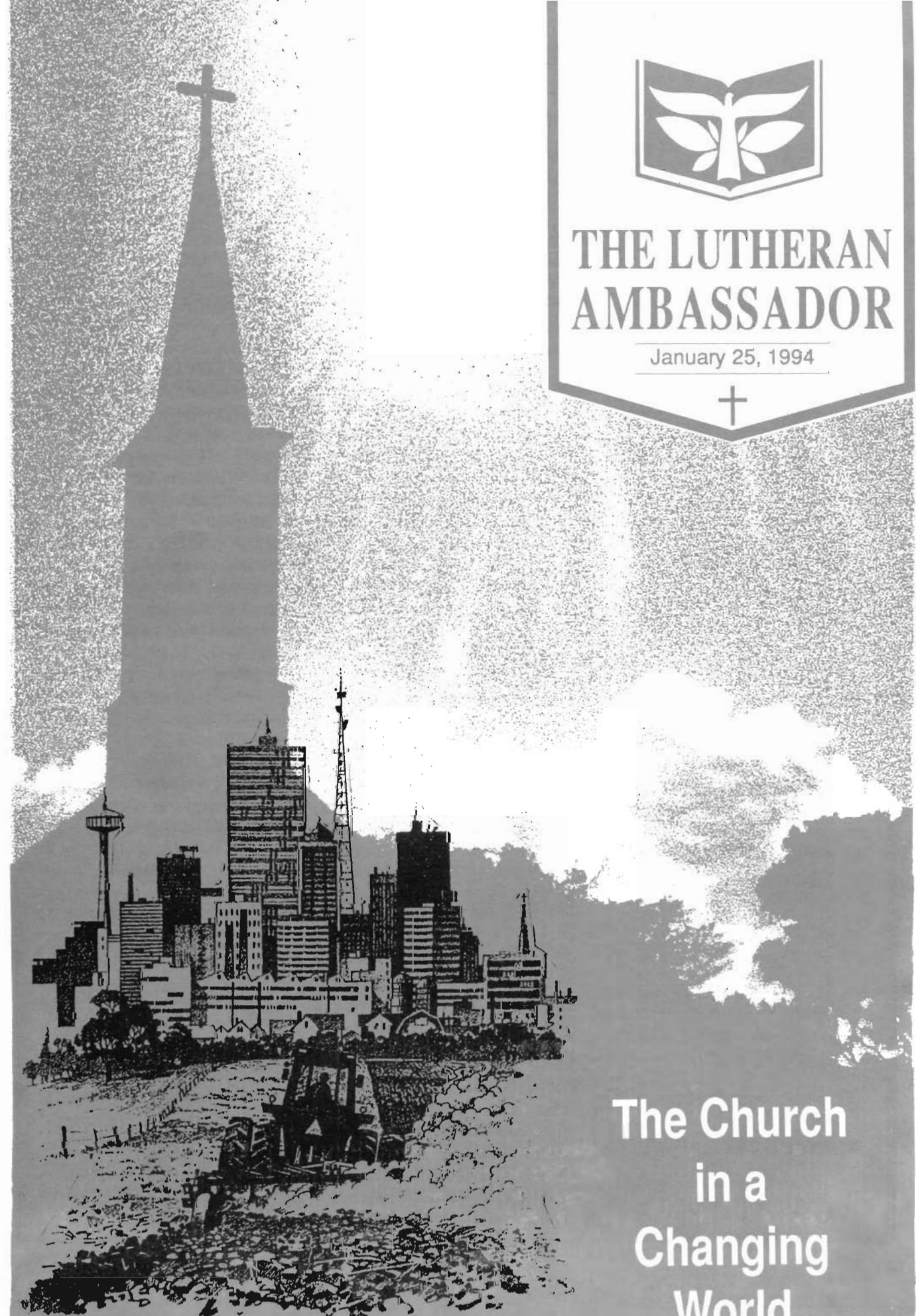




THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

January 25, 1994



The Church
in a
Changing
World

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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Light on the Way

God is With Us

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). During the 27 centuries which have passed since Isaiah spoke those words to King Ahaz of Judah, countless rabbis, Bible translators, and seminary professors have passionately expounded about just who this prophesied son was and whether or not it was a "virgin" or merely a "young woman" who conceived and bore him. Matthew gave the definitive answer to these important questions when he said of Jesus' conception: "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'The virgin (the Greek word Matthew used is much more specific than was the Hebrew word of Isaiah) will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel' — which means, 'God with us'" (Matthew 1:22-23).

With Matthew, the Christian believes that the Immanuel of Isaiah's prophecy is ultimately Jesus Christ: Jesus is "God with us" — and to know that changes everything! Philip Yancey said it like this: "Unimaginably, the Maker of all things shrinks down, down, down, so small as to become a single, barely visible fertilized egg. And that egg divides and redivides until a fetus takes shape, and finally a baby comes from Mary's loins to join puny human beings on their speck of a planet ... Here on earth, for 33 years, God experienced what it is like to be a human being. And in the stories he told, and the people whose lives he touched, he answered for all time the question, does one person matter?" (*Christianity Today*, November 22, 1993, pp. 21-22).

There is an answer to the perennially troubling questions: "Do I matter?"

and "Does God care?" The very simple answer is this: Jesus came! God is with us! Eugene Peterson, in his paraphrase of John's Gospel, helps keep this astonishing reality new and fresh: "The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood" (*The Message*, p. 185).

In the person of Jesus, God moved into our neighborhood (we call it Planet Earth) ... and our neighborhood has never been the same! Thirty-three years later, after He had purchased our redemption at the price of his very lifeblood, the risen Christ ascended back to His original neighborhood called heaven. Soon after, He poured out His Holy Spirit ... and His people have never been the same.

Immanuel came and, even though He no longer lives here in the flesh, He remains in us in the person of His spirit. God is with us! Immanuel has assured our victory, no matter how fiercely the enemy may rage. Jesus became one of us; His understanding of our battles is no abstract theory from afar, He lived out the same realities we live, He faced the same temptations we face, and through it all, He never sinned. Consistently He triumphed over the enemy and, as we trust in Him, we share in His victory! We who believe in Jesus, our Immanuel, can challenge whatever enemy we face, saying "Devise your strategy, but it will be thwarted; propose your plan, but it will not stand, for God is with us (Immanuel)!" (Isaiah 8:10).



— by Rev.
Jerry Holmaas

"Wake, awake, for night is flying. The watchman on the heights are crying; awake Jerusalem, arise!" (Concordia 426)

Wake, Awake, For Night Is Flying

This was the theme song of the "Watchmen Quartet" as they traveled around the newly organized AFLC in 1964. Its message challenged the churches to see the signs of the times and take a stand of faith for that which was right. The song continued: "Bear through the night your well-trimmed light, speed forth."

Thirty years have passed, bringing growth and change to our AFLC. We have gone from a predominantly rural, small town, midwestern fellowship to a more urban and regionally diverse brotherhood. We have seen other groups under the name "Lutheran" advocate everything from abortion to alternate lifestyle ministers to female "Sophia" worship. Christian values are mocked and sometimes outlawed. Many believe we live in a "post-Christian" era. Indeed, the night is flying fast!

The call to awake is timely! That requires more than just having our eyes open. "I looked for a man among them," said God through the prophet Ezekiel, "who would build a wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so that I would not destroy it" (Ezekiel 22:30). Standing and building are action words. Christ called His Church to action under the power of the Holy Spirit. Being awake should be characterized by action. How then can we, as a local body of believers, actively demonstrate that we are awake?

First, we need to be awakened to the people around us. Our ministry cannot be limited to those of a certain ethnic or denominational background. Minorities, refugees, new immigrants and the unchurched need our attention. Bethany Lutheran in Spokane, Washington, has the right idea. They placed a sign on the inside of the exit door: "You are now entering the mission field!"

We also need to be awakened to the principles of Christian living. Christ has called us to follow Him and be His disciples. This means down-scaling our lifestyle, living closer to the Word and giving of ourselves sacrificially. Heavy time and debt commitments can prevent us from freely responding to God's leading. John the Baptist told his repentant hearers that if they had two coats, they should sell one (Luke 3:11).

Understanding our purpose for being is another way of demonstrating that we are awake. Why do we exist as a body of believers? Is it simply to carry on a denominational title, build lovely structures, and conduct worship services and suppers? The Bible tells us we are "God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:10). Perhaps a rural congregation with limited growth prospects could become a prayer beacon for the many ministries of the larger church body. Maybe there could be a seminary a congregation could sponsor or a neighboring congregation with a new urban ministry. Larger urban congregations might explore new forms of outreach and worship to reach the unchurched or a minority group. God may open doors to mother a new congregation or support those who God calls for service from among them. Jesus said in John 15:16: "I have chosen you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last!"

Above all these, the church needs to be awakened to the power of fervent prayer. Through prayer God convicts, converts, capacitates and commissions His church for service. In his best seller, *This Present Darkness*, Frank Peretti describes the scene in a small college town on a summer evening during the local festival. There was a lone figure kneeling in a small church amidst the frivolity out on the street. The man came to the church nightly to intercede for the people before the Lord. Two angelic observers stood at the door. The one said: "But he is only one. He is alone." The other quickly remarked: "No, there are others. There are always others. They just have to be found" (p. 13).

Note: The author has ministered for 13 years as a missionary in Brazil. He has served Solid Rock Church since 1992. He and his family plan to return to Brazil in the summer of 1994.



— Rev. David Abel
Solid Rock Free
Lutheran Church
Osseo, Minnesota

The Church's Role in Rural America



The headlines in many publications announce that rural America is in a state of decline. Some have suggested that we in North Dakota should let our state return to the buffalo; a "buffalo commons" as some call it. It is true that the population in North Dakota continues to decline and to increase in average age. However, for those who remain, life goes on: not vastly different from most other parts of our nation.

What role does the "church" play in rural America? Are churches in the rural areas in a state of decline? Is the function of the congregation different in a rural area than it is in an urban area? The answers to these questions could produce volumes of material, much beyond the length of this article.

The place that the church occupies in rural America must be defined by its mission here on earth. That mission is to worship and glorify

God; minister to the needs of the saints; preach the Word in such a manner that those who hear are brought into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ; and to encourage all to apply their faith in ministering to the needs of the people and community around them. This is the mission of the church. The location of the building makes no difference.

I have been a member of a large urban church (approximately 3,000 members) and a member of small rural congregations. There is a difference of function due to the contrast in numbers in both the congregation and community. Some say that rural churches cannot compete with all the programs of a larger urban church; but impact on a community cannot be measured by the number of programs your church has developed.

The rural congregation has a unique opportunity. The closeness of a community where

It is not uncommon for adolescents to tell their parents that it is much more difficult for a kid to grow up today than when they were young. I am not quite sure if this is true, although there does seem to be a significant factor in the life of an adolescent that is certainly making existence frightening for many. The existence of gangs and satanism pose a threat to more and more youth. This, unfortunately, is not limited to large, overpopulated cities. In a multitude of locations the pressures and drive to join gangs and satanic cults appear to be increasing.

This gang and occult-type behavior used to be considered isolated to specific areas such as large and prominent cities. After working for several years in a city which is

Gang Problems on the Rural Doorstep

considered half rural and half industrial, I have personally seen the massive increase of gang and occult-type activities in only the past two years. Our city is about 50 minutes from Chicago. It is close enough to be influenced by its activities. One theory of the reasoning for this is simply that more and more people are moving out of the city and going south to the more rural areas, thus, taking their social ways with them.

A more realistic theory is that the gang and occult-type behaviors are spreading by way of negative education. This negative education is passed on from person to person or student to student. The information is dangerous to the community. An example of this is as follows: an adolescent boy is not getting along with

Sin comes when we take a perfectly natural desire or longing or ambition and try desperately to fulfill it without God. Not only is it sin, it is a perverse distortion of the image of the Creator in us. All these good things, and all our security, are rightly found only and completely in Him.

— Saint Augustine in *"The Confessions of Saint Augustine"*

virtually everyone knows everyone, allows a loving, Christ-honoring congregation to impact and perhaps change the lives of most of the people in the community. As I was growing up in McVie, North Dakota, (population nearly 600), I witnessed this many times. For example, everyone knew that my parents had a strong, personal faith in Jesus Christ because they lived their faith daily. Because of this, people would alter their behavior when they came into my parents' store. One man, who used profanity every other word, did not use one profane word when he was in the store or even on other occasions when he met my father or mother.

The smallness of the community also has its drawbacks. As the population declines so does membership in the local churches. Most of the young people leave for the larger urban areas as that is where the jobs are. The people that remain in rural America tend to get older. As wonderful as rural life might be, it cannot stop the aging process. The rural churches

and their pastors must meet the challenges of declining and aging membership.

In some churches there are more funerals than baptisms on a yearly basis. Some of these churches eventually close or merge with a nearby congregation. This does not come easy as we in rural America attach much to our heritage. However, the words of Jesus in Matthew 18:20 offer much comfort. "For where two or three come together in my name, there I am with them."

Just as rural America is not in a state of decline, the rural church is not in a state of decline. Yes, population and membership may decline, but the mission of the church remains the same! Where the Word of God is preached there is power and vitality. The demographics may have changed but the Word of our Lord remains forever!

— Reuben C. Quanbeck
Trinity Free Lutheran Church
Grand Forks, North Dakota

"The demographics may have changed but the Word of our Lord remains forever!"

his peers in the community and goes to stay with a relative in the city. The boy learns the ways of the city and comes back to his rural home. When this boy is still not getting along with his peers, he decides to use some of the recently obtained negative knowledge to make friends and get back at other peers. This sole boy will then educate more and more adolescents and soon, a gang-type problem exists in the community.

A common question asked by parents is: "Why is my child in a gang and what do they get out of it?" There are many answers. As a family and adolescent psychotherapist I find many patterns to the behaviors that are exhibited. Probably the most common reason that an adolescent joins a gang or a satanic cult is to gain power. This power comes in many forms including the power in numbers, the sense of belonging and the fear the young person is able to instill in others. Usually the "joiner" will have something missing in his or her life. Usually they have a low self-esteem so belonging to anything is fulfilling and powerful for them.

Obviously, adolescents with low self-esteem are not the only ones to join the gangs and cults. There are many things that must be taken into consideration. Probably

the most effective way to deal with these problems is to not wait for them to happen. It is best to take a preventative stance and educate the community so they are strong and powerful enough to meet these problems head on. I have witnessed many communities, especially in rural areas, using denial as an approach to deal with these problems. If a community waits until the problem is at their doorstep, it is too late.

Ultimately, the best way to deal with such problems is to start at home by giving the adolescents the love, emotional support and understanding, and communication they need. Understanding the spiritual, identity, developmental and self-esteem issues the teen faces is to give them true support. If this challenge can be met, the next step is for the church to provide support and education so values and self-esteem can be biblically developed. Coming together as a community and dealing with these issues before they start is the best possible way to overpower and win your community back from the threat of gangs and the occult.

— by Mark Levine
St. John's Lutheran Church
Milford, Illinois



Ministering to the Inner City



**"The
mission
field
has come
to America."**

An artist was asked to paint a picture of a decaying church. To the amazement of many he portrayed a stately building instead of a tottering old structure. Through the portals one could see a richly carved pulpit, awesome organ and beautiful stained glass windows. As I thought about this I pictured many inner city churches standing so dignified and appearing rather out of place surrounded by busy streets, unpainted buildings and people, many of whom wondering where they will sleep when night falls. This is the inner city where the Good News of Jesus Christ is so desperately needed!

Protecting ourselves and our children and preserving a lifestyle cause many of us to move away from the crime infested communities of the city. Many of us simply shy away from the problems occurring so close to our neighborhoods. We are overwhelmed by the sheer size and complexity of the inner city problems. The church can choose to close their eyes and hearts to the cries of her neighbors aching with poverty, immorality and loneliness; or the church can become involved and experience the joys of seeing people come to a saving faith in Jesus Christ and the wonderful changes that follow.

Morgan Avenue Lutheran in North Minneapolis has chosen to open her doors to the needs around her. Our congregation has truly become a multicultural church as she has reached out to her neighbors.

We have learned that as we invite our neighbors to come to church, they will often turn us down due to the inadequate clothes they feel they have. Some will feel they cannot make a contribution to the church, so they stay away. Others are simply too ashamed of their lifestyle. We have to bring the church to the people. It is people reaching out to people.

A family I often visited have now moved away but still call on the phone. They illustrate some of the special challenges of inner city ministry. They occasionally came to church and their children were evangelized. The single parents constantly quarreled due to numerous addictions and cheating on one another. They agreed that Christ was the real solution to their troubles but remained under the satanic grip of drugs. I had given them a Bible and one day I noticed about one-fourth of the Old Testament was gone. The lady explained that her boyfriend and his friends had smoked those pages one weekend when they had run out of money and cigarettes.

One Saturday afternoon, while picking up children for Kids' Club at church, I asked to talk to their mother to confirm that I was taking the children. The little five-year-old called for his mother. When she did not answer, he went to her bedroom door only to discover his mother in bed with a visitor. Sadly, many children are routinely exposed to this type of environment.

In our area we have many Southeast Asians. We have enjoyed many beautiful, intelligent and ambitious children and adults.

Hidden Holocaust

They say that it's really a terrible fright,

Auschwitz ... Dachau ... such other ghastly sights.

But while millions have died in such sights that can be seen,

There's a hidden holocaust; I'll tell you what I mean.

From millions of wombs babies' lives are ended.

They are torn asunder ... never to live nor to be mended.

And not because of sin on the part of the little one,

But because someone's chosen that their life is done.

We cry out in shame at the genocide we see,

While ignoring the cry of the unborn child's plea:

"Remember you too were formed this way!

Let me live, let me live!" can't we hear him say?

If wombs had windows, I will entreat,

We could hear his cry, we could see his feet,

We could hear his heartbeat, we could understand

That here's an unborn woman! Here's an unborn man!

You see, I want you to understand there's a hidden holocaust,

Since 1973 — 30 million have been lost.

Lost to the hands of doctors who really knew,

That a fetus is a baby, but denied that this is true.

Lost to the hands of nurses who didn't dare

To shout out: "This is murder. For the unborn I will care!"

Lost to the hands of abortion clinic directors

Who told the pregnant women this abortion wouldn't affect her.

Lost to the hands of women who were told,

"The baby will be a burden, unwanted," or "You're too old!"

Lost to the hands of a world which seems to

Care for victims that are visible, not victims yet unseen.

You see there's a hidden holocaust that's rampant across our land,

That we must not try denying, but seek to understand.

Precious is each life — young, old and inbetween:

And no more precious is it, than that little life unseen!

— Rev. Lynn Wilson
Rostyn, South Dakota

Some of these new Americans refuse to succumb to the addicting welfare system while others are not so successful. It is so urgent to reach these young people before they get swallowed up by gangs where they find strength and acceptance. Many of the older generation are beginning to wonder if they would have been better off remaining in their homeland, even if it meant death under tyrannical governments.

I have spent hours counselling with many Southeast Asian couples. Often it is the husband who has become an alcoholic or has sought other women. The free living lifestyle glamorously shown on TV, when tried only brings deadly results.

One 19-year-old girl came to Morgan Avenue and heard the gospel for the first time. She accepted Christ as her Savior. She went on to be a missionary in Thailand among the Lao refugees. While there, she met and married an Asian pastor and now together they are back in the Twin Cities ministering to Southeast Asians. Hundreds of children have

heard the gospel of Jesus through the ministry of our congregation. Isaiah 55:11 is our encouragement as we proclaim His Word, knowing that it will bear fruit.

The news media declares the plight of the homeless and poor. American metropolitan areas are facing the ugly reality of third world poverty and oppression. More police officers and more dollars will not solve the basic problem. It is a moral and spiritual battle. Only as the Christian community begins to love our lost neighbors as we love ourselves, will the inner city problems be truly solved. Drugs and violence are here to stay as long as the family unit disintegrates. The mission field has come to America.

"The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few: Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest" (Matthew 9:37-38).

— Rev. Yeddo Gottel
Morgan Avenue
Lutheran Church
Minneapolis



A New Community, A New Church

My wife, Ana, and I believe the most important events of our lives have occurred during the past two years. During this time we have become involved in and are working for things we could not have imagined just two years ago. We are now helping to establish a congregation in Juniper Hills, California, a community of about 45 homes. The Lord has been leading and directing each step.

In 1991, I wanted to retire but our savings were low. Ana prayed. Within four months her prayer was answered and our savings were replenished. In June of 1992, I retired. I was prepared to kick back and enjoy freedom from responsibilities; but God had other plans. Now I realize the Lord was working with me and I was beginning to sense the need to make some changes in my life.

I had always been a very self-centered person. Ana, I am sure, prayed many times for me. A serious illness and resulting fear lead me to the Bible. I began reading God's Word

and believing. I continue to read, study and believe His life changing Word.

To affirm my faith, I wanted to be baptized. At first we had difficulty finding a church and a pastor as we knew nothing about churches. We opened the Yellow Pages and together asked the Lord to lead us to a church that taught the true Word of God. We were lead directly to Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran in nearby Palmdale. We met with Pastor David Molstre and he agreed to baptize me. After the baptism, things started to happen fast.

Ana was baptized as an infant in Panama, but she never attended church as an adult. Ana renewed her faith and I surrendered my life to Christ. Together we committed our future to serve Jesus our Savior. In our prayers we asked the Lord to lead and direct us and we would always desire to do His will. After this we experienced the most wonderful feeling of peace and the presence of God.

About three weeks after Pastor Molstre baptized me I had an experience or dream. In the night I heard a voice loud and clear say: "Build a church in Juniper Hills." That was

"There has never been a church in this growing community of about 1,200 people."

"For thou didst form my inward parts: thou didst cover me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks unto thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: wonderful are thy works; and that my soul knowest well"

(Psalm 139:13,14).



One Response to Roe vs. Wade: Crisis Pregnancy Center

Have you ever seen a sign, an advertisement, or driven by a Crisis Pregnancy Center and wondered what it is all about? Do you know anything about its philosophy, what its emphasis is, what it is trying to do?

I became acquainted with our local Crisis Pregnancy Center (CPC) in 1990 when I became a volunteer counselor there. At the time I really did not know a lot about CPC, but in the last three years I have learned much and seen the influence CPC has had on many individuals, especially on the many girls that come through our doors.

What is a Crisis Pregnancy Center all

Shepherd of the Hills, Juniper Hills, California

the dream. There were no images; just the words. The next morning I clearly remembered those words. I thought, this can't be because I have no knowledge, skills and ability that could be used for such an undertaking. Nearly two week later, the exact dream happened again. I could not forget it. I told Ana and her first response was: "We have a perfect location for a church on our lot." We own a vacant five-acre lot across the street from our home.

We discussed the possibilities and became excited. Then we realized that the land and even a building will not make a church; we need people. We related our feelings to Pastor Molstre and he was very interested in the prospects of testing the response of the community. Pastor Molstre suggested we look for a building in the area we could rent.

Juniper Hills is a rural community located in the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains. There has never been a church in this growing community of about 1,200 people. The only building in the area, other than homes, is the Juniper Hills Community Association. It

is a nice building in the center of the community and perfect for our needs. We contacted the board of directors to request rental time on Sunday mornings to hold worship services. We assumed there would be no problem as they rent to other groups. After two months we finally received our answer: "No." Discouraged, Ana and I prayed and placed it in God's hands. Thirty days later a neighbor, who is one of the directors, contacted me and volunteered to attempt to get the board to reconsider. He was successful!

Beginning on October 3, 1993, we rented the building for a three-month period. The response has been encouraging. As of this writing, we have had up to 36 in attendance and new people come weekly.

We have the land and now we have people who would like to see a church here. We are ready to accept the challenge of the next step. Acquiring the funds for a conditional use permit, plus building fees and materials is our next goal. Several individuals have indicated to Pastor Molstre they would volunteer their labor to help build our church building. The Lord is with us and we have faith that Shepherd of the Hills will become a reality.

— Jim Steele

*Shepherd Of The Valley Lutheran Church
Juniper Hills, California*

**"We have
the land
and now we
have people
who would
like to see
a church
here."**

about? Our center, in its simplest form, is a ministry that provides girls or women with free pregnancy tests. But it is much more than that. It is a ministry dedicated to providing alternatives to abortion to the many girls who are faced with unplanned pregnancies. CPC is there to help them become aware of what abortions mean physically and emotionally. We use videos, pamphlets and books to explain fetal development and help girls understand that the unborn is a human being. ("Window to the Womb" a video showing ultrasound fetal development throughout the nine months of gestation is an excellent video we use. We have had many personal testimonies from clients who say that having seen this video played an important part in helping them change their minds and not have an abortion. They learned that a fetus is a human being, not a "glob of tissue" as they are so often taught.)

Quite a few girls come in thinking that

abortion is the only alternative they have. They may feel pressured by their boyfriends, parents, friends, even husbands, into thinking abortion is the best solution for an unplanned pregnancy. Often all the girl needs is someone to talk to, someone to help her affirm her wish not to abort, someone to help her walk through the decision making. Is she considering marriage, keeping the baby and single parenting, adoption? CPC helps her to look at her options. We help to plug her into what ever community services are available — financially, with housing and schooling. Through generous support from churches, organizations, and individuals we also have layettes, baby clothes and other baby items, along with maternity clothes available to those clients who need them.

What is our clientele? They are girls from broken homes, girls living on their own, girls from two parent families; middle school, senior high, and college students; single and

Did you know?

More babies (30 million) have been aborted since 1973 ...

- than the entire population of Canada?
- than live in 13 United States states?
- than the total deaths of all wars America has been involved in since the Revolution?

Did you know?

- One of every three children conceived is aborted?
- That more babies are aborted each month than American Lutheran church bodies together baptize in an entire year?
- That 70% of all abortions are performed on women who say they are Christians?

I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my sense, and still preserves them ... and all this purely out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me; for all which it is my duty to thank and praise, to serve and obey Him. This is most certainly true.

— Martin Luther
The Small Catechism

Source:

Lutherans For Life

P.O. Box 819
Benton, AR 72018
Telephone: (501) 794-2212
FAX: (501) 794-1437

CENTER — married women. Their ages are anywhere from 13 to in their 50's.

We also speak to our clients, who have negative pregnancy tests about chastity, abstinence, second virginity and sexually transmitted diseases.

Our CPC also serves as an educational tool for the public. We have a resource library of books, videos and audio cassettes available to anyone interested in checking them out. We have a variety of topics to choose from: information on abortion, adoption, chastity/abstinence, parenting and dating, to name a few.

Another way our CPC reaches out to educate the public is through speeches and educational talks to community groups, church groups, and in the public school. A big emphasis in school talks is on chastity/abstinence, and on the fact that a fetus is an unborn human being — life — not a glob of tissue.

Our CPC is staffed by a director, a counseling coordinator, and two office workers, plus a board of directors. Our counselors are all volunteers who commit one or two three-hour-blocks of their time each month to the center. (At present we have between 35-40 volunteer counselors.) These counselors meet with clients, help them with their pregnancy test, talk with them and find out their needs and, at times, pray with them. These counselors receive training before starting to

counsel, and, on an ongoing basis, are encouraged to expand their knowledge through reading, looking at videos, and attending our monthly inservice meetings. Our counselors are young mothers, working mothers and grandmothers. They may have had different life experiences, but all have a common purpose in volunteering — to help girls/women make the best possible decision in facing their unplanned pregnancy, and to show that abortion is not the answer.

Having been a part of CPC I see how it is an important link in the struggle surrounding the abortion issue. We touch lives on a one-to-one basis, striving to teach the truth about abortions, striving to teach "sanctity of life," striving to help those who are hurting.

How can you support your local CPC?

- As a church, why not pledge financial support?
- Groups within your church, such as ladies' groups, could provide layettes, baby items and maternity clothes.
- Why not volunteer as a counselor? CPC's can always use more volunteers.
- Call your local CPC and find out what their needs are, and see where your skills can fit in to help them.

— by Carol Knapp
*Green Lake Free Lutheran Church
Willmar, Minnesota*

Apply Now for 1994 Brazil FLY Team

Applications are now in order for the 1994 Free Lutheran Youth Mission Team. The team this year will be going to Brazil. Training will begin around Memorial Day weekend. The experience is open to youth who are in their junior and senior year in high school and older.

For additional information, contact Rev. Dennis Gray, AFLC Youth Director, P.O. Box M, Greenbush, MN 56726; phone 218-782-2246.

The 1993 FLY Team went to Mexico. Read their testimonies and share their experience:

Our trip to Mexico was great! During the three weeks we stayed with godly, Christ-serving families; the Dan Giles in Aguascalientes; the Samuel Flores in Leon and with Milton Flores and his wife in Celaya.

Our time was spent traveling in a tightly packed car to urban outreach meetings and church gatherings. We did painting at all three churches.

I was encouraged to see in real life people who are willing to leave the comfort zone of a quiet Christian existence and spend their lives reaching out to people who do not know they need a Savior from sin.

—Greg Miller
Richfield, Minnesota

My trip to Mexico with the FLY Team is one I will always cherish. The Christians there are really excited about the Lord.

I especially thank my "adopted family" the Giles, who taught me so much and for making me feel at home; yes, even Danny and Ingrid! I learned a lot about a missionary's joys and frustrations. I do not know now, but if God were to lead me to mission work, I would consider it.

If God is trying to tell you to go on a short term mission trip, do not hesitate or try to talk yourself out of it. It was a wonderful experience.

—Rena Onstad
Park River, North Dakota

Our President Writes

Doing What We Can

The annual report of the Helmar congregation in Illinois that was sent to me prior to the beginning of my ministry there included a financial statement from the "D.W.W.C." society. What did the letters signify? I soon learned that this was the name of the ladies aid, and it originated during the early years of the century when, in response to a specific financial need, the women said: "We will Do What We Can."

It was not until over a year later that I discovered the scriptural basis for this name: the words of Jesus Himself when He spoke of the woman who anointed Him at the house of Simon the leper in Bethany, "She has done what she could" (Mark 14:8).

God gives to our congregations, as well as to the AFLC, some special people who are doing what they can. This means that they are using the gifts that He gives them, both spiritual and temporal, together with their natural abilities, to get His work done around the world. No one can measure our capacity but the Lord Himself, so only He will ultimately know if we are truly doing what we can ... yet sometimes there are special glimpses into the way that He is working through individual lives.

I remember Ragna, who was close to one hundred years old when she went to heaven last year. During my last visit with her the previous fall, it was clear she was wasting away in body but still glowing in spirit. "The enemy is strong!" she reminded me, yet we rejoiced together in the assurance of the Word: "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through the Lord Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 15:57).

The reason she comes to mind now is a conversation I had with Ernie Miedema, our AFLC Director of Development, after he visited in her home several years ago. She wanted to give him a donation for our common endeavors, yet the modest surroundings suggested there was little to spare. He soon discovered the gift represented the proceeds of some afghan sales which provided her with the ability to share something extra with the work of the Lord.

"I almost felt guilty taking it," Ernie reported, yet it was clear to him she found great joy in her God-given privilege to give the gift. Only eternity will know how this donation was multiplied to the blessing of others.

Am I doing what I can? The purpose of this important question is simply an invitation to ask ourselves a series of Bible-based questions: Who am I? Where am I? How many loaves do I have? What shall I do, Lord? There are no guarantees of recognition nor promises of any plaques ... only the hope of a word from our Master, "Well done!"

—Rev. Robert L. Lee

My trip last summer to Mexico was a fun and educational experience, but above all it was a time for spiritual growth. I learned just how fortunate I was to grow up in a Christian family and learned just how important Christian friends are.

I came to know many wonderful people in Mexico who have been

used by God to encourage me every day. It was a real inspiration to see people standing up for what they believe. It took lots of courage and persistence for the Mexican Christians to build their churches. Being a Christian in Mexico is not popular.

—Sara J. Mobley
Lake Preston, South Dakota

Introducing a New AFLC Congregation

Christ Lutheran Church, Savannah, Georgia



Every Sunday morning approximately 40 people gather at 316 Tibet Avenue, Savannah, Georgia. A third of them are Savannah residents; another third live just beyond the city limits. The remainder come from as far away as Ridgeland, South Carolina to the north, Fort Stewart to the south, or neighboring counties to the west. Some of them arrive shortly before 11 o'clock. The majority, however, gathers by 9:45 a.m. for two and one-half hours of Bible study, prayer, worship, preaching, the Lord's Supper and fellowship. They meet in a simple frame building. These people are Christ Lutheran Church.

General James Oglethorpe founded Savannah, England's 13th and last colony in the New World, in February 1733. Since then, Savannahians have had a fascination with history, especially their history. Salzburger fleeing Roman Catholic persecution arrived in Savannah in 1734. Today, except for one Missouri Synod congregation, the 15 Lutheran churches of the area (the state's largest concentration of Lutherans outside metro-Atlanta), trace their origins to those Salzburger. In fact, the roots of nearly all Savannah's churches and synagogues are interwoven with her history. As a result, "church" is an integral part of the city's social fabric, and Savannah-style Christianity is typically a blend of a little

"religion" and a lot of local customs and traditions.

Within this setting, a group of people from local LCA congregations formed Independent Lutheran Church in 1966. The congregation described itself as "an old fashioned, God-fearing Lutheran church whose only purpose would be to preach the gospel and spread the Word." By 1970, the congregation was incorporated under its present name, three and one-half acres were purchased, the first unit of its purposed building was erected and attendance reached into the 60s. Served primarily by lay preachers, the congregation's attempts to obtain a full-time pastor

were repeatedly hindered by two articles in its constitution: "this congregation shall be completely independent of any church body" and "this congregation shall not be integrated."

In June, 1976, a new Christ Lutheran Church affiliated with the ELS. In August of that year, Rev. Paul Jecklin accepted the call to serve this congregation of 15 souls. Over the years, the church's organizations and committees, which outnumbered its membership, have fallen by the wayside as the Body of Christ, with members gifted for ministry, has emerged. In a city steeped in history, the congregation now delights in talking about history — the history of God's gracious activity throughout the ages of gathering a people unto Himself through the Good News of Jesus Christ.

In July, 1993, the congregation, desiring fellowship with churches committed to being Bible believing, confessional Lutheran, free and living congregations, affiliated with the AFLC.

The members of Christ Lutheran Church, Savannah, ask their brothers and sisters in the AFLC to pray for them and the ministry the Lord Jesus has set before them.

— Rev. Paul Jecklin

New Ambassador hymnal update

Completed:

Samplers and order forms have been sent to all AFLC and Church of the Lutheran Brethren congregations as well as to the AALC leadership. Samplers are still available from the AFLC Headquarters at 3110 East Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55441; phone 612-545-5631.

All the copyrights we can get have been purchased.

All the hymns are engraved.

Worship services have been designed and are being typeset.

Cover and title page are designed.

Continued work:

Page numbering and indexes are being prepared.

The proofreading of hymns and texts is ongoing.

Congregations and individuals are ordering the hymnal. After January 31, 1994, the price goes up from \$12 to \$14 per book.

Support of this undertaking continues through gifts and prayers.

With the current progress, delivery date appears to be June 3, 1994. Plan to pick up your order at the annual conference in Valley City, North Dakota.

AFLC Missions Conference Scheduled

On February 6-9 the Annual AFLC Missions Conference will be held on the campus at 3110 East Medicine Lake Blvd., in Minneapolis. The keynote speaker will be Rev. Vince Will, Springfield, Missouri.

Missions Director in Brazil

Rev. Eugene Enderlein, AFLC World Missions Director, left for our mission field in Brazil January 12. He attended the Brazilian annual conference during January 14-16, held for the first time at the ARCA near Curitiba.

Another highlight is the dedication of the new infirmary on the Campo Mourão campus on January 23. The infirmary was built with funds from Global Health Ministries, an inter-Lutheran mission.

Pastor Enderlein expects to visit each missionary and congregation in the Brazil AFLC during the three weeks he is in that country.

Shevlin, Minnesota — Lanstad Free Lutheran Church found a different way to raise money for repairs on their building. Last fall, members volunteered their time to assemble "Tree Pacs" — kits which include tree seeds, a peat pellet and instructions. A conservation group contracts out the assembly of the pacs. The church raised over \$1,000.

Rev. John Mundfrom, Bismarck, North Dakota, has begun serving the new mission fellowship group in Beulah, North Dakota, along with his duties as pastor of Calvary Free Lutheran Church in Bismarck.

Greenbush, Minnesota — The youth and adult Bible classes of United Free Lutheran Church recently visited the Greenbush Nursing Home. Over 20 youth and adults broke into small groups to individually visit and encourage residents. The congregation is also sponsoring a laymen's service on the third Sunday afternoon of each month.

AFLC Annual Conference June 15-19, 1994 Valley City, North Dakota

Bel Air Motel — 2315 West Main, 701-845-3620; non-smoking rooms available; color cable TV; air conditioning; in-room coffee; restaurant next door.

Rates: (queen beds) single (1) \$20.95, (2) \$26.95; double (2) \$30.95, (4) \$34.95.

Flickertail Inn — Exit 290 and I-94, 701-845-5278; non-smoking on request; air-conditioned; color cable TV; restaurant next door; continental breakfast.

Rates: (queen beds) single (1) \$21, (2) \$27; double (2) \$30, (3) \$32, (4) \$35, triple \$37-\$47, roll aways/cribs \$5.

Mid-Town Motel — 906 East Main, 701-845-2830; non-smoking rooms available; air conditioning; color cable TV, in-room coffee.

Rates: (queen beds) single (1) \$20, (2) \$25; double (2) \$29, (3) \$31, (4) \$33, 3 double \$42.

Prairie Inn — 140 Third Avenue SE, 701-845-1560; air conditioning; color cable TV; restaurant.

Rates: single (1) \$19.75, (2) \$25; kitchenette (1) \$27.50, (2) \$31.50.

Super 8 Motel — 822 11th Street SW (exit 292 and I-94), 701-845-1140 or 1-800-800-8000; air conditioning; color cable TV; restaurant next door; non-smoking available.

Rates: singles (1) \$28.95, (2) \$32.95; double (2) \$34.95, (3) \$37.95, (4) \$40.95, roll away \$5, cribs are free, children under 12 are free.

Valley City Motel — 1139 West Main, 701-845-2208; all rooms are non-smoking; air conditioning; color cable TV; restaurant next door.

Rates: single (1) \$21.60 (2) \$27; double (2) \$32.40, each additional person add \$3 up to five people, one kitchenette room available.

Wagon Wheel Inn — 930 4th Avenue SW (exit 292 and I-94), 701-845-5333; new rooms; indoor pool; air conditioning; color cable TV; restaurant nearby; five suites with microwave/fridge, two with whirlpool.

Rates: (per person) (1) \$28.95, (2) \$43.95, each additional person is \$3.

Valley City State University Dorms — 701-845-7724, Diane Hill.

Rates: (per person) \$8 per day, \$3 one time linen fee. Handicapped accessible. Linen fee includes sheets/towels. All rooms have two single beds. Community bathrooms with 198 beds available.

Valley City Tourist Campsite — East Main, 701-845-3294; 18 sites. Facility includes showers and restrooms.

Rates: \$5 minimum fee, \$2.50 electricity, \$1.50 water, \$1 dump, \$9 includes everything with full hook-up.

Other campsites available — 701-845-2970

Ashtabula Crossing, 15 miles north of Valley City.

Eggert's Landing, 10 miles north of Valley City.

Mel Rieman Recreation Area, 10 miles north of Valley City.

Note: Registrations should be made early because of other community activities at this same time!

PEOPLE and PLACES



Camarillo, California — Each fall for three years, First Lutheran Church has sponsored a six-week Spiritual Growth Experience. The Experience has involved small group Bible studies, Sunday sermons and a guest speaker. Each year one Article of the Apostles' Creed was highlighted.

This year's study dealt with the First Article which confesses that "I believe in God the Father Almighty Maker of heaven and earth."

The series has been under the direction of the stewardship committee whose chairman this year is Ron Spooner. Early in the planning it was decided that a visual aid was needed to promote the Experience. Mr.



Dalton, Minnesota — Zion-Sarpsborg Lutheran Church dedicated their new church building on November 14, 1993. Rev. Robert Lee, AFLC president, officiated and gave the message on, "What Kind of a Church Do You Want?" Sarpsborg Lutheran Church lost their church by fire in 1986, after which they

united with Zion in Dalton. They formally became one congregation in 1988. Zion's church building was in need of major repair so the decision to build a new facility was made in 1990. The congregation has a membership of 80 families. Rev. David H. Skordahl is pastor of the congregation.

Spooner bought a nine-inch dinosaur skeleton and, designing it to a scale of one inch to one foot, ended up with a 9'x20' skeleton covering it with wire mesh.

The next step was to involve about 20 K-5 children in the Wednesday night program to apply the papier-mache and to paint it. The end result was an intimidating tyran-

nosaurus rex which the children named "T-Rex."

When completed T-Rex was stationed at the end of the church parking lot to draw attention to the final weekend of the Experience when Mr. Bill Hoesch, a geologist at the Institute for Creation Research in La Jolla, California spoke on the "Evidence of God in Creation."



Park River, North Dakota — Pictured are 13 of the 15 new members at Victory Free Lutheran Church. Membership Sunday last fall marked the beginning of the congregation's special meetings with Rev. Ray Klug, Fairbury, Nebraska, as the guest speaker.



Minot, North Dakota — Pictured are the three new families who recently joined Bethel Free Lutheran Church. Each family received a subscription to *The Lutheran Ambassador* as a gift from the congregation.

Things aren't quite the same here

I don't think we're in Kansas anymore, Toto." In the story *The Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy makes this astute observation to her dog, Toto, after the tornado takes them from their home in Kansas and deposits them in the land of Oz. It was not difficult, but very important, for her to realize that the land in which she was in was much different from the place in which she had been.

Congregations often need to make observations similar to that which was made by Dorothy. Sometimes the communities in which we serve are vastly different from what they were a generation ago. What was a rural area may have become a suburb of a large city. A congregation that had been in a neighborhood dominated by one ethnic group may now find that the majority of their neighbors trace their ancestry to a totally different part of the world. A small town where everybody knew everybody may have become a bustling city on the move. Other cities that had been full of life are now struggling to survive. We may not be in "Kansas" anymore.

The communities which we strive to serve, change. Many try to fight that fact. They gain much frustration but little else. Change comes to our communities. The question is: how do we deal with it?

Part of our approach to our rapidly changing society is to rejoice in the fact that our God does not change. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). People, in this tumultuous age, are in desperate need of stability. That stability can be found in Jesus.

We have good news to share with needy people. We must ask ourselves, what is the most effective means for communicating that news with the people around us? The question must be asked in the present tense. The issue is not what was most effective a generation ago. The need is to prayerfully determine, under God's direction, the most effective means of sharing the gospel where we are right now.

Paul did not preach the same sermon everywhere he went. He preached the same Christ, the same way of salvation and the same truths in each city, but he did so in a different manner in the various locales.

Missionaries learn the language of the people in order to share with them the gospel. Each of us needs a missionary attitude and approach. This calls on us to learn from the people around us how we can

best communicate with them. We should not just consider, "how was it done in my hometown?" For each of us, even our hometown is no longer the same place it was. We must seek wisdom from God as to how we can best do His work in the town in which we live today.

The true value of a life

A commonly heard lament is that a dollar does not seem to buy much anymore. We should focus even more on the sad fact that, to many, a life does not seem to be worth much anymore.

In the past 20 years, approximately 30 million lives have been brought to an early end within a mother's womb. According to a survey done by a research division of Planned Parenthood, 16% of abortions are done because the woman is concerned about how a child will change her life. Some 21% feel they are not ready for the responsibility. Another 21% cite economic reasons. A relationship problem is the cause for 12%, a lack of maturity for 11% and eight percent said they had all the children they wanted. Thirty million lives have been felt to be worth very little.

Many lives that have long since left the womb are often treated as being devoid of value. The ones weak of mind and muscle, the ones who receive more than they seem to give, the ones with many needs who are considered by some as unable to make a contribution to society; some say these lives are not worth living and they should be ended.

The Psalmist considers the vastness of creation and wonders if a human being really matters. He says: "What is man that You are mindful of him, the son of man that You care for him?" (Psalm 8:4). The wonderful truth is revealed to him that human beings have great value as special creations of God. "You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor" (Psalm 8:5).

Jesus Christ sees so much worth in you that He died on the cross in your place. That amazing fact is true for each one of us. May His view of us transform us and may His view of others transform the way we love and care for them.

Is It the Holy Bible or the Hole-y Bible

A few years ago, a Wisconsin farmer woke to discover that part of his barn had collapsed and been swallowed up due to a massive sinkhole that had occurred on his property. Because he was a friend, I went out to see this rare event and it was truly incredible. Without warning, this man's property and farm had collapsed. No one knew that the soil conditions on his property were such to cause this kind of destruction.

In our society today, conditions exist for a "spiritual sinkhole" to cause massive damage, too. For centuries, churches believed and taught that the Bible alone was the revealed Word of God. As a result, churches and society stood on solid ground. But today, the Bible is not held in such high esteem as in days past. So as a result, just under the surface, spiritual soil conditions for a massive "sinkhole" exist that threaten our moral and spiritual landscape.

Today, many people assume we no longer have a Holy Bible inspired by God; rather it has been labeled a man-made book with many contradictions and holes in it. The Bible itself makes the claim that it is not a man-made book, but rather "... no prophesy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophesy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (II Peter 1:20-21).

The question, it seems to me, is can the Bible live up to the claims it makes about itself? Does the evidence point to a man-made book filled with holes and contradictions, or truly a Holy Book?

Consider these important facts. First, the Bible is actually 66 individual books. More than 40 human authors contributed to its work. These authors all came from differ-

ing backgrounds. They lived at different times in history because the Bible was written over a period of about 1,500 years. The writings of the Bible were written on three different continents: Africa, Asia, and Europe. But the entire Bible speaks with one accord. The central message of the Bible is in complete agreement with itself. It is God's involvement with human history, and His plan to place people back into a right and holy relationship through His eternal Son, Jesus Christ. This is the Bible in a nutshell. That message runs through the entire Bible and is in complete harmony from Genesis to Revelation.

Another important set of facts to consider is its reliability to be historically correct. The Bible is a book inspired by God, but it is also a historically correct book. Although we do not possess the original manuscripts, we have excellent copies of the biblical text that contain all or parts of the New Testament. These copies were written with extreme care and accuracy. The work was carefully checked to make sure no errors existed in transmission. The copies of Bible text we have are numerous, about 5,500 copies. The number of copies in existence far outnumber any other great historical work from this same time period. It is also a proven fact that the dates of the copies are much closer to the

originals than other great historical works. Yet, people in general do not make the charge that other historical works are somehow full of holes or contradictory.

Whenever a person makes the claim that the Bible has contradictions in it, a fair request to make is: "Please show me one." If the claim of contradictions is true, then the Bible is no longer what it claims to be. When I ask the question, the person making the claim has had a very difficult time even finding one. But if they find what appears to be a contradictory statement, every time it has been easily resolved with a closer look. It is one thing to accuse the Bible of inaccuracies, but it is quite another thing to be able to prove it.

The Bible is God's letter to us. Some have called it a love letter from God. It is a powerful and accurate book filled with God's wisdom on how we can live our lives in a peaceful relationship with Him. When we choose to love His Word with our lives as well as our lips, it provides a solid ground for our faith and our life.



— Rev. Jim Ritter