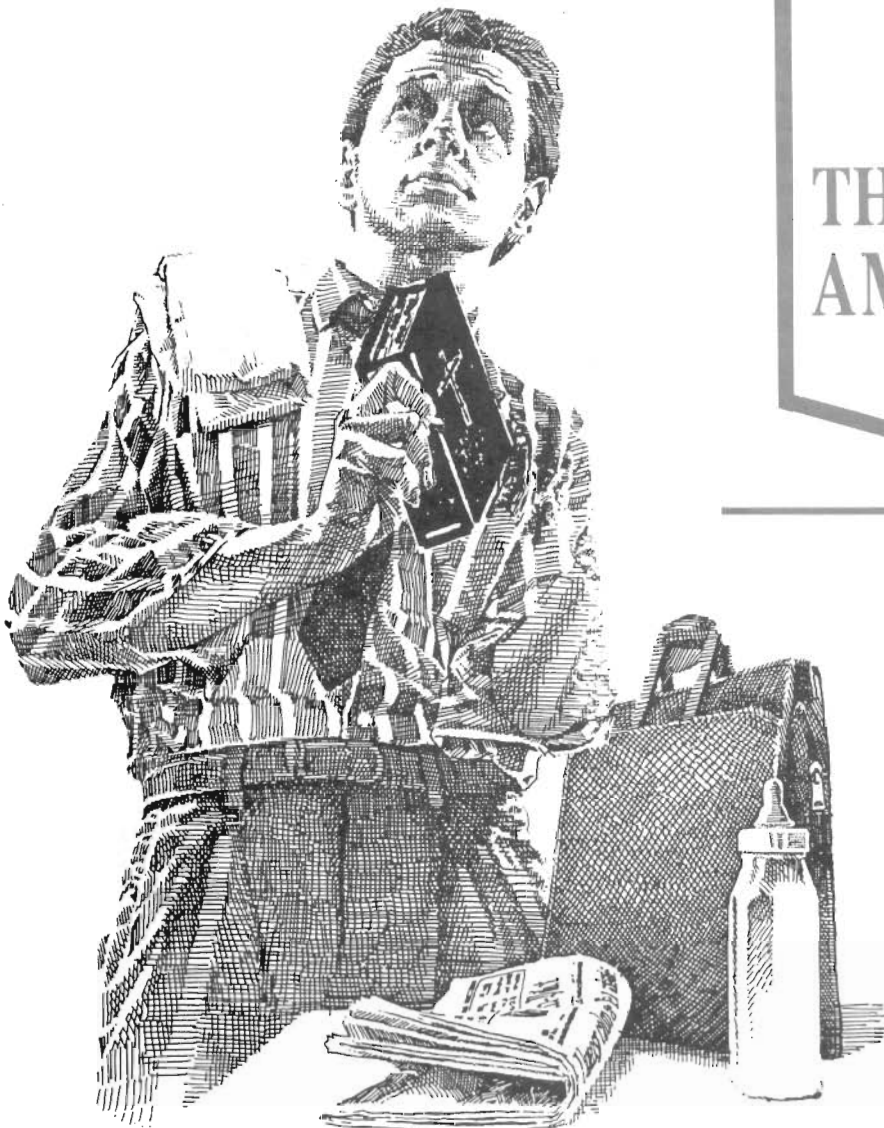




THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

February 8, 1994



The hour
I spend
with the
Lord is
always the
best part
of my day.

Becky Tirabassi



THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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Wonder of a counselor

The hymn writer said God's Word "is like a deep, deep mine" which contains "Jewels rich and rare." Nowhere are those words more applicable than when we begin to probe the depths of spiritual blessing contained in the names of Jesus prophetically given to Him by Isaiah. One verse in particular contains a "mother lode" of incredible worth: indeed so rich is the deposit of blessing in just the second half of Isaiah 9:6 that it will take us four columns to even begin to "mine" its wealth. "And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

His name is **Wonderful Counselor** (or even **Wonder of a Counselor**). To catch the Hebrew force of this name, we could say "He is a counselor who is out of this world!" One way we can begin to appreciate the riches contained in this name is to contrast the "Wonder of a Counselor" with mere human counselors.

First of all, human counselors are temporal (i.e. they will die, for "man is destined to die" (Hebrews 9:27)). This grim reality does not apply to the Wonderful Counselor, for He has conquered death and lives to die no more: indeed "He cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him" (Romans 6:9). What profound comfort to know that Jesus is not only the Wonderful Counselor; he also assures us that "surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

In the second place, human counselors are fickle and can turn against one. History is filled with instances where this has happened. Consider, for example, King David's counselor Ahithophel who went over to rebellious Absalom's side (II Samuel 15:12) and actually gave advice to undermine the king. What a comforting contrast is Jesus, the Christian's "out of this world" counselor, who is

Light on the Way

"the same yesterday and today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).

Finally, human counselors sometimes give bad advice. King Solomon's son, Rehoboam, followed bad advice from poor counselors — and it led to the split of the kingdom (II Chronicles 10): In radical contrast, the counsel of Jesus (as revealed through his Holy Spirit) can always be trusted, it will never lead one astray. "But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own: he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come" (John 16:13).

Why such radical differences between human counselors and the Wonder of a Counselor? Jesus, the Wonderful Counselor, is God — and that explains it all! He is Immanuel ("God with us") and as Isaiah said, God is "wonderful in counsel and magnificent in wisdom" (28:29). To that, we say "Like Father, like Son!" Paul put it like this: "in (Christ) are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3). What a privilege to have a Counselor who possesses perfect and complete wisdom and knowledge, and gives it to us for free!

Christian, take time to meditate on Jesus. Rejoice that not only do you by faith know this one called Wonder of a Counselor: in the person of the Holy Spirit, he actually lives inside you! Depend upon Him as you seek to follow His perfect counsel revealed through His Word and Spirit.



— by Rev.
Jerry Holmnaas

To Whom Shall We Pray?

Consider the prayer Jesus taught His disciples. It begins: "Our Father ..."; not my but our. We talk with, we share, we unload, we root ourselves in the One who is very personally involved in our lives. When we pray "Our Father," we recognize that we have brothers and sisters in this world and are part of a universal family.

Jesus said: "When you have seen Me, you have seen the Father." Through Jesus Christ we know the one Scripture talks about in 1 Peter 5:7 (paraphrased). "Let Him have all of your worries and cares, for He is always thinking about you and is watching everything that concerns you." The secret of genuine Christianity is the holy minutes spent in conversation with "our Father who art in heaven." Prayer is the silver thread that ties man and God together. Every man or woman who has become someone for God has spent much time alone with God in prayer.

Our Father is our creator. We are His creatures and we will always be His children and He will always be our Father. We can freely come into His presence and say with the psalmist: "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth." It is an awesome wonder that we can enter into our Father's very presence with gladness and assurance. Blessed be the name of our Father who gives to each one of us His undivided attention. As men of old have said, coming before God and standing before His face is not as simple as it sounds. It requires an effort of our will to take time out of this busy world, to make up our mind that we will arise and go to our Father.

General Douglas Mac Arthur at the signing of the peace treaty with Japan in 1945 said: "Never take part in any great or important undertaking without first invoking the blessing of Deity."

There are two things that hinder our prayer life with our Father — hurry and worry. Hurry hinders because we do not take time waiting on the Lord in prayer so He can make known to us the great blessings of His grace. Prayer to our Father becomes a power if we not only talk to God but also take time to listen for His answer. Prayer is a two-way spiritual conversation and waiting for our Father's

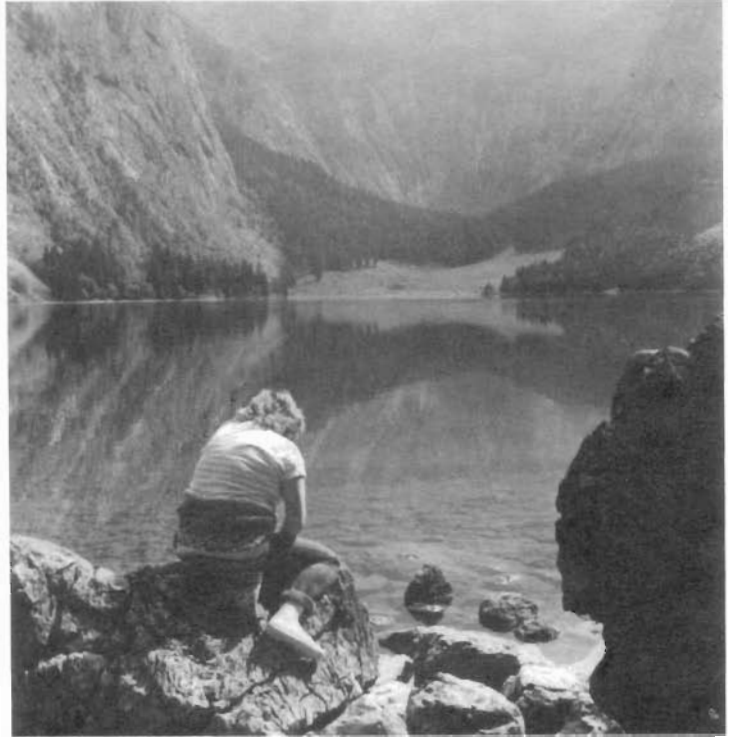


Photo by Roger C. Huebner

answer. "They who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength" (Isaiah 40:31).

The other great hindrance to prayer is worry. Worry means we do not trust God. Coming to God in prayer is like Peter walking on the water. We can not afford to doubt. We can not afford to worry. Without a total trust in God, religion becomes a form rather than a dynamic force. Abundant blessing from our Father awaits those who shift their dependence from self to God in all things. James 4:2 states: "We have not because we ask not." Let us ask our Father in complete confidence that He will supply all of our needs out of His riches in glory.

Great and mighty blessings are offered to us from our Father. We are urged to receive them. "Ask and you will receive, seek and you will find, knock and the doors will be opened." So do not hurry. Do not worry. Those who wait upon the Lord will enjoy His power and His peace. Why should we talk to ourselves when we can talk to our Father who art in heaven?



— by Pastor Kenneth K. Thoreson
Bethany and Trinity Lutheran Parish
Broadhead and Janesville, Wisconsin

The Priority of Prayer

Do we
talk it
or do it?

What do a tug on the ear, a turn into a church parking lot, two men washing dishes together, and a man wanting to wait for his wife have in common? They are all ways in which prayer has been answered in recent months.

Let me give some explanation. Last February our outreach to the community around us received some fresh direction thanks to Pastor John Abel. Not only is evangelism training and visitation taking place, but also concerted prayer for our community has intensified. And God is answering!

Within one month, I heard these comments from three different individuals who had come to the church for the first time. One said, "It was just like God was tugging on my ear. I've driven past here for five years and never considered visiting before." Another said, "I've just felt driven to come. We have begun to see the emptiness of building life around a paycheck." A third said, "It was like my car turned into the church parking lot involuntarily." (By that time I could say: "I am not surprised.")

A few weeks before these incidents, a visitation team had the opportunity to meet with an 82-year-old man who had become an

acquaintance through neighborhood questionnaire work. In the visit, this dear, gentle man indicated a desire to hear how he could be certain of having eternal life. As the Bible's plan of salvation was shared he said, "I never understood before what Jesus really accomplished on the cross." When asked if he would like to receive the gift of eternal life, he responded that he would like to "come in" (to God's Kingdom) — but sure wished he could come in with his wife who was away for the evening. Upon being assured that the team would happily return to visit **with his wife** on another evening, he prayed a prayer expressing his trust in Jesus as Savior.

More recently, one of our Saturday morning men's breakfasts was attended by two new young men — both previously unacquainted with each other and both without a church they regularly attend. What a joy to see them fit in so comfortably that they made their way into the kitchen after the time of study and fellowship and voluntarily washed the breakfast dishes shoulder to shoulder as they talked enthusiastically with each other.

The significance of these events is that they all resulted from God's gracious answer to prayer for individuals and for this commu-

Our Father ... Thy will be done ... How easily these words roll off our lips. They are said at least every Sunday by most if not all of us. Thinking about what we are really saying, to whom would we dare make such a declaration? Certainly, only to one we trust very much and to one we are convinced is concerned about our welfare. So we tell God as we repeat the Lord's Prayer that we submit to His will and that He may work in us and through us whatever He desires. We pray this in direct contradiction to our flesh which daily tries to convince us: "You do whatever you want to do!"

We agree, it is good theology. But then it happens; a desire that we are certain is according to God's will is laid at His throne. All our being is consumed with one desire. Over days, weeks, months, perhaps even

Thy Will Be Done?

years, we plead to our Heavenly Father, the God whom we trust. Then the answer comes with certainty and finality: "No." We feel shocked, angry, betrayed; our faith wavers. "Doesn't God care? Couldn't He have done something?" The very foundation of our life seems to crumble.

It takes time, perhaps a great deal of time, but one of the most important developments occurs in our lives though just such circumstances.

Our life does not end. Our weak faith does

nity. And they are really only a sampling of recent indications of people's openness to God's plan of salvation.

Does that encourage you to persevere in your personal prayer life for the lost as it encourages me?

Two simple but all important truths that all of God's people ought to grasp and act upon are (1) Nothing is more important in this world than people coming to put their trust in Jesus as Savior. And (2) people are reached and hearts are opened in answer to believers' prayers.

Confidence in the power of prayer is not based so much on our personal experience as it is upon the emphatic promises we find in God's Word. Jesus promised in Matthew 7:7: "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you." Jesus also encourages us in our prayer lives through His personal example as a man of prayer during His earthly ministry (Matthew 14:23; Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16; 9:18; 11:1). In II Chronicles 7:14, God gives His promise of "healing" a nation on the condition that the people who are called by His name "humble themselves, **and pray** and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways."

With so much to prompt us, do we find that we **do** take time to pray — for the lost among our personal contacts and in our community, for our pastor and church family, for

our own families, for our AFLC, for our nation, for our world?

It is true that we cannot stop after we have prayed. God also wants us to be available as instruments through which He can accomplish His work. We would not have seen much of what God has done among us locally if people were not both praying and going forward as His instruments. But the power and effectiveness begins with prayer.

It is time to be convinced of the priority of personal prayer. To the extent that we all, even now, commit ourselves to regular, fervent, specific, intercessory prayer, we will very literally change the world and impact eternity. That seems like a lofty statement, but it simply reflects the awesome power that God has vested in prayer. If we believe that God's Word is true, then we must believe that prayer makes a difference. And can we believe that prayer makes a difference — is even one of the most significant activities we can invest ourselves in — and not make it a priority in our lives?

Brothers and sisters in Jesus, let's give priority to prayer — and see what great things God will do.

"If we believe that God's Word is true, then we must believe that prayer makes a difference."



— by Rev. Richard Long
Atonement Free Lutheran Church
Arlington, Washington

not die. One day we laugh again. One day we feel joy again. One day, what is left in our lives becomes tolerable and even at times pleasant again. What was impossible to bear becomes bearable. We know it for certain; we could not have recovered with our own strength. In the midst of the overwhelmingly impossible, we realize our loving Father never left. He never quit caring; He still wills only for our good. Though not completely understood, we begin to see a vision greater than ours. There is power greater than ours. There is love beyond comprehension.

Sure we knew all of this; but never as now. Before it was good theology; now it is a personal, real and living faith. God does care for me! There is not one area of my life that He is not concerned about. He is in control and He is good!

Children never understand all the choices their fathers make. Some of the choices are greatly disliked; some are very painful. Fathers are somewhat of a mystery to their children. But good fathers make their love known and felt even through the painful choices.

Those who are fathers and mothers understand and appreciate their parents with an understanding they never had before children of their own arrived. There is a time when we will better understand our Heavenly Father's choices for us. We will then be overwhelmingly thankful for all He has done for us. But isn't it good to know now that His grace is sufficient for us? "Our Father who art in Heaven ... Thy will be done!"



— Rev. Jon Wellumson
Emmanuel Lutheran Church
Williston, North Dakota

LUTHER: Man of Prayer

**Prayer
must be
offered
from the
heart.**

In 1535 Luther published a 34 page book entitled "A Simple Way to Pray for a Good Friend." The book was a response to a request he had received from his friend and barber, Peter Beskendorf. Beskendorf had asked Luther to show him a simple method of praying that an ordinary lay person could use. One of the principles Luther establishes in the first portion of the book is that "prayer calls for concentration and singleness of heart if it is to be a good prayer" (Luther's Works 43, p. 199). Luther reminds Peter that just as a "good and attentive barber" needs to keep his "thoughts, attention, and eyes on the razor and hair," so prayer demands the same kind of concentration. If a barber's mind begins to wander he may end up cutting the customer and the work will come to a poor end. So too in prayer, wandering thoughts and lack of focus will produce wrong praying (Ibid.).

Another of Luther's down-to-earth illustrations comes from the "Tischreden." At one of the family meals, Luther's dog, Tolpel, was at the table eagerly waiting for some scraps. As Luther saw his puppy sitting there with open mouth and motionless eyes he remarked, "Oh, if I could only pray the way this dog watches the meat! All his thoughts are concentrated on the piece of meat. Otherwise he has no thought, wish, or hope" (LW 54, pp. 37-38).

Coupled with the thought of heartfelt prayer is the truth that good prayers are not necessarily long prayers: "a good prayer should not be drawn out, but frequent and ardent" (LW 43, p. 209). In the 1522 "Personal Prayer Book" Luther declared that "what is important for a good prayer is not many words ... but rather a turning to God frequently and with heartfelt longing, and doing so without ceasing" (LW 43, p. 12).

Prayer must be in the name of Jesus

Luther points out in the "Sermons on the Gospel of St. John" that a believer's prayer is acceptable to God only when he prays in Jesus' name. "Anything that is to qualify as true prayer and worship must be stamped with the simple words, 'in My name'" (LW 24, p. 397). Luther is not teaching that the mere recitation of certain words avails before God but only that the prayer of a child of God

must be centered in the person and work of Christ. In fact, apart from Christ and faith, "no one is able to utter a single word of prayer that is valid before God and acceptable to Him" (LW 24, p. 88). Praying in Jesus' name "is the foundation upon which prayer must rest" and produces two positive results. First, "these words ('in My name') give to prayer the good quality and the dignity that make it acceptable to God," and secondly, these words "free us from severe trials and useless worries regarding our worthiness, worries that hinder our praying and frighten us more than anything else" (Ibid., p. 393).

Praying in the name of Jesus is intimately connected with the central biblical doctrine of justification by grace through faith. To pray properly, one must first despair of his own merits and come to God clothed in the imputed righteousness of Christ, for apart from Christ no one is "worthy to speak with the Lord" (LW 3, p. 291). Indeed, says Luther, "if I were righteous, I would not pray" (LW 4, p. 170). Therefore, the root of true prayer must always be an acknowledgement of sin, a repentant heart, and a personal appropriation of Christ's righteousness — all of this worked by the Holy Spirit through the Word. To put it another way, an understanding of "misery" and "mercy" are essential to true prayer — namely, our misery and God's mercy (LW 3, p. 362). If anyone is not resting completely in the finished work of Christ, prayer will spring from a false sense of personal merit and God will not hear (LW 5, p. 157).

Many people easily speak of God's mercy and forgiveness, because His graciousness is little more than an objective theological concept to them. Only when sin and grace become personal, however, is prayer truly possible.

Prayer must be empowered by the Holy Spirit

The constant work of the Holy Spirit is necessary to produce true prayer. That is so because, according to Luther, all Christian experience (beginning with the gospel call to salvation) is the work of the Holy Spirit. Humanly speaking, prayer is a sheer impossibility, but the presence of the Paraclete in a



— Dr. Craig Jennings
Excerpts from a paper
presented at the
1991 AFLC Pastors'
Conference

believer's life makes prayer effective in two ways. First, the Holy Spirit continually prompts him to pray and then enables him to follow through and actually pray (LW 12, p. 315). Secondly, He intercedes for him. In a beautiful passage in his "Lectures on Galatians" (1535), Luther describes how the groaning of the Spirit on behalf of a child of God rises to fill the Father's ears so that he hears nothing else (LW 26, p. 384). Such intercession is necessary because in and of themselves believers' prayers "are really nothing else than the stammering of children" (LW 3, p. 159).

Prayer must be made in faith

As one might expect, Luther speaks time and time again of the importance of faith in connection with prayer. In the opening paragraphs of "On Rogationtide Prayer and Procession," Luther states that "two things are necessary so that a prayer is good and so that it is heard." First, it must be based upon "a promise or a pledge from God," and second, "it is necessary that we never doubt the promise of the truthful and faithful God" (LW 43, p. 87). Sometimes, however, a believer becomes discouraged in praying. When that happens, the believer needs to disregard the obstacles and human impossibilities he sees around him and continue in prayer, claiming God's promises by faith. He



must completely exclude doubt from prayer.

In summary, then, there is a basic theocentricity underlying Luther's theology of prayer: prayer is intimately connected with God's Word, it springs from a heart touched by God's grace, it is made in the name of God's Son, it is sustained by God's Spirit, and it is a claiming of God's promises. If all of that is true, then the power of prayer is not due to anything in the heart of a believer — including his sincerity or moral earnestness when he comes before God. The power of prayer springs from the fact that its beginning and end is in God.

Standing in the Gap

A great promise of the Lord to depend on is found in Jeremiah 33:3: "Call unto me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know." In obedience to His command, a group of women at Helmar Lutheran Church near Newark, Illinois, gather on Monday mornings for a Prayer Hour. We are joined in prayer by some of the younger mothers who are not free to come to the Fireside Room at church but set that hour aside for prayer. Together we stand in the gap and uphold many in prayer: our Pastor Jeff Swanson and family; Pastor Robert Lee and family; missionaries of the AFLC along with others our congregation supports;

members of our AFLC congregations and the need for revival; our schools and its faculty and staff; the ill and bereaved; and the list continues.

It was in the early 1970s when two of our ladies, both now in glory, Emma Mathre and Mildred Scott felt the burden of the need for a prayer group. Since then, Helmar's Monday morning Prayer Hour has been a part of many lives. Some have gone to work outside the home, moved away, and some have been called home. Dorothy Olson, 90, drives about 11 miles from her home to join us. We all admit that the "week just gets started right when we begin it this way."

In our devotions the other day, we were reminded of the warrior's resource from Ephesians 6:18:

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints." The concluding thought of the devotional said: "you can expect God to intervene if you are willing to intercede!" Last year's WMF Bible Study on prayer has been an encouragement to our group.

It is a joy to know others in our congregation set aside that 9 o'clock hour on Monday mornings to pray. We invite you readers, who are able, to join with us. Meet you at the Throne!

—by Marjorie Mathre
Helmar Lutheran Church
Newark, Illinois

At the 17th Annual Conference of the AFLC, held in Whitefish, Montana, during June 13-17, 1979, delegates voted 180 to 24 to purchase a former Air Force Radar Base near Osceola, Wisconsin. The 80-acre site sold for \$200,000. The property was seen as a retreat, Bible camp and retirement center for the AFLC. Approximately 18 buildings were on the site with only the two apartment buildings in current use as rental property. There were lots of dreams for this deserted military installation but it would require someone with huge amounts of fortitude, ingenuity and vision to translate those dreams into reality. Bob and Carol Dietsche from Sand Creek, Wisconsin, answered the call.

In his 14th report to the annual conference last June, Bob Dietsche wrote: "My enthusiasm for the ARC has not diminished. God's continual blessing on it has confirmed that the purchase of this property was His will and the ministry of the ARC is expanding His Kingdom."

On January 1, 1994, Bob and Carol turned the responsibility of the ARC over to Ken and Bev Hokkanen. They have purchased an ARC Country Village home near the Retreat Center.

As a member of the AFLC and the ARC Board, I say "thank you" for the past 14 years. Bob and Carol, as you look back to that day when you accepted the call to take the helm at the ARC, you accepted the challenge of an uncharted course with God as your only compass. During those days when the enormity of the job was so overwhelming, did you ever dream that the ARC would be of such value to the AFLC, to other church groups, to schools and the many other services provided? We praise God that He allowed you 14 years of good health in order to do so much work.

— *Cliff Seldal*
ARC Board Chairman
DeKalb, Illinois



A Tribute to Bob and Carol Dietsche

After being under Bob's supervision for the past ten years, a number of thoughts come to mind. A river runs through Bob's life; it flows with energy, imagination, inquisitiveness, optimism and concern for his colleagues, friends and family. Professionals are often taken for granted. Because of their many abilities, we think they come naturally and little effort is needed for their accomplishments. Many times I have seen Bob keep right on plugging away in spite of fatigue or injury; always without a complaint. Often Bob and Carol have sacrificed family activities and personal needs to care for a retreat center that attempts to bring families closer together and closer to the Lord. Thank you for giving yourself to others and for being a mentor to me.

— *Gene Yukonich*
ARC staff member

When you want to give tribute to someone, you think. You think about Bob and Carol and the challenge they accepted 14 years ago; about their newly built home they left to fashion a home in a base building they chose to name Good News

Lodge. You think of how they faced the task of directing operations while seeing a rough building site evolve into a lovely and functional facility.

You ponder as you see Bible names appear on each street, building and room. You are amazed to witness a radar tower come down and its steel girders take on the form of the Association Family Life Circle which looms near the main entrance. Your heart lifts in praise to Jesus as the Alpha and Omega letters emerge in bold relief at the bottom of the 40-foot cross, completing the monument.

You wonder how Carol in those years could stay ahead of the book-keeping, scheduling, laundering, menu planning and grocery shopping. How can one express gratitude to the Dietsche family and to the dedicated ARC staff for this multifaceted endeavor which continues to be a blessing to so many?

You can know for certain that they will hold this honor with gratefulness until that glorious day when they can lay this tribute at the feet of our Savior to whom all praise and honor is due!

— *Myrtle Smith*
ARC neighbor

In the fall of 1979, my parents left their life-long community and their new home on the Red Cedar River near Sand Creek, Wisconsin. For over 30 years, my dad had owned a radio and TV sales and repair business along with his aerial photography work. My mother had always been a full-time homemaker. I was the youngest of three children and had begun my second year as a student at AFLBS. I was surprised to see my parents make this transition and even thought they were a little crazy.

My father is truly a "Jack-of-all-trades" and mom epitomizes organization. Both have hands and minds that are never idle. That combined with a strong desire to serve the Lord and a vision for the AFLC, and I began to understand why they were the ones to be the first directors.

The summer of 1980, I graduated from AFLBS, came home and learned what hard work was. For nearly two decades the base had been abandoned. We cleaned out barracks from top to bottom including dead birds in drawers. We mopped, scrapped chipped paint, mopped, scrubbed bathrooms, mopped some more and through it all Dad was constantly fixing the plumbing. That summer I gained a new appreciation for lawn mowing. Our mowers, called "yahzoos," came from a state prison and yes, Dad was always fixing them.

The January 1980 Pastors' Conference was the first retreat ever held at the ARC. That summer we hosted the first Bible camp with about 200 campers who somehow fit into the Bethel Chapel. The following summer, the Tabernacle was made ready.

I can not recall a time when they did not have a big project going. My parents have an amazing gift to spot the sales and businesses looking to give things away: mattresses, beds, folding chairs, kitchen and office equipment, theater seats, bleachers and the list goes on. Dad saw the projects as a challenge and had fun.

Meet the New ARC Director

Mr. Ken Hokkanen, 36, is the new director of the Association Retreat Center (ARC) near Osceola, Wisconsin. He began his new duties on January 1, 1994. Ken and his wife, Bev, along with their two children, Ben, and Sara, moved to the ARC in August of 1992 when Ken began working as the assistant director.

The Hokkanens have been familiar with the AFLC for over 16 years. Ken grew up attending Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Annandale, Minnesota. Their missionary support included John and Ruby Abel and the AFLC's Brazilian mission. Though the congregation continued to be independent, their pastor encouraged members to subscribe to *The Lutheran Ambassador*.

The Hokkanens moved to Minneapolis in 1980, and became active at Medicine Lake Lutheran Church as youth leaders. It was then that they were first introduced to the ARC. After returning to Annandale, they joined the new AFLC congregation in nearby Cokato, Good Shepherd Free Lutheran Church, where their membership is today.

There was the man-made lake, swimming pool, dinning room renovation then addition, and the radar tower snow tube slide to name a few. I never went out for dinner without Dad writing plans on placemats or napkins. If he did not know how to repair or construct something, he somehow learned. Mom was the one behind the naming of the buildings and streets.

Just a year or so ago I was thrilled to hear my parents begin to talk of retirement. It will be different. No more being the first one up to turn on the ovens and the last one to bed after checking lights and doors. No more stares at the supermarket when you are checking out with five carts



Ken has been employed as a sales and technical representative for photographic companies. He also has had his own chimney sweep and insurance businesses. For six years Bev has worked in medical offices.

In 1986, Ken and Bev began to sense a strong call to full-time ministry. They began to pray for and seek numerous doors of opportunity. When the door opened at the ARC in 1992, they knew that was the Lord's perfect timing and leading. They desire your prayers for themselves as well as for God's continued blessing in the ARC ministry.

of bread or watermelon. Perhaps Dad will not have to use his pest control skills on everything from mice to skunks, weasels to woodchucks. No more narrow escapes with heavy equipment including a recent fall off the roof of the new director's house.

Now my parents are ready to make another transition. I am proud of them and thank God for what He has done through their lives. They have lived a servant life; always grateful for how the Lord has provided through staff and the hundreds of individuals who have volunteered time and money. Thank you, Lord.

—Christy Dietsche Jacobson
Burlington, North Dakota

Baltic Bulletin No. 5

It was a crisp, cold Sunday morning in Siberia as Pastor and Mrs. Nikolaus Schneider picked up Pastor Don Richman and me at the Omsk Hotel. As we got into his frost-covered car, we did not realize the extent to which we would be warmed spiritually before the day was over. Yes, the winters can be very warm in Siberia among God's people.

A half-hour later we turned onto a little street in an older part of the city. Small houses crowded close together lined the narrow, snowy lane. Soon we arrived in front of what appeared to be just another house. The solid wooden gate was opened to let our car into the small yard; then was closed.

Stepping into this "house," we were amazed to see a very large room filled with narrow benches. Even though it was a long time before the worship service was to begin, there were already about 100 people singing hymns.

We were greeted with warm smiles and friendly handshakes and then we met with the pastor and deacons for a time of prayer. The deacons were men in their upper sixties to eighties. They have walked with God though it has meant deep suffering for many of them. Their earnest prayers reflected spiritual maturity and a depth of Christian experience.

The service was led by one of the older deacons. All of the men sat in the front behind and to the side of the center pulpit. The women sat separately and each one had their heads covered with scarves. Some 250 people had squeezed into this house-church. The entrance area was filled with people and some were standing. We learned later that the church is packed like this every Sunday.

Though there was a piano, the hymn-singing was all without accompaniment. Perhaps a dozen beautiful hymns were sung during the service, fervently and slowly. Many knew the

verses of each hymn from memory. Interspersed throughout the service were three or four times of congregational prayer. Everyone kneeled and prayed audibly at the same time. One could hear the heartfelt prayers of praise and petition on every side if one would pause to listen. Yet, there was not a sense of distraction by the sound of many voices. As the prayer times ended, everyone waited for the last one to finish.

The deacon who was the main leader of the meeting read a sermon on the text for the day. Then Pastor Schneider preached from the texts in Romans 13 and I Peter 2.

It was interesting to see the many Bible verses printed in beautiful script letters on the walls of the church. Most were in German but at least one was in Russian. Among the verses was Matthew 7:7 and 11:28. During the service it was announced that one of the ladies was moving soon to Germany. She stood and tearfully said her good-byes to the congregation.

After two hours, Pastor Schneider announced that there would be a short break before the service would

continue. After the break there was more singing by the congregation and the small choir. Then Pastor Richman and I each preached.

The people did not seem at all in a hurry to leave. As they slowly left the building, many of them expressed their thanks for our coming by hugs, handshakes, as well as the common Russian custom of a kiss on the cheek. The love of Christ was clearly evident among these people themselves, as well as toward us. Referring to each other as dear brother (liebre Bruder) or dear sister (liebre Schwester).

It was encouraging to see a number of children and youth beginning to sing as we put on our coats to leave for the airport. We expect that the Sunday school time is perhaps as unhurried as the worship service.

Stepping out into the sunshine again, it seemed much warmer — or was it that our hearts had been so spiritually warmed that it only seemed that way? I know we will never think of Siberia as a cold place again!

— by Dr. Francis Monseth
AFLTS Dean on a teaching
sabbatical to Latvia

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences – February 1 - December 31, 1993

FUND	TOTAL BUDGET	REC'D IN DECEMBER	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$239,852.25	\$45,765.85	\$213,648.68	89
Seminary	136,235.00	31,131.96	100,812.76	74
Bible School	196,377.50	42,428.11	149,510.45	76
Home Missions.	268,210.25	57,633.71	249,610.44	93
World Missions.	284,166.66	56,159.12	317,753.82	1.12
Capital Investment	46,108.33	2,317.74	22,445.49	49
Parish Education	48,718.08	8,715.23	60,196.48	1.24
ARC	12,100.00	222.44	**5,315.15	44
Chrisn. Acd. Ed. Bd.	3,666.67	265.32	1,300.20	35
TOTALS	\$1,235,434.74	\$244,639.48	\$1,120,593.47	91
1992 - 1993	\$1,631,326.00	\$133,408.47	\$1,018,112.88	62
Goal 100%				

*Revised budget based on fiscal year of 11 months. Total AFLC subsidy reduced by 1/12 to show a more accurate % of total received.

**This total represents mostly undesignated gifts that were sent to the Minneapolis office and then divided between the funds by percentage.

I Peter 1:19

— We must personally apply His blood to our own hearts. When God looks at me, covered by the blood of Jesus, He “passes over” my death penalty. He removes our sins from us as far as the east is from the west.

f. FOOD - Matthew 26:26-28

John 6:35

— Our acceptance of Christ’s substitutionary death and life must become so much a part of us that it affects every area of our lives.

g. OWNERSHIP - Hebrews 10:9

I Corinthians 6:20 “You were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, WHICH ARE GOD’S.”

h. RESULTS - John 3:17

Romans 5:1

I John 5:11-12

— Because of Jesus, we are saved and have eternal life if we have put our trust in Him as our sacrificial Lamb.

The sacrifice of the Passover lamb in Egypt was a picture to reveal Jesus to us. He was the “Lamb of God” without blemish, whose blood was shed to save and protect us and lead us to a life of service for Him.

MAKING IT PERSONAL:

Have you put consecrated time and thought on the suffering that Jesus, your “Passover Lamb,” endured as He went to the cross for YOUR sins? this month, may each of us take time to do this.

THE PASSOVER

Ever since man’s fall into sin, God made it clear that: (1) a sacrifice is necessary to “cover” man,” and (2) that He had a plan to redeem mankind. The nation of Israel was part of that plan. In this lesson, we will see the Israelites in Egypt as slaves. Moses was born, protected, and educated in Egypt. He became Israel’s leader in the exodus to the promised land, according to God’s plan.

1. Read Exodus 2:1-10 and Acts 7:34.

a. Why did God choose Moses? Acts 7:20; Hebrews 11:23-28.

b. Does God have plans for you? Discuss some of them.

(1) I Timothy 2:4

(2) I Peter 2:2

(3) I Peter 2:5

(4) I Peter 2:9

(5) I Peter 2:12

So God’s plan for each of us is to acknowledge that we are sinners and deserve death. But because of God’s love and mercy, He sent His Son Jesus to pay the price in our place. We praise Him because of what Jesus did for us.

c. What is always true about God’s plans for your life? Jeremiah 29:11.

2. After forty years in the wilderness, Moses returned to Egypt to lead the people out. God sent plagues to convince Pharaoh to let the people go.

a. List the Plagues	Exodus	Who was affected
(1)	7:19-20	
(2)	8:6	
(3)	8:17	
(4)	8:24	
(5)	9:6	
(6)	9:11	
(7)	9:25	
(8)	10:14	
(9)	10:23	
(10)	12:29-30	

b. Discuss how we as believers are often protected from the things of the world.

PASSOVER

3. God gave instructions for the preparation of the Passover. List the steps. Exodus 12:1-13

- a. TIME - vs. 2 _____
- b. CHOICE - vs. 3 _____
- c. CONDITION - vs. 5 _____
- d. ACTION - vs. 6 _____

- e. BLOOD - vs. 7 _____
- f. FOOD - vs. 8 _____
- g. OWNERSHIP - vs. 11 _____
- h. RESULTS - vs. 13, 28-29 _____

The blood applied to the door was the sacrifice to "cover" the individuals inside who had their faith and trust in God to protect them.

4. JESUS CHRIST IS OUR PASSOVER LAMB (1 Cor. 5:7). Compare the first passover with its spiritual application for us today in Christ.

- a. TIME - Galatians 4:4 _____

- Our calendar and dating system is set by the birth of Jesus, so believers and unbelievers alike acknowledge His birth.
- b. CHOICE - John 1:11-12 _____
 John 3:16-18 _____
 — It is a personal choice — a response of faith to God's offer.
- c. CONDITION - Matthew 3:17 _____

 John 3:5 _____

 Hebrews 9:14 _____

 — Jesus is our Lamb without blemish or sin.
- d. ACTION - Luke 23:33 _____
 — Jesus was MY replacement to pay for MY sins, so MY sins killed Him.

Raising Money Through STEER, Inc.



In 1979, the AFLC World Missions Department received the first unit of money from a donor. The first actual contribution to World Missions came 11 months later when that steer was sold and STEER, Inc. channeled the profit to the AFLC. Fifteen years later, the AFLC is 14th out of 76 total organizations receiving STEER, Inc. funds. Last year over \$5,300 was paid to World Missions. Currently there are 32 donor units designated to the AFLC and 37 animals being raised. Pictured are Rev. LaRue Goetz, Executive Director of Steer, Inc. with Adam and Jayne Jordan of the Dan Jordan ranch near Faith, South Dakota. Rev. Goetz had just delivered three new steers to Faith area ranches. More donors and farmers/ranchers are needed. A donor unit is \$700 and half a unit is \$350. Donors may designate the specific mission or missionary their unit will support. More farmers and ranchers are needed both to raise livestock and to raise crops with God's Acres Plan. For more information on how you can get involved, contact the World Missions Office at 3110 East Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55441 or call 612-545-5631.

Letter to the Editor

To the Editor:

I would like to share my conviction for the need of having an evangelist for the Association once again. Many of you remember with deep respect our last full-time evangelist Pastor Pentti. He was a straight shooter. He spoke right from the Bible. Pentti spoke of how we need to stand for something — the Word, or we will fall for anything — any of Satan's schemes (Psalm 118:6)! Take a stand and people will notice.

John 12:43 says: "For they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God." I am so thankful to presently be under the sound biblical preaching of a pastor who also lives it. Pastor Monseth once shared, "Your actions speak so loudly I can't hear what you're saying."

There were some that perhaps

didn't appreciate Pastor Pentti's preaching — but in his own words — when hearing the gospel preached, first it makes you mad, then it makes you sad, then it makes you glad!

God used Pastor Pentti to reach many people for the Lord, and I am but one. As a saved father, I then became concerned about the salvation of my wife and family, and praise God my household is secure in Christ. We became involved in the church, in youth work, and Bible studies. I was glad and still am! I think that an evangelist could be responsible for getting many more families (including pastors) on track for the Lord (1 Timothy 3:1-7).

Carter Hedlund
Roseau, Minnesota

At the Miriam Infant Home

Hi! My name is Cristiano Maciel, but most people call me Maciel. I arrived at the Miriam Infant Home on October 20, 1992, after my mother decided that she was tired of me. My mother was only 17 years old and her life was a real disaster. In June I became seven years old and am so happy here at the Miriam Home. I now have a beautiful, big smile on my face. I go to school in the afternoons, from 1-5 p.m. at the Christian Day School, run by the AFLC of Brazil in Campo Mourão.

I will be under the care of the Miriam Home until my mother decides to sign the release papers, so that I can be adopted. Please pray much for this, because I would so much like to have a good home.



PEOPLE and PLACES

Pastor Paul Pillman and family have moved to Menomonie, Wisconsin, where he is serving Good Shepherd Free Lutheran Church. Their new address is 1220 Knapp Street, Menomonie, WI 54751.

Rev. Allen Monson has begun serving Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran Church in Lakeville, Minnesota. His new address is 16358 Goodview Trail, Lakeville, MN 55044.

Rev. David Barnhart, formerly of Eagan, Minnesota, has moved to 3535 Bull Run Court, Melbourne, FL 32934. Phone number is 407-253-9387. Along with his wife, Mary, Pastor Barnhart continues to work with Abiding Word Ministries with offices located at 4300 Nicols Road, Eagan, MN 55122.

Wyoming, Minnesota — Hope Free Lutheran Church held their winter Special Meetings from January 30 to February 2, with Rev. David Skordahl, Dalton, Minnesota as the guest speaker.

Mountain Home, Arkansas — The address of St. Matthew Lutheran Church is Route 8 - Box 45A, Mountain Home, AR 72652. The phone number is 501-425-9258. AFLC winter travelers are welcome to visit.



Greenbush, Minnesota — Pictured are four of six couples with young children registered in the Cradle Roll at United Free Lutheran Church. The young couples meet informally for fellowship and encouragement.

Oceanside, California — The children's and youth departments at Community Bible Church, AFLC, sponsored a day-long golf marathon on December 6. Mr. Jack Sances of the Emerald Golf Course in Oceanside and Pastor Orville Hiepler won the trophies for the fastest 100 holes played among the 22 golfers. Pastor Hiepler played a total of 112 holes from dawn to dusk. Mr. Tom Lane continued until he played 125 holes. This young congregation of 39 family units held their first annual meeting on January 24. The Golf Marathon raised \$3,000 towards the hiring of a Parish Worker or Youth Pastor.

Weslaco, Texas — On Tuesday evenings, Faith Lutheran Church congregation holds a Friendship Evangelism class for all who are interested in an imaginative and practical concept of evangelism in everyday life.

Elbow, Saskatchewan — Bethel Lutheran Church has begun a new series on Wednesday evenings entitled: "Faith Bible Class" while continuing the Thursday evening Home Study Group on Ephesians. The Wednesday study is an in-depth class on Lutheran teachings.

The new address for **Rev. Tim Hurley** is Box 258, Bruce, SD 57220; phone number is 605-627-5188 (home) and 605-627-5445 (office). Pastor Hurley was installed as the pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in Bruce on January 16, by AFLC President Robert Lee.



Detroit Lakes, Minnesota — Pictured is the new Faith Free Lutheran Church building which was dedicated recently. The Home Mission congregation has grown from a group attending an AFLC Informational Meeting in January, 1990. Rev. Paul Larson became the first pastor of the congregation in the fall of 1990. The congregation continues to grow spiritually and to reach out into the community.

Mid-Winter Conference

Maranatha Free Lutheran Church
Glyndon, Minnesota

February 25-26

Theme: "Be Not Ashamed of the Gospel," Romans 16:17

Speaker: Bob Andrews,
WMPL Director

For more information call Pastor
Dale Finstrom (218) 498-2808

Reaching Your Goals

The Bible can ask some penetrating questions. One such question is found in Galatians 3:4 where we are asked, "After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?" Most who call themselves evangelicals would be quick to defend the truth that it is "by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8). After beginning by faith, however, we often live as if our continued growth is solely dependent on our own hard work. Eugene Peterson in his book "Working the Angles" says, "Our theology is orthodox and biblical in these matters. ... We preach the sovereignty of our Lord, the primacy of grace, the glory of God. ... But in our committee meetings and our planning sessions, in our obsessive attempts to meet the expectations of people, in our anxiety to please, in our hurry to cover all the bases, we practice a theology that puts our good will at the foundation of life and urges moral effort as the primary element in pleasing God."

Some things we do not say with our lips but we proclaim clearly with our lives. What message are we giving when we spend five minutes meeting with God and two hours meeting with a committee? Whose ability are we trusting in when we spend hours consumed with our work and, in a passing thought, ask God to do His work? Are we more interested in putting together a program or spending time in prayer? If someone examined the way we as individuals and congregations use our time would it be said about us, "They really believe great things happen when God's people pray?"

People who cannot make it on their own, people whose best efforts are bound to fail, people who are desperate, people like us need to pray. It is foolish to think our goals can be attained by human effort. Yet, we spend much time and energy on things that will have little ultimate effectiveness. We have been fooled into having a "big" view of what we can do and a "little" view of what God can do. We need to get it straight as to who is truly powerful. A clear understanding of who can get things accomplished should lead to drastic changes in the way we spend our time. It should lead to us doing that which our get-it-accomplished mind may say is impractical, but what God's Word and centuries of testimonies say is extremely productive. It should lead to prayer.

Relax

One of the best hours of my week is 8 a.m. to 9 a.m. on Wednesdays. I get together with a group of pastors in our community to pray. We come from a variety of denominations. What unites us is our love for Jesus. We never have a speaker or a business meeting. We have a brief time of sharing requests, and then we pray. It is pretty simple. Maybe that is what makes it seem almost innovative.

Part of the beauty of the hour is the opportunity to share what is on our hearts. Things that are shared do not go out of the room. They only go up to God. The men in that room love and accept me and care about me. They have confessed their faults and struggles. I have confessed mine. Being with them in prayer is a relaxing and refreshing time. I am glad I can be honest with them, and most of all, I am glad I can be honest with God.

Prayer gives us the wonderful opportunity to unload. We can let go of the burdens we have been bearing and give them to God. We can confess our sins so that Christ can break the chains that bind us. We can express our confusion, our frustrations, our sorrows and our joys. We can be real and know that, because of what Christ has done on the cross, we will not be rejected. God knows us better than we know ourselves. We come into His presence, with great reverence most definitely, but we can also relax.

I hope the hour I spend in prayer with the other pastors never becomes another meeting I have to go to or something else to cram into a busy schedule. Sadly, that kind of thing often happens to prayer. We know we are suppose to do it. People tell us about its importance and we heartily agree. Yet, we never do it enough and the guilt piles up. It becomes simply another religious obligation we feel we must fulfill. How far short that is of the beautiful thing prayer can be! God invites us to "approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Hebrews 4:12). Do not make it into a mere duty to keep. Enjoy it as an incredible opportunity and privilege that can be yours to experience.

If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.

— Matthew 21:22

Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

— Hebrews 4:16

It is not our prayer which moves the Lord Jesus. It is Jesus who moves us to pray.

The results of prayer are, therefore, not dependent upon the powers of the one who prays. His intense will, his fervent emotions, or his clear comprehension of what he is praying for are not the reasons why his prayers will be heard and answered. Nay, God be praised, the results of prayer are not dependent upon these things!

To pray is nothing more involved than to open the door, giving Jesus access to our needs and permitting Him to exercise His own power in dealing with them.

— O. Hallesby in *Prayer*

The disquieting thing is not simply that we skimp and begrudge the duty of prayer. The really disquieting thing is it should have to be numbered among duties at all.

— C.S. Lewis in
*Letters to Malcom:
Chiefly on Prayer*

The greatest fulfillment in my prayer life has not been the list of miraculous answers to prayers I have received, although that has been wonderful. The greatest thrill has been the qualitative difference in my relationship with God.

God is interested in your prayers because He is interested in you. Whatever matters to you is a priority for His attention. You don't have to pester Him to get His attention. He's your Father; He wants to hear what you have to say. In fact, He's waiting for you to call.

Authentic Christianity is not learning a set of doctrines and then stepping into cadence with people all marching the same way. It is not simply humanitarian service to the less fortunate. It is a walk — a supernatural walk with a living, dynamic, communicating God. Thus the heart and soul of the Christian life is learning to hear God's voice and developing the courage to do what He tells us to do.

— Bill Hybels in
Too Busy Not to Pray

I suddenly realized a very basic fact: for me, talking **about** God had replaced talking **to** God.

I prayed, "I want to know you better, Lord. I make a decision to spend one hour a day with you for the rest of my life."

The hour I spend each day with God becomes a time of exciting dialogue with my Creator.

The hour I spend with the Lord is always the best part of my day.

— Becky Tirabassi in
*Wild Things Happen
When I Pray*

If you believe indeed in the Lord Jesus for the salvation of your soul, if you walk uprightly and do not regard iniquity in your heart, if you continue to wait patiently, and believingly upon God; then answers will surely be given to your prayers.

— George Muller in
Answers to Prayer