaven. But in the world of mankind it is frustrated and hindered from attaining its aim. Our sins of unbelief and disobedience deflect the gracious will of God. We have ignored God, neglected His Word and transgressed His Commandments. The world has become more godless and wicked, our human nature is corrupt, and Satan rules in the lives of unrepentant people. The consequences

don't have much in worldly goods, but in spiritually goods they recognize being so blessed because they have the gift of eternal life, which naturally produces in these believers thankful hearts.

The next word is **thanksgiving**. This I believe is an attitude we all need to practice more in our lives. The Apostle Paul says, "that he has learned to be content in whatever state of life he was in. Certainly our dear brothers and sisters in the Lord in Obregon, Mexico are practicing that attitude. I remember when the late evangelist Ken Pentti was in Nogales, Arizona, for special meetings, and I had the opportunity to take him into Nogales, Sonora, Mexico, to visit a congregation under WMPL care. When our dear brother saw the living conditions where the church was situated he made this remark. "I'll never complain again about my living conditions. I just never thought I was so blessed until I saw the living conditions which I would never want to live in. I'll never complain again!" Could it be that complaining does not let us see the blessings we do have. Maybe what we need to do more of in our lives is to acknowledge our blessings to God daily so to produce a more thankful heart.

are crime, disease, cruelty, wars, poverty, dishonesty, misery, death and hell.

God's will is that we should repent of our sins, believe in Christ and be saved; obey His revealed will in the Bible, and be sanctified (grow in Christlikeness); and cheerfully accept the consequences of the obedience of faith in Christ in an evil world, knowing that "to them who love God all things work together for good" (Romans 8:28) in this life and in the life to come.

Lord, teach me to pray.

(cf. "A Study Course in Luther's Small Catechism" by C.J. Sodergren, former teacher at the L.B.I. 1619 Portland Ave., Minneapolis, MN)



—by Rev. Amos Dyrud
Crystal, Minnesota

THE FOURTH PETITION

Give us this day our daily bread.

What does this mean?

Answer: God indeed gives daily bread to all men, even to the wicked, without our prayer; but we pray in this petition that He would lead us to acknowledge our daily bread as His gift, and to receive it with thanksgiving.

—from *Luther's Small Catechism*



—by Rev. Ted H. Kennedy, Jr.
Nogales, Arizona

Forgive Us Our Trespasses As We Forgive Those Who Trespass Against Us

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Every part of the Lord's Prayer is of great importance. Each phrase carries an important part of man's relationship to our God. As we deal with the Fifth Petition, human lostness is admitted and dealt with to bring us salvation. Christians need to pray thus because we are not without sin. We live in a world among people who lead us into sin as well as the devil at our back, fighting us on every side.

In the midst of our darkness our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has called us to pray and teaches us to ask, "Dear Father, forgive us our

debts." The Gospel message is all prepared for people. For the Christian believers we are already living in a forgiven state; but our main point is for us to recognize and accept our God's forgiveness. Human nature and circumstances cause us to not be always able to trust and believe God. We are constantly battling evil desires and devises, so that we sin daily in thoughts, words, and deeds; in acts of commission and omission. Because of sin, our conscience becomes restless. It fears God's wrath and displeasure and therefore loses the peace of God that in the past was beyond our understanding and now is a wondering doubt. How good it is to be able, at our Lord's calling and teaching, to pray, "Dear Father forgive us our transgressions!" Our God wants us to have His peace and comfort for our souls.

As Jesus taught us to ask for forgiveness it puts us all under sin and in great need of His grace. This petition leads us to despise others. We find in this petition that we are no better than others and ought to be glad that we can attain forgiveness. From the Book of Concord page 432, "Large Catechism," "Let no one think that he will ever in this life reach the point where he does not need this forgiveness. In short, unless God constantly forgives, we are lost." By the grace of God, as He promises, we are forgiven, when we ask in truth and in spirit to be forgiven.

The truth part is dealt with the clause, "as we forgive those who transgress against us." God has promised full forgiveness, as we forgive our neighbor, even though we sin greatly against Him. If we do not forgive others, do not think that God forgives you. But if we do forgive, we have all of God's sweet promise, comfort and joy that our sins are forgiven. Our forgiveness is not on account of our forgiving, for God grants all forgiveness out of pure grace, as the gospel teaches. But He has set up this condition for our strengthening and assurance as Luke 6:37 states, "Forgive and you will be forgiven." The one conditional command our Lord placed with this prayer in His "Sermon on the Mount" is to forgive and you'll be forgiven.

Approach, My Soul, The Mercy Seat

*Approach, my soul, the mercy seat
Where Jesus answers prayer;
There humbly fall before His feet,
For none can perish there.*

*Thy promise is my only plea,
With this I venture nigh;
Thou callest burdened souls to Thee,
And such, O Lord, am I.*

*Bowed down beneath a load of sin,
By Satan sorely pressed,
By wars without and fears within,
I come to Thee for rest.*

*Be Thou my shield and hiding place,
That, sheltered near Thy side,
I may my fierce accuser face,
and tell him, Thou has died.*

*O wondrous Love, to bleed and die,
To bear the cross and shame,
That guilty sinners such as I
Might plead thy gracious Name!*

— John Newton
(Service Book and Hymnal)



— by Rev. LeRoy Flickinger
Newfolds, Minnesota

Lead Us Not Into Temptation But Deliver Us From Evil

When temptation calls, **run the other way**, because temptations are enticements to attract us with the hope of reward or pleasure that appeals to our sinful nature. Satan who is called "the tempter" (Matthew 4:3), who is the "father of lies" (John 8:44), and a master of deception, uses all the world's sinful attractions to try to draw us away from Christ. The "... devil prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (I Peter 5:8). On the other hand, ready and willing to respond to temptation is our fleshly desire to do evil. The Bible says, "But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust" (James 1:14). Satan and our flesh form a deadly combination bent on the destruction of our souls in eternal hell.

When we pray the sixth petition, "Do not lead us into temptation," we are asking God to lead us on the "paths of righteousness," away from temptation. We are also asking God for guidance, wisdom, and discernment that He gives to us through the reading of the Holy Scriptures. "Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105).

Even though we do our best to avoid temptation, we often involuntarily fall into it. When

this happens, God is always at our side, ready to rescue us. "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man: and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it" (I Corinthians 10:13). It is not the involuntary falling into temptation that is sin but it is the yielding to temptation that is sin.

In the seventh petition, "Deliver us from evil," we are asking God to deliver us from all sorts of evil that surround us, and also from evil's ultimate goal, to lead mankind to eternal hell. We are living in difficult times. The attacks against Christ and His Church are becoming more and more vicious as we draw nearer to the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior. Yet, in spite of Satan's onslaughts, we can face the future with confidence knowing that God will not fail us, for the Bible says, "And the Lord is the one who goes ahead of you; He will be with you. He will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear, or be dismayed" (Deuteronomy 31:8).



—by Rev. Harris Van Someren
Mason, Wisconsin



A volunteer crew from Millford, Illinois.



The Administration Building as of January 23, 1992.

Volunteers From Five States Work On Building

Work crews from AFLC congregations in five states have come to Headquarters since mid-January to help with the inside construction of the Administration Building. Besides the Minneapolis-St. Paul area, other Minnesota communities represented are: Cokato, St. James, Fertile, Fergus Falls and Thief River Falls. Other workers have come from Edinburgh, North Dakota; Ishpeming and Marquette, Michigan; Roslyn and Webster, South Dakota and Millford, Illinois.

A Prayer Journal For My Spiritual Journey

There are so many different categories when talking about prayer that it's hard to list them all, considering books have been written on the subject. When I think of prayer, though, I think of coming to God and being completely honest with Him, bringing my joys, sorrows, and troubles to Him.

Prayer is a relationship between God and ourselves, and as such, there needs to be communion and dialogue between the two parties involved as there is in any other relationship. We are to come to God in humility as we are, as evidenced in Luke 18:4-14, in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican. The latter was justified because he came before God in humility and honesty, acknowledging who and what he was.

Different people find various meth-

ods of praying more effective than others might. In my personal life I find journaling a wonderful means of prayer. At first I didn't realize that this journaling was prayer, but what is prayer if not an honest and open time in which we tell God what we need help concerning, and ask for His strength and guidance? This is what my journaling is — a time of unguarded honesty with God, pouring out my heart to Him and seeking His guidance. At the same time I am also learning more about myself as well as keeping a record of my spiritual journey. I enjoy my time of journaling each day as a time to spend in the presence of God, opening myself to God in a new dimension of experiencing and learning how to commune with Him, and how He speaks to me.

There's much more to be said about prayer, but I find it necessary to remind myself of some of the basics, such as being honest before God. He doesn't want us to try to become "spiritual" and "holy" so we're worthy to come before Him and speak lofty phrases and pray eloquent prayers. We can never become good enough on our own to earn the privilege of an intimate relationship with God, as Paul says so often. God calls us to come to Him in honesty, unguardedness and humility in accepting who we are (sinful humanity) and who He is (the holy God). It is by God's grace, unmerited by ourselves, that we have access to the privilege of a personal relationship with Him through prayer. It is only by first knowing and accepting this that we can have a foundation for beginning a relationship with God through prayer.

— by Dawn M. Linder
Pasadena, California

God Called

— by Helen Swenson
Boscobel, Wisconsin

God called to me one day
and convicted me of my sins,
He said open up your heart
let me come and enter in.

I couldn't understand why
God kept calling me
To repent of my sins
and He would set me free.

I thought I could live
the way I wanted to.
I didn't have to change
until it was time to say adieu.

The joy I thought I had found
living in my worldly sin,
Became a life of misery
So I let my Savior in.

God entered into my heart
and gave me blessed peace.
Why don't you answer His call,
your happiness will never cease.

God gave His all for you
love, forgiveness and His Son.
How little we do for Him
when we refuse to give just one.

So give your life to Jesus
don't hesitate, do it today.
For this is the road to heaven,
there is no other way.



Edinburg, North Dakota, Grace Free Lutheran Church WMF honored Mrs. Opal Gemmill, age 92, and Mrs. Elizabeth Rud, age 83, with Honorary Membership pins. Both ladies continue to faithfully serve in the WMF.

WOMEN

The Spring Rally for the Minneapolis District WMF will be held at Good Shepherd Free Lutheran Church, Cokato, Minnesota, on Saturday, April 11, 1992. Pastor and Mrs. Wendell Johnson will be the speakers for the day. Registration begins at 9:00 a.m.



Grafton, North Dakota, Patti Juntunen, wife of Pastor Wayne Juntunen received the WMF Honorary Membership pin from Molly Wiesen during Bethel Free Lutheran's Church WMF Christmas party.

Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee ... Psalm 55:22

*Never be sad or desponding,
If thou hast faith to believe;
Grace, for the duties before thee,
Ask of thy God and receive.*

— F. J. Crosby



Valley City, North Dakota, Evelyn Emberson recently presented Honorary Membership pins on behalf of Grace Free Lutheran Church WMF to: (L. to R.) Marion Nelsen, Arlene Simpson, Marcie Hannig and Helen Salberg. Blanche Kling also received a pin, but was not present for the picture.



Amery, Wisconsin, Amery Free Lutheran Church Cradle Roll has 14 children enrolled. Pictured above are: Debbie Christopherson and Andrew; Karen Rice and Bethanie. Below are: Laurie Stewart; Nicholas and Carrie; Gerry Webber and Shane. Lower right are: (Standing) Mary Knutson and Kraig, Betsy Welsh and Susan, (Seated) Kelly Kjos, Johathan and Sarah, Ilona Fouks and Jessica and Brandon.



From The AFLBS Prayer Class

Strength to Stand

It didn't occur to me how important prayer is until about six years ago. I had always said my prayers before I went to sleep, but I never really thought about what I was saying.

When I started high school, it seemed as if I had more things to pray about. Satan's work was more visible. I began to pray more often. I kept asking God to give me the strength to stand as a Christian and not just back away.

He answered my prayer. The Lord continued to give me strength through the rest of my high school years and my first year of college. Without Jesus Christ in my heart, I never would have withstood the temptations.

Now here at AFLBS for my first year, I am taking the Prayer class. The Lord has given me a renewed confidence in the power of prayer. God has given us the best defense against Satan. "Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the victor's crown, the life God has promised to those who love him" (James 1:12).

We must resist Satan and unite against him in prayer. If we continue to stand for God and not let evil take over the world, we will be granted eternal life with God.

— by Gail Martin
First Lutheran Church
Camarillo, California

Van Fund Started

AFLBS uses two vans to transport their teams to minister in congregations throughout the nation. One van has 175,000 miles on it and the other has 115,000 miles of service. One of our AFLC congregations has offered to donate a generous sum to begin a van fund. If you or your congregation have been blessed by the ministry of AFLBS, perhaps you would like to join in to meet this imminent need for our Bible School. Write to: AFLBS 3110 E. Medicine Lake Boulevard, Plymouth, MN 55441. Designate "Van Fund."

The New Choir Director

Walking in God's Will

Next to the Word of God, music deserves the highest praise... Sounds like a statement you would hear from your choir director during his explanation that even Mar-

tin Luther held sacred music in high esteem. In fact, if you were a member of the AFLBS Choir today, you might be listening to Mr. Jerry Nelson admonish the singers: "We don't want to do just beautiful music, but we are singing to share a message from Christ that will reach the heart and change lives."

The new Association Free Lutheran Bible School Choir director is teaching the student singers from the depths of his heart. He knows what he is talking about. "The Lord spoke to me through the Gospel message in music that caused positive changes in my life. As we commit each concert to the glory of God, He will use it to reach hearts," explained Mr. Nelson.



Jerry and Terri Nelson, Matthew - 9, Aaron - 7 and Emily - 4.

The Weapons of Our Warfare

What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the Lord our God is near us whenever we pray to Him? (Deuteronomy 4:7).

Working abroad during the summers from age 14 to the present, I had come to experience the reality of temptation. This was before I began to understand the place prayer has in a Christian's life. Satan knew my weakness in prayer and knowledge of the Word. He had a window into my thought life. He often brought up thoughts and feelings of inadequacy and failure.

Finally I was brought to my knees by these failures and by trying to cope with many broken resolutions. Defeated and made weary by a judgmental view of God's grace, Jesus brought me to the cross. It was there in prayer I experienced His mercy and love.

In God's Word, I have also come to realize that the Christian life is a warfare. Through the class on Prayer at AFLBS, I am learning to fight more effectively for God. Though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The armor of God has divine power to demolish the strong holds Satan has built in our lives.

II Corinthians 10:4-5 says: "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for the pulling down of strong holds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

— by Clint Langerud
Maranatha Free Lutheran Church
Glyndon, Minnesota

The students know they are listening to a man of experience. For seven years he traveled on weekends with a Gospel Team. For four years he sang with the Dale Warland singers, a Minneapolis based classical music group. For the last 12 years he was the minister of music at a suburban Lutheran church. He also taught voice at St. Paul

(continued on page 12)

Meet the AFLTS Seniors

Part II

CAMPUS



Name: James L. Johnson

Address: Bloomington, Minnesota

Son of: Lyell and Lois Johnson

Married to: Linda (Jackson)

Children: Elizabeth, 3; Hannah, 1 1/2; Lydia, 3 months

Home congregation: Emmaus Lutheran Church, Bloomington, Minnesota, Don Richman, Jim Ritter, pastors.

Graduate of: Association Free Lutheran Bible School, University of Minnesota, CLA, BA (School of Journalism), 1987.

Special interests: Photography, sports, woodworking, writing, gardening, history, people.

Personal testimony: I grew up in a happy home with warm, evangelical parents and a growing, living congregation (Emmaus Lutheran Church) near by. God was faithful to me, but I became stale and dull toward Him. The Lord worked, though, to bring me back to a living relationship to Him. I remember one summer in particular, in Washington, where I spent the summer with my sister's family. There my heart became tender again to the Lord. I've been growing in grace ever since. I spent my high school years growing closer to Christ, then attended AFLBS for two years and became bolder for the Lord. And during my college years, while preparing for a career in newspaper journalism, I spent my extra time helping with the Emmaus youth, teaching Sunday School and serving one night a week on an evangelistic visitation team. My interest in the things of the Lord soon began to outweigh my desire for a career in newspapers. I



Name: Todd Schierkolk

Address: Prairie Farm, Wisconsin

Son of: Mr. and Mrs. LeRoy Schierkolk

Married to: Barbara (Sheldahl)

Children: Rachel, 3 months

Home congregation: Amery Free Lutheran Church, Amery, Wisconsin, John Rieth, pastor.

began training one-on-one with one of my pastors in discipleship and evangelism. I spent my summers either on Gospel teams or serving as a summer youth worker in a rural Wisconsin church. And so, after graduating from the University of Minnesota, Linda and I were married and we began to sense a call to start seminary and prepare for the parish ministry.

Seminary experience: Seminary has been a time for me to mature as a husband, father, student and Christian. What a privilege to be here. It's great to have teachers who not only know and teach the truth — but who live the truth and walk in the truth. They have been real examples to me. And tell me: is there another seminary in the country where you pay \$600 (for the year) to attend? While I've studied at AFLTS, I've worked for AFLBS' dean Don Greven as resident head in the men's dormitory. We spent our internship in Lake Stevens, Washington, witnessing the power of the Lord with Pastor Dick Gunderson and the people of Elim Lutheran Church. We hope to serve an AFLC congregation — and see the Kingdom of God flourish.

Graduate of: Concordia College, Moorhead, Minnesota and Association Free Lutheran Bible School

Special interests: Athletics, reading.

Personal testimony: I was baptized and grew up in a Lutheran congregation but during my junior high and high school years I walked the path of a sinful world. After getting myself into trouble, my parents disciplined me, in part, by having me read several chapters in the Bible out loud each day after school. During the months that I read, God worked mightily in my heart, bringing me to repentance for my sin and giving me a desire to do His will. What a change He made in my life! He restored my relationship with my parents and gave me a new lease on life. John 8:36 says, "If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed." I am so thankful for my freedom in Jesus.

Seminary experience: As I look back over my years in seminary, I marvel at the privilege that I have had to get to know my God, His ways, and His concern for the world so much better. These years have been a time of personal challenge and growth. I have gained much from the insights of godly teachers and I am very thankful for the training I have received. I served the beginning of my internship at First Lutheran Church in Camarillo, California, under Pastor Keith Quanbeck. It was there that the Lord gave me peace about the call to the ministry and caused a love for people to grow. The final five months of my internship were spent on our mission field in Brazil under the direction of Pastor Connely Dyrud. The Lord confirmed my desire to work in cross-cultural ministry during those months in Brazil. My wife and I are eagerly awaiting His direction for our ministry. Regardless of where the doors open for us, our motivation remains the same. Jesus said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, ..." (Matthew 28:19, 20).

"Changes are made in youth culture without the youth knowing about those changes."

Reasons For

The September, 1990, *Group* magazine lists several "megatrends" in youth culture which effect your ministry as a teenager and adult. We would have to agree with these "megatrends."

It is hard for us adults to keep up with the youth of today. And, it is not the "older" youth worker who faces this, it is also the youth themselves. Changes are made in youth culture without the youth knowing about those changes.

"Your response to these societal changes will determine your ministry's success or failure." And, we could add, that this goes for youth involved in ministry as well as adults.

1. There is a need for a **global outlook**. There is no way we can isolate ourselves from other nations. Our nation has tried to do this with fair success during its early history. However, today this really cannot be done.

There are many global issues which every nation faces. "The average

teenager is influenced by global issues. This world is becoming an increasingly smaller place in which to live!

Our programs in our churches can focus on how to meet the global needs of people where ever they are. **Missions ought to become more and more important to our youth programs.**

2. There is a **deluge of information**. People will have little time to digest the information given to them. The personal computer will bring information right into our homes. More information is not necessarily good! It is going to be hard to digest.

We will need to offer our young people opportunity to sit down and reflect on things. They will need more time to consider the truths of Christ Jesus. We need to teach "life skills" which will enable our teenagers to handle information.

What we are doing now is the same thing we have done for years. We have retreats, camps, rallies, lock-ins and the like. These are usually over-planned, according to *Group*.

I add, let us be careful not to have speaker, speaker, speaker, video, video, video. Let us slow down and have open discussions which are Christ-centered and Bible-centered.

We need to allow time for our youth to reflect on all the information they have at their disposal. We need to help them put Jesus Christ first and to "edit out lower priority activities."

3. There is a **focus on television and technology**.

"The main conduit for information in the 90s is going to be television." The computer will become a shopping device and will be used for banking. We will have fax machines in addition to the newspapers, library, videos and movies. In addition, we may be able to go to school at home.

About 50 years ago, television was making its debut. Today, it is in nearly every home. Personal computers, fax machines, special telephone devices and other electronics are common.

NELSON

Bible College as a part of their adjunct faculty program. Nelson has maintained his own part-time business of piano tuning and repair.

The Bloomington, Minnesota, native grew up at Emmaus Lutheran Church. As a teenager, another Nelson was his youth director, Elden Nelson. God used the elder Nelson in Jerry's life: "Pastor Nelson was one of the men who have had a spiritual impact on my life," Jerry said.

During the recent years of their life, Jerry and his wife, Terri, sensed that the Lord was calling them to make a change in their lives. Isaiah 43:18-19, continued to challenge them: "Do not call to mind the former things, or ponder things of the past. 'Behold, I will do something new, now it will spring forth, will you not be aware of it? I will even make a roadway in the wilderness, rivers in the desert.'"

Nearly a year ago, Jerry went to the home of Rev. Elden Nelson to tune his piano. Their old acquaintance was renewed. The Lord continued to impress upon Jerry and his wife that they needed to step out in faith. Together they sought the Lord's will. Jerry picked up the phone and called Pastor Elden Nelson to share their burden. Jerry Nelson resigned last summer

as minister of music of the church where he had served for 12 years. Peace flooded into their lives as they knew God was leading them.

Within a few days, Pastor Donald Greven, dean of AFLBS, called Jerry to ask if he would consider teaching voice lessons at the school. He agreed. Within two months, Pastor Greven asked if he would take over the brass ensemble teaching at AFLBS. Since January, 1992, Jerry Nelson has added directing the Choir and Seminary Chorus to his responsibilities.

The 1976 graduate of the University of Minnesota is returning to his alma mater where he is working on his M.A. in music. Meanwhile, he is excited to be preparing the Choir for their Spring Tour. He enjoys working with students on a post-high school level. "The preparation of excellent acappella choral music is certainly a goal. The tradition for that has already been established here," Nelson added. "It is also a joy to be a part of the lives of these young people. It's a time when many important decisions are being made. To help them seek and find the Lord's will is exciting."

And finding God's will and walking in it has brought indescribable joy to Jerry Nelson himself.

— by Solveig Hjermsstad

Youth Work Concerns

—Rev. Dennis Gray, Youth Resource Director

Where does this leave the church? I think it means we had better develop **warm and caring environments** in our churches and in our youth groups. We need to make certain that our ministry is to the individual. **Individuals are more important than the group.**

The reason for this is because of our fast growing technological world. This is a world where people will relate more to machines and games with screens rather than to one another.

Youth ministers, both teens and adults, need to realize the importance of this kind of a loving, caring and open atmosphere. Our youth need supportive fellow youth and adults. If we do not find our relationships with Jesus Christ and His Church, these relationships will be found else where.

4. Teens are looking for a **return to ethics and humor**. The pendulum has swung back to being concerned about the things of society. Youth are concerned about "AIDS, the homeless, and drug abuse."

There is so little to offer youth in society and they are wanting to fill the void with things that matter. The things this world has to offer are becoming less important.

There needs to be involvement, according to *Group* in projects which will give youth meaning and purpose in life.

5. There is a **premium place on time**. This is something, I feel, that is more real than ever. **Youth will be looking for time for themselves.** So will their parents.

Let us be careful when we preach that lack of involvement is a lack of interest in the spiritual. We admit it is very possible, to be true, but not always.

Lack of involvement is often times seen when youth and parents are trying to find some room for themselves. Their schedules are burdened with all kinds of things to do. Some of it is their own fault, to be certain. Good things can get us down. Good things

can keep us away from God. Good things can keep people away from the Lord. We need to "pick and choose."

We need to train youth leaders in various ways they can improve their ministry situation. Our ministry needs to fit the kids' schedule and not ours, or maybe not even the church's schedule. We will need to switch to shorter meetings, held at times when they can feel less pressed and can sit and talk about things.

6. There is a **trend toward physical maturity and emotional immaturity**. "That means they are able to be sexually active three years before their grandparents were." I do feel this has slowed, but has previously increased each year until now.

"This, in part, explains the astronomical rise in the number of teenagers who have had sex. They are physically ready for sex, but they have a hard time thinking about the consequences."

Therefore, it will be increasingly more important for youth groups to hand over the leadership of their groups to the youth. They should be trained to take leadership roles. "This will help them build up the emotional muscles they need to live Christian lives in the 90s."

7. There is a **drop in church attendance**. Many congregations have experienced a drop in church attendance by youth just after confirmation

instruction is completed. It is the same in other denominations where they have other ways of instructing youth such as children's church. They also see a drop in church attendance in the age group just after 13 or 14.

"Many kids feel that church attendance isn't crucial to their belief in God." Youth have been subjected to secular humanism and to the New Age movement. They are going into the occult and into eastern religions.

Yes, we have seen the drop for years and years. I think the attitude is that they can believe and be saved without attending church. It is not a crucial matter for many. These other things, too, have played their part.

There is also the attitudes of some parents that their teens are old enough to make their own decisions. Parents, too, are living with double standards. These things take their toll.

We need to do our best to keep up with the youth after they are confirmed. It is not enough to announce meetings in the church newsletter or bulletin, or to make nice posters in the foyers of our church.

We need to be interested in the youth by making calls to them on a regular basis. We need to get our minds off of numbers. We need to invite each one to meetings, meet with them at other times and to show that we love them. They need Jesus, and they need the church.



Rev. Keith Quanbeck, Champlin, Minnesota, member of the youth board, visits with Rev. Lloyd Quanbeck, Northhome, Minnesota, at the recent Pastors' Conference at the ARC.

PEOPLE and PLACES

Celaya, Guanajuato, Mexico — Gethsemane Free Lutheran Church, served by Pastor Milton Flores, added a Sunday evening service to their weekly schedule in January. It was also announced in their quarterly bulletin that a new piano was dedicated last October, a gift from Rev. Richard Larson and family in memory of his mother, Mrs. Marian L. Larson, who passed away on September 15, 1990.

Rev. Peter Bergstedt, Stacy, Minnesota, has resigned as pastor of Sunnyside Church, effective April 7.

Beltrami, Minnesota — Resurrection Free Lutheran Church recently voted to begin looking for property for a future building site. The young congregation has used rented facilities.

Milford, Illinois — Rev. Thomas R. Gilman, the new pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church of Schwer, was officially installed on Sunday, January 12, by AFLC Vice President Robert L. Lee at a 3 p.m. service, followed by a fellowship dinner served by the ladies of the congregation. The installation message was delivered by Rev. Richard Gilman, Beresford, South Dakota, father of the new Schwer pastor, who served a two-point parish together with his son since the younger Gilman graduated from Luther Northwestern Seminary in 1987.

Newark, Illinois — a group of 27 new members were welcomed by Helmar Lutheran Church on Sunday, January 26, during the morning worship service. They are: Robert and Sharon Bond; James and Tony Carlson, J.C. and Travis; Robert Chandler; Larry and Peggy Ciesla, Holly Harker, Chris, and Julie; Tina Cryder; Ethan Hagen; Frank and Darlene Leitner, Scott, Bryan, and Abby; Edwin Morris; Cynthia Swenson; Ronald and June Wagn-

er, Jessica, Loyal, Audra, and Wyatt. A unique feature was the fact that only two of the new Helmar members were received through letters of transfer from other Lutheran congregations; the others joined after instruction.

The Mexico-Montana Connection Continues

On February 21, 1992, a bus load of energetic Kalispell, Montana, workers and families will begin the long ride to Obregon, Mexico. They will stop by Nogales, Arizona, to reshingle one-half of Triumph Lutheran Church. The Kalispell group reshingled the other half last February on their way to Obregon. Once in Obregon, the short term mission workers plan to begin construction on the expansion for Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, paint the existing building and do street evangelism.

Three-fourths of the 26 people making the trip are from Faith Free Church and Stillwater churches. The remaining workers are from four other Kalispell area Lutheran congregations. The cost for the two-week trip is about \$300 per person. That includes transportation, room and board. According to Pastor Stephen Snipstead: "We are seeing it as an annual event. The people really have a commitment."

The expansion plan for the church in Obregon calls for a 24 foot by 24 foot room, which will include a fellowship room with a kitchen, a bathroom



Participants in the installation service at Milford, Illinois, included: (L. to R.) Rev. Gary Jorgenson, district president; Rev. Robert Lee, AFLC Vice President; Rev. Thomas Gilman; and Rev. Richard Gilman.

CLIMBING UP THE MOUNTAIN

It was a mountain top experience! This familiar analogy was frequently used to describe the recent pastors' conference by those who attended. The theme was "Recovering Our Priorities," and it was clear from the first session that the focus centered on the pastor's foremost priority, to be a man of prayer. The opening prayer times led by Pastor Tony Stockman and Pastor Craig Wentzel set the tone for both days, and the warmth of Pastor Terry Olson's Bible hours on the Lord's Prayer, the fascinating and challenging insights into Martin Luther as a man of prayer and the Word from Dr. Craig Jennings, the encouragement of Pastor Amos Dyrud's presentation on a pastor's prayer life, as well as each of the evening messages and the closing worship service, were all linked together by the Lord in a wonderful and powerful unity.

Pastor Craig Johnson, Eugene, Oregon, addressed the assembly on Wednesday afternoon, recounting his experience at a prayer retreat as an introduction to our own season of prayer. We were divided according to districts and assigned a place to meet, and then almost two hours were spent in prayer and praise. Some frankly confessed that they had never spent such a long period in prayer, and still others freely admitted that they wondered how we would ever fill the time. But the minutes soon became hours, and some of the prayer groups reported that they were just "warming up" when the sessions ended.

Refreshing. Reviving. A real spiritual mountaintop.

The trouble with most mountain tops, however, is that the only direction left is down. It's good to be there, as Peter testified on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17), but we can only tarry on our spiritual mountain tops for a short time, too. Then it's back to reality, falling rapidly down from "cloud nine," sometimes with a sickening thud.

Perhaps a new analogy is in order ... not the top of a mountain from which to fall, but the foot of a mountain waiting to be climbed. The measure of our retreats must always be the inspiration that we receive to advance. Those who attended the pastor's conference could not avoid the call to prayer, but the acid test comes as we seek to carry the call into our closets and to share it with our congregations.

One does not need to have attended the pastors' conference to experience a prayer awakening, nor is it necessary

to be a pastor in order to be used by God to encourage others to approach the throne of grace.

The mountain stands before us. We can't even see the top from here, but the path is plainly marked. There are hungry saints waiting for someone to lead the way.

Let's start climbing!

CLERGY BEWARE! AGAIN

Some of our readers will recall the editorial in an earlier issue this year (January 7), referring to an alarming tax seminar advertisement. Since preparing the first editorial, I followed my own advice and attended a similar seminar, publicized, however, in a more sedate spirit. Now I feel like sounding the alarm.

B.J. Worth, author of a popular income tax guide for ministers and leader of the seminar, uses the word "nightmare" to describe some of the implications of the present situation. A new policy that became effective on 1-1-91 concerning the reporting of a pastor's professional expenses was adopted too late to effect last year's procedures for most of us, resulting in an increased tax liability. The need for an accountable reimbursement plan to satisfy current I.R.S. requirements will create an undue burden for both pastors and congregation, yet there is no reasonable alternative in sight.

Church councils and treasurers, your co-operation is essential. There have been penalties for failure to submit W-2's (or 1099's) to the I.R.S. since 1982, yet some congregations still persist in treating their pastor as self-employed, even though he is only considered as such for Social Security purposes under current regulations concerning his dual status. Trustees or treasurers can be held responsible when the law is disregarded.

If you have not already done so, take time during your next council meeting to discuss the implications of these regulations with your pastor. It may be that a new approach to his salary will have to be adopted; otherwise, your hesitation could cost him hundreds of dollars that he can ill afford.

It may be, also, that the time has come to address a few carefully chosen words to our lawmakers ... like, "Help!" for instance.

and a private room for the pastor. The fellowship room can also be used as common space for the church and the pastor's residence. Currently Pastor Gabriel and his wife, Virginia, spend about two weeks each month at Obregon. It is difficult for them to work there longer than that, as it is necessary for them to stay as a guest in someone's home. The completion of this

addition will provide Gabriel and future pastors with modest, yet comfortable shelter.

The Kalispell group will concentrate on excavating the footings and foundation, building forms and pouring concrete. On March 19, 1992, a group from eastern North Dakota and northwestern Minnesota AFLC congregations (14 people from the Bagley Free

Lutheran Parish), is planning to leave for Obregon. This phase of the project is expected to lay cement and/or abode block for the wall and stand roof trusses. The cost for this first stage of construction is estimated at \$5,000.

For more information on these two mission trips, contact: Vernon Russum, Grafton, ND (701) 352-1762 or Clark Berg, Kalispell, MT (406) 755-4160.

Are You Ready For This?

But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded of you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' (Luke 12:20)

Perhaps most of us can recall with vivid reality some crisis moment in our lives. A life threatening illness perhaps, or an accident that brought on a close encounter with death. "I was sure I was going to die" said a young lady recently after breaking through thin ice on a Twin Cities' lake in an attempt to rescue her dog. Those excruciating moments in the ice water before rescue arrived brought her face to face with death. Such an experience becomes devastating to one who has lived indifferently toward God, giving little thought of concern to the question of life beyond. A life-style crowded with material pursuits has left no time for God and His Kingdom.

Jesus portrays such a one in the above parable. Prosperous, materially secure, he views his vast assets with a feeling of great pride and satisfaction. He possessed everything his heart desired in terms of temporal and physical comforts. This had been his objective in life. Now he has seen it all fulfilled. The time has come for him to begin "enjoying it."

Precisely at this point, when his future appears so promising ... God said to him, "**You fool! This very night your life will be demanded of you.**" Suddenly the moment of truth had dawned. No more time to enjoy the fruits of his labors. No time now to correct the error of his ways. No time now to make eternal investments. No time to care for his soul! The years had slipped by in their characteristic pace. Suddenly he receives the summons ... "This very night your life will be demanded of you." It's all over! Among the most relevant warnings in the New Testament, are found in these words of Christ, "For what shall it

profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark 8:36-37).

In one moment this affluent, materialistic minded man finds himself a "pauper." His days of grace are ended. Opportunities to serve the Lord gone. To all of this our Lord's final comment is, "**So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God**" (Luke 12:21).

A word of caution is in order to you who are banking on a time at the end of life to make things right with God. Deathbed opportunities are rare. Someone has well said, "those who put off salvation until the eleventh hour, usually die at 10:30." That hour for repentance before you slip into eternity will likely never come. Furthermore, consider the disaster of an entire life lived in self-indulgence and material pursuits. Only to hear when day is done, "This night your life is demanded of you." Why not begin **now** to live with eternity's values in view? Let Jesus Christ take control of your life, forgive your past, and get you started in a life that

counts for eternity. Determine with the apostle Paul ... "**But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord ...**" (Philippians 3:7-8a).

*"God calling yet — shall I not hear?
Earth's pleasures shall I still hold dear?
Shall life's swift passing years all fly,
And still my soul in slumbers lie?"*

*God calling yet! I cannot stay;
My heart I yield without delay.
Vain world, farewell! from thee I part.
The voice of God has reached my heart!"*



— by Rev. Jay
G. Erickson