

100 years
of
ministry



THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

June 14, 1994



Maple Bay Free Lutheran

Mentor, Minnesota

1894 - 1994

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

June 14, 1994 • Vol. 32, No. 12

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

CONTENTS

The New Testament basis for free and living congregations	p. 3
Why we get together	p. 4
Challenges that face free congregations	p. 6
Baltic Bulletin	p. 10

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

Write to:

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

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

USPS 588-620 ISSN 0746-3413

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

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

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

Editorial Board:

Rev. John Mundfrom
Dr. Craig Jennings
Mrs. Oryen Benrud

Light on the Way

Jesus, Glorious King!

What a richly detailed portrait of Jesus we have seen as we've probed Isaiah's writings in these "Light on the Way" columns! Jesus is *Immanuel* (God with us); the *Wonder of a Counselor*, *Mighty God*, *Everlasting Father*, and *Prince of Peace*; He shines brightly as a *Light* for Gentiles, the *Savior* of us all; He is both the Root of *Jesse* and the *Branch*; He is no less than God's long promised anointed one, the *Messiah*. Lest we get carried away with the splendor of these names, we diligently remember that in addition to all this, He is the *Suffering Servant*, the Lamb of God who "was pierced for our transgressions" and "crushed for our iniquities" (Isaiah 53:5). Jesus is wonderful and highly exalted, but ... before His exaltation came unfathomable humiliation, suffering, and death.

What a wealth of multi-faceted truth is contained in the reality that is Jesus! How impoverished we would be without the treasure of Isaiah's prophetic picture of Him!

The prophet gave us a balanced picture of the Messiah, coming first to earth as a *Boy Child*, growing up to be God's *Suffering Servant*, and finally returning as a glorious *King*. In this final meditation, our focus is on the rule of Jesus as King. We return back to Isaiah 9, where we started our studies together. The Boy Child of verse 6 is now revealed to be an eternal King! "Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the **Lord** Almighty will accomplish this" (9:7).

In our day of deep cynicism and

distrust of both politicians and governments, isn't it a delight to anticipate a ruler we can trust completely and a government which will be just and righteous? When unjust legal decisions are rendered and rampant godlessness increases, isn't it good to have the sure hope of a day when a King will rule "who in judging seeks justice and speeds the cause of righteousness" (Isaiah 16:5)? Jesus, the Messiah foretold by Isaiah, is such a King; blessed indeed is the kingdom which He brings and over which He rules!

The day King Jesus returns and establishes His kingdom in its fullness will be a day of inestimable blessing and incomparable glory for the Christian faithfully waiting for Him. Tragically that day will bring unspeakable horror and ceaseless anguish for anyone not trusting in Him. In which group are you?

In the days which remain to us, let us meditate much upon Jesus Christ as He is portrayed not just by Isaiah, but by all the biblical authors. Let us not, however, merely *meditate* upon Him; as His Spirit works through the Word, let us *believe* in Him as well. And let us not just *believe* in Him either; let us *follow* Him in joyful Spirit-empowered obedience. As we keep on meditating upon, believing in, and following Him, one blessed day we will find ourselves together with Him enjoying in *eternal perfection* both King Jesus and His glorious kingdom!



—Rev. Jerry Holmaas

Our name states simply that we are an association of free Lutheran congregations. From the very beginning of the Lutheran Free Church there was concern that the free Lutheran congregations remain spiritually alive. There was a vivid memory of the moral and spiritual conditions of the State Church they left behind before they migrated to America. Therefore, our congregations are often referred to as both free and living. Is there a New Testament basis for free and living congregations? If so, how should this be put into practice today?

The New Testament basis for free and living congregations



— by Rev. Del Palmer
Our Saviour's and
Reiner Parish
Thief River Falls, Minnesota

Living Congregations

A living congregation is made up of individuals who have spiritual life. The New Testament reminds us that those who have spiritual life are those who have been born again into a living relationship with Jesus through faith. Jesus explains: "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life" (John 5:24).

Being born again happens in connection with the means of grace.¹ God uses His law to show us that we cannot be saved by our own good life, and then His gospel brings us the good news that eternal life is a gift. People are born again through the work of God's Word; "you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God" (I Peter 1:23). Jesus also declared to Nicodemus that God uses the means of baptism to give a person new birth (John 3:3-8, cf. Titus 3:4-6).

The life of a person who has been born again to spiritual life through faith will show evidence that they have faith. Faith in God always changes the way we live. Look at Hebrews 11 for examples. The person who is spiritually alive will daily die to self and live for Jesus.

How is this exhibited by individuals in a living congregation? We have a simple word for God's working in our lives in this way: we call it piety. Paul says we "live up to what we have already attained" (Philippians 3:16). It involves living for Christ by reaching the lost and loving those around us, perhaps even through sacrifice, that the work of God might go forth. A living congregation is made up of individuals who have spiritual life.

Free Congregations

A free congregation is an independent congregation that recognizes no authority above it but the

"We have a simple word for God's working in our lives in this way: we call it piety."

Word and Spirit of God.² The New Testament portrays independent congregations looking to God and His Word for total guidance. Consider Paul's example of starting churches. He always encouraged these independent churches to rely on God's Word and Spirit. "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (II Timothy 3:16, 17). Never do we find that Paul set up a church body to which an independent church would need to answer. There was one time when these churches had a question about grace that needed to be addressed. In this situation they went to the apostles for clarification (Acts 15). We note that the apostles sent them a heartening answer, along with two men to encourage them, rather than lay burdens upon them.

Although these congregations were totally independent, there were times they desired to serve the Lord in ways that were beyond their individual capabilities. At one point they realized that there had been a severe famine in Jerusalem. Paul encouraged the Corinthians to help their brothers saying: "I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love" (II Corinthians 8:8). The Corinthians along with other churches worked together to help those in Jerusalem. The same attitude was used to promote Paul's mission work.

Our Association carries out this New Testament picture in a remarkable way. Even our name reminds us that we are not a church body as such, but an association of independent Lutheran

Why we get together

The right
relationship
of the free
congregation
with the
church body

God said in Hebrews 10:24-25: "And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together ... but encouraging one another."

We gather together as Christians to worship, pray, learn, fellowship and share one another's burdens and joys. Our children need to be taught and we need each other as brothers and sisters in Christ for encouragement in our daily walk with the Lord. We can become discouraged when we focus on ourselves and our thoughts do

not go outside of our own circumstances. We need, rather, to see the finished work of Jesus and to share that with others.

Jesus said: "For where two or three are gathered in My name, there I am in their midst" (Matthew 18:20). What a blessing! Gathering for worship and prayer is one way God planned for us to center our thoughts and praise on Him. That time set aside from our daily activities to worship Him is so necessary in the life of a growing Christian. To worship Him collectively, God has established the free and living congregation.

What then is a right relationship between the congregation and the church

"Sverdrup, on the basis of his New Testament studies, caught a vision early in life of what the congregation was really meant to be. And so great and glorious was this vision to him that henceforth he could scarcely think or speak of anything else."

— from *Georg Sverdrup For Our Day* by John Stensvaag

BASIS

congregations that help each other serve the Lord in ways that we could not individually.

What have been the doctrinal requirements to be considered like-minded enough to be affiliated with the work of this association? Historically, even back to the Lutheran Free Church, all the congregations accept both the Old Testament and the New Testament as the Word of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and as the ultimate source of all truth pertaining to Christian faith, doctrine, and life. The congregations accept the ancient creeds such as the Apostolic, the Athanasian, and the Nicene, as well as subscribing to the unaltered Augsburg Confession and to Luther's Small Catechism. "The leaders of the Lutheran Free Church have been steadfastly opposed to the formulation and discussion of theological propositions as a means of instructing or edifying the congregations or of effecting a union of Lutherans. They have always

been of the conviction that they should emphasize a personal, vital, dynamic appropriation of the fundamental truths unto salvation rather than an intellectualistic reformulation and redefinition of theological doctrines and the attempt to secure assent thereto in the most minute details. The Lutheran Free Church always recognized as Lutherans those who subscribe to the historic confessions of Lutheranism. Its leaders have always acted upon the premise that further theological deductions and agreement thereto were not necessary."³

How do we carry out the work that we could not do individually? Through prayerful giving we hire people to be missionaries both at home and abroad, be administrators and teachers in our schools, do work among our youth, publish printed material to promote the gospel of Christ as well as other ministries. It must always be kept in mind that all those, both paid and volunteer, who work for the

association of congregations serve the independent congregations through the association the congregations have created. Therefore, they are under obligation to carry out the wishes of the congregations rather than have the congregations carry out their wishes. Unfortunately in all our minds, it is easy to get this turned upside down.

When we consider the New Testament basis for free and living congregations, we must focus on the work of the local congregation. We must place the most importance in carrying out the work of the gospel in the location in which God has placed us. If everyone expects the major work to happen in another place, no work is accomplished anywhere. May we bloom where we are planted.

Footnotes:

¹ *Fundamental Principles*, Number 2.

² *Ibid.* Number 5, 11.

³ Clarence Carlsen, *The Years of Our Church* (The Lutheran Free Church Publishing Company, 1942), pp. 28, 30.

body? In our fellowship, our individual congregations have come together to form what we call the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations (AFLC). Why do this? The reason is quite simple, yet large in scope.

The Need for Training

We, as individual congregations, need to work together to build God's kingdom here on earth. That building starts in our own congregations with the teaching and preaching of God's Word. That cannot be accomplished if there are no pastors to do the job. Yes, we as lay people can attempt to fulfill that mission, but we need training to be better equipped to accomplish the task. We could go to another denomination or fellowship for our pastors and teachers, however, it is so much better if they have the same doctrinal beliefs we do.

Thus, we need a seminary to train our men in God's Word, teaching them to rightly divide between law and gospel. We, as an association of congregations, join together to support a seminary which trains men with Lutheran convictions to be shepherds of free and living congregations. Georg Sverdrup wrote: "That which makes the biggest difficulty in the work of the church is that of preachers differing in education — with a variety of seminaries comes a widespread base of information without central consistence between them. It is not hard to see that it is then hard to have consistency in our teaching and

preaching. Therefore, a seminary for educating our pastors is necessary."

We are encouraged in II Timothy 2:15: "Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Our Bible school is a place to train young men and women for service in the local congregation. These people often become our Sunday School teachers, Vacation Bible School leaders, youth advisors and all the numerous positions needed in the local congregation. Without this mutual support from the local congregations, there would be no AFLBS.

The Need for Building Each Other Up

We also join together to support home and world missions, youth and family Bible camps. Our Parish Education Department is producing Sunday School curriculum and Church Extension funds are helping congregations build new churches. The list could go on in the building of the Lord's Church. This constructive relationship, or association exists for free and living congregations' benefit and to increase outreach.

The church body is not the authority over the congregation. We hold up the Word of God for that task. Sverdrup warned: "Playing politics with the church leads to spiritual death. We pray that we be spared from sinking into that political — spiritual death."

The relationship between congregations in the AFLC is much like that of individuals who make up the body of Christ. We need to encourage and pray for one another; a result of a relationship of respect that comes from acknowledging God's value on the individual congregation and the souls within those congregations. "The love of Christ constrains us" to live out I Corinthians 12 and 13.

Congregations can encourage one another by providing programs for each other and allowing our pastors to be guest speakers for special meetings in other congregations. As we become more acquainted with other congregations far and near, it is easier to pray for people or situations by name. I urge you to pray and pray some more for your own congregation and for those throughout our AFLC.

"But can we ever expect to have such congregations? Sverdrup's answer to this would be: Keep the ideal ever on your heart and in your prayer; trust in God and He will bring it to pass, for what is impossible with men is possible with God.

**— from Georg Sverdrup For Our Day
by John Stensvaag**

*— by Ralph
Peterson,
Coordinating
Committee member
Portland,
North Dakota*

Challenges that face

"I personally fear that one reason we have so few living congregations is that we have settled for active organizations instead."

— from *Georg Sverdrup For Our Day*
by John Stensvaag.

Do not touch! Can you remember hearing that warning or giving it to a child? Such warnings are given for the safety of the person in potential danger. Other times it is given to preserve a valuable item. An accompanying note may also warn that, "You are responsible for broken items."

All of this brings an ominous message and never quite so much as when we talk about change in the church. It raises fears because history again and again tells of biblical scholars who have "messed" with the Scriptures. That kind of change removes any basis for faith. This article will refer to that later. It does strike an emotional nerve when truth becomes a relative matter rather than the basis. Again, an emotional nerve is struck when the familiar is changed for the unfamiliar in worship forms, styles of music, places of worship and yes, even times to hold services.

Having served on the mission field, I would return on furlough and see significant changes in the church, albeit somewhat less radical. For example, clapping in church after a musical number was never done before we went to South America. Another change was bringing amplifiers into the church with booming speakers.

Challenges of Change: Opportunities to be Pro-active

Change that occurred gradually during those five years of our absence was palatable to the membership whereas it hit us with full force. We need to recognize that change is always happening and cannot be stopped. As an association of free congregations, we continually face the challenges of change. These are opportunities to be pro-active rather than end up being re-active.

We need to be pro-active in facing challenges of opportunity in evangelism, ministering to the needs of people materially, socially, emotionally, educationally, etc. To not do so is to promote an internalizing "garrison" or "ghetto" mentality which is reactionary, not unlike the monastic movements of the past. The Great Commission (Matthew 28) records Jesus' statement:

"Having gone therefore ..." This assumes the follower of Christ is already active and in the process of going.

The challenges we face must be met on at least three levels: 1) individually as a redeemed child of God; 2) as free and living congregations; 3) as an association of congregations, the AFLC. The challenges we face today are really no different than those in the past as long as we understand our relationship and responsibility to the Lord and the teachings of Scripture. The constitution of the congregation which I presently serve states this in Article II, Section 5: "This article shall not be subject to amendment." This refers to the first four sections which speak of the Scriptures being the only source and rule of faith, doctrine and life; that we accept and hold to the confessional statements of the Lutheran writers; that the congregation governs its own affairs and its affiliation with the AFLC. Article II, Section 5 is good and was wisely included. The other articles and bylaws are subject to change. While changes are made, they must be always done with the mind of the Lord in His timeless perspective.

To have the mind of the Lord is the "Having gone therefore" to people who do not yet know Him. That includes all three levels of involvement. It is God's work to motivate, provide the means, reveal the modes and guide in the use of the methods. We have numerous examples of Jesus going to the homes of all types of people for a variety of events. He was in the synagogues to teach as was the custom. He met people in the market places and went into the countryside. He utilized each opportunity. The book of Acts is a reference book of the Lord working through Peter and Paul in their having gone therefore to meet the challenges of the day. Things were rapidly changing at that time! The same challenge faces us today.

Responding to the Lord's Call: Expanding Our Vision

Our church today needs to be awakened to the Lord's call of having gone therefore. We need to see in an ever renewing experience the Lord who sends. Our vision

free congregations

should include the world around us whether it is in our neighborhood or another continent. As an AFLC, we are generally white European. Have we no ministry to the black African-American? or to the Latinos or Asians or the recent arrivals from Russia and other former Eastern Bloc nations? Is it that we do not want to change our modes and methods in music, language, worship style and social structure? As we comfortable the way we are and change would threaten us? We have a goal as an AFLC to see the beginning of 200 new congregations by the year 2000. We have only a little more than five years to go to fulfill the challenge which we committed ourselves to at an annual conference.

Our AFLC has grown over six times larger during its three decades of existence, yet our mission force has grown only a little over two times larger since those early days. That is a worldwide challenge. Our annual conferences make resolutions which are pulled back and forth between a vision and the reality of budgets. Good discussion occurs, and yet it is what is done in our individual hearts and congregations that makes the dream come true and the challenge a reality.

Free congregations must balance being independent/autonomous while working together in a unity of faith and purpose. There is a stress point between the annual conference and headquarters which cannot legislate desires, while needing to facilitate and communicate the goals expressed by the corporate decision of the fellowship. Only a small number of the membership of the AFLC attends the conferences and how many of those really understand how all of this works? Pastors have a difficult task of trying to explain how the AFLC works and communicate conference decisions to their congregations. This writer has failed with this challenge and perhaps others feel the same.

Facing the Challenge: What We Can Do

How do we face this challenge? Let us start within the congregations. Let us communicate to the conference what

hopes, expectations and ministries we would like to see addressed. Then let us become more involved. Schedule conferences according to regions and membership and people will know that conference will be in a certain region at a defined time. Poll the congregations to arrive at the best possible schedule. Each region could let a congregation or group of them submit an invitation. By hosting a conference, we would begin to have the opportunity to take ownership within our AFLC.

Last but not least, is the challenge of the changing times. Societal changes involving sex, marriage, sexual preferences, the right of individuals, family, material goods, and change in the work place impact us daily. Again we can be pro-active or re-active. Facing these conditions as opportunities for ministry is a true challenge. We need to sort out what is the biblical basis for our going to the nations and what is simply a cultural standard that dictates the course of our action. We have the greatest news for all peoples! Our challenge is to get it to them so they too might hear and come to know the Jesus who loves them. These people might be in your backyard.

The only way we are hindered from going to the people of the world is an unwillingness of God's people to do it. If there are those who say the AFLC is not practical and needs to be changed, then let their concerns be addressed only after we have done what we are called to do. May no one hinder another in carrying out God's divine call to go. Yes, there are organizational matters that need to be attended to within our body, but the problems really are not an organizational issue. We need to rediscover God's divine call to His people and get with it! A glance at history shows numerous organizational structures that God has used to proclaim the Good News. Do we need change? You bet! Let it begin in me and in you; in all of us who call ourselves Christians in the fellowship of Free Lutherans!

"God can accomplish more through a few living congregations than through all the church machinery in the world."

— from *Georg Sverdrup For Our Day* by John Stensvaag.



— by Rev. Richard Gunderson
Elim Lutheran
Lake Stevens, Washington

YOUTH

Mini Youth Manual Part IV - conclusion

There is to be Christian cooperation between the Youth Board and the Free Lutheran Youth Executive Officers. The Youth Board is to advise the executive officers. It is the responsibility of the executive council to be in regular consultation with the Youth Board. The Youth Board and the Free Lutheran Youth Executive Officers are to be a team, but the basic authority is in the hands of the Youth Board.

The Youth Board is to call for at least one joint meeting of the Youth Board and the officers of the Free Lutheran Youth each year (1966 minutes): The executive officers of the Free Lutheran Youth are to have at least three other meetings, and at least one member of the Youth Board is to be present at all official meetings of the Free Lutheran Youth executive officers. The president of the AFLC is to be invited to attend these meetings as an ex-officio member (see Rules of Work).

There is to be a Youth Worker serving throughout the Association. This is a part-time office unless determined otherwise by an annual conference of the AFLC. He shall be directly responsible to the Youth Board of the AFLC.

The Youth Worker is elected by the Youth Board of the AFLC. They are to consider nominees sent to them by the Free Lutheran Youth, but are not necessarily limited to these nominees. It is recommended that the Youth Board consult the Coordinating Committee of the AFLC, as they keep the clergy roster, before the final election is made.

The Youth Worker is elected for a two-year term. He is to be elected immediately following the Free Lutheran Youth Convention on

Relationship between the Youth Board and the Free Lutheran Youth Executive Committee

odd-numbered years. he is to take office by October 1 in the year he is elected.

The Youth Worker may be removed from office by three-fourths majority vote of the members of the Youth Board. It is the responsibility of the Youth Board to fill the office of Youth Worker whenever a vacancy occurs.

The budget for the youth work of the AFLC is to be prepared by the Youth Board of the AFLC in consultation with the executive committee of the Free Lutheran Youth. This budget is to be presented to the Annual Conference of the AFLC for action. The youth work budget is to be a part of the General Fund budget of the AFLC.

The youth of the congregations of the AFLC are expected to support the youth budget by giving to

the General Fund budget of the AFLC. Free Lutheran Youth is expected to promote such support if the youth program is to continue and succeed.

The support of our Christian youth

The Association is greatly blessed by having a host of consecrated young people. These young people need understanding, love and encouragement from the congregations and adult Christians. Youth work is of utmost importance. It must be upheld by prayer. It must be marked by love, patience, and understanding on the part of young and old. May there never be a sinful generation gap in the AFLC.

— Rev. Dennis Gray
AFLC Youth Director

World Missions



Pastor Gabriel and Virginia Mercado are pictured with their congregation, Triumph Lutheran in Agraristas de Obregon. The congregation recently was renamed as a sister church of Triumph in Nogales, Arizona, in order to comply with governmental regulation. Partners in Mission Outreach groups have assisted in the building and ministry projects of this Mexican congregation.

Parish Education resources and needs

The Parish Education Department is blessed with the ministry of serving our congregations with biblical teaching and devotional materials for people of all ages. Two examples of materials you should not be without are described as follows:

- *Martin Luther's Small Catechism in Illustration* is a beautiful set of posters produced in full color by a special technique using colored pencils and watercolor paints. Each poster depicts a section of the catechism, capturing the concepts of the catechism by way of illustrations and time-honored text. Display these fine pieces of art in your classroom, fellowship hall, library or office. This set of posters is an excellent teaching resource for confirmation, Sunday School, home school and Christian school. A teaching guide is included with each set of posters.

- *The Way of Life* by A.W. Knock provides a study of the foundations of our faith. Many times we try to determine how to live the Christian life without first knowing and experiencing what it means to be a Christian. In other words, we put the cart before the

horse. This book puts the horse before the cart. Every chapter includes study questions. *Excellent for youth.*

Your help is needed

Parish Education has been blessed by your continued prayer and gift support. We continue to need this kind of support because:

- Just to replace out-of-stock Sunday school and confirmation materials, and the very basics for the 1994-95 school year we will need approximately \$5,500 before July 1.

- The board has decided to print *The Junior Confirmation Book* and *The Senior Confirmation Book* by Tanner and *The Believer Free From the Law*. We will need an additional \$17,000 for the first printing of these books. We hope we will not have to put these books "on hold" because of a lack of funds.

- The Parish Education office is in great need of:

- A computer and printer
- File cabinets
- Office furniture (secretary's desk and chair, shelves for storage

room and offices, furnishings for the display area and a variety of smaller items.)

- For many years our people have been missing instruction in the history of the Christian Church and especially the history of the Lutheran Church. *The March of Faith* presents factual history as a moving, action-filled life story which young and old will enjoy and learn from. Your support will make the printing of this excellent study a reality.

- Our monthly budget is \$5,655; total needed as of 3-31-94, \$16,964; total received as of 3-31-94, \$7,231; budget shortfall, \$9,734.

Your continued prayer and interest in the revision of materials is appreciated. The new kindergarten series is top priority in the work of Parish Education. The board has been scheduling additional meetings to complete the new kindergarten books. We have nearly completed editing all the student lessons. Art, activities and teacher's manuals are also being worked on at this time.

A computer would be a tremendous help for the revision work done in the Parish Education office.

Book Fund balance, \$17,128; estimated total needed, \$35,000, (first printing).

The first printing of a book includes charges for negatives, color separations, typesetting, etc. which are not needed in future printings unless there are corrections/changes in the book.



The Partners in Mission outreach bus outside the hotel in Obregon.

Fire destroys 100 homes in India

Recently fire swept through the Indian village of Potharlanka, killing a four-year-old girl and within 30 minutes destroying over 100 homes.

The AFLC is the only denomination working in this village. Relief assistance for food and clothing should be directed to the AFLC World Missions Office.

Camp Notice: Due to the small number of pre-registrations for the July 3-9 ARC Family Camp, it has been cancelled. Please plan to attend the July 31-August 6 Family Camp at the ARC in Osceola, Wisconsin.

In reflecting on the past nine months of sabbatical leave here in eastern Europe, there is a deep sense of gratitude to God for the many blessings we have experienced. These special days and the special people we have met here will never be forgotten. We have enjoyed the privilege and blessing of working with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Russia and Other States (ELKRO) and its beloved bishop, Harald Kalnins. This includes our seeking to be of help in the beginning of a Bible training center and a Christian orphanage in Latvia. We rejoice that the orphanage project is underway as the crop has been planted on the farm where the children will live. It is planned the orphanage will be sustained through the produce of the farm. They expect to serve all orphans including the mentally handicapped. A chapel will be built to serve the orphanage and the community.

Bible Training Center and Seminaries

Classes have not yet begun at the site of the future Bible training center in Jurmala. There has been a delay due to the discovery by building inspectors that some of the floor and ceiling beams must be replaced before it will be safe. The heating system also is in need of major repair. Recent developments have been very encouraging as building materials are being donated so that work can progress. The facility will serve as a Bible training and conference center for the German-Russian Lutheran congregations in Latvia. Its tree-covered grounds are located next to the beautiful Baltic Sea.

It has also been our privilege to preach in congregations in ELKRO both in Latvia and Russia as well as to teach at the first and only Lutheran seminary in Russia (St. Petersburg) since the demise

of communism only a few years ago. What a thrill it was to meet lay pastors from all over the former Soviet Union (Siberia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, the Ukraine, Lithuania, as well as Moscow) during those most interesting days of this spring session! In the fall, the seminary will move to its own facility in a rural area south of St. Petersburg. Pray that this seminary will prepare truly evangelical and Bible-believing pastors. Russia is a vast and needy mission field and the church has a great opportunity in these new days of freedom for the gospel.

In earlier articles of the Baltic Bulletin, we have described the ministries of Tartu Theological Academy in Estonia as well as the Latvian Deaconal Institute in Jurmala. What a privilege it has been to have fellowship with the administration and staff of these schools as well as the students! We have been teaching systematic theology, New Testament, and English language courses in these schools. Although their programs are longer, the curriculums compare with our Bible school in Minneapolis in many respects. The graduate of these schools will be a tremendous help in the ministry of the church here as they remain faithful to God's Word. We are very encouraged by the caliber of students who are applying themselves to prepare for Christian service.

Sunday Schools

During the past few months several more open doors have been given to us for which we are thankful. On Saturdays we are taking part in an all-day seminar for Lutheran Sunday School teachers. These dedicated people travel from many parts of the country to Riga each Saturday for six hours of training in Christian education. It has been my privilege to have a Bible doctrine hour with them.

The church here takes the ministry of the Sunday School very seriously. This was illustrated to us again recently as we participated in the five-year anniversary of a large Lutheran Sunday School. At least eight other congregations brought their Sunday School children to the celebration and the sanctuary was filled to overflowing with children! We were deeply moved as the children of the host church crowded the chancel area at the close of the service and knelt in prayer together with their godly pastor in thanksgiving and praise for their first five years.

One of the needs of the Sunday Schools here is for material with which to illustrate the Bible stories — flannel graphs, pictures, etc. Perhaps there are congregations among us who would be interested in providing some materials.

University Work

During the past two months we have led a Bible study for about 50 theology and university students on Tuesday evenings. This is a Lutheran student society whose leaders have a deep concern to bring the gospel to their fellow students at Latvian University. It gives us great hope to realize that from such young people will come many of the future leaders of the Latvian Lutheran Church and of the nation. It is amazing to consider that until a short time ago, atheistic communism was the prevailing ideology at this university and meetings to study the Bible were strictly forbidden. We are reminded of the final struggles that resulted in the new freedom as we walk by the bullet-scarred buildings just a block from the university.

Still another highlight for us lately has been teaching in the theological department of the university. There are about 130 students in this department, most of them preparing to serve as pastors of the Latvian Lutheran Church. There is a great concern on the part of the bishop and many pastors and theological

THE PEACE OFFERING

Marriage -

We have learned in the last two lessons that we are sinners in a two-fold sense: 1) born sinners by nature and 2) we commit sins by choice. The sin and trespass offerings represent our need to first come to God confessing our sins and acknowledging that God's Son, Jesus Christ, is our sin offering. Now we will study an offering that brings a sweet aroma of God: the peace or fellowship offering.

Tithes -

1. PEACE is "the presence and experience of right relationships," according to the *Guidepost Family Topical Concordance*; so it means reconciliation, communion, and agreement. What does this offering then represent?

Service -

2. Notice the requirements of this sacrifice:
What animals were to be offered?

Do we give to the Lord voluntarily? Remember:

Psalms 50:14 - "Offer to God _____ and

pay your _____ to the Most High."

Dear Lord, thank You for being the One Who is that perfect sacrifice, for bringing peace between God and me, and for being that Perfect Peace for me.

Making it personal:

This coming month, let us be more aware of all the things, big and small, that we should thank God for — especially remembering the peace He has obtained for us with God the Father.

Leviticus 3:1 _____

Leviticus 3:6-7 _____

Leviticus 3:6, 12 _____

What was to be their condition? _____

How did the person identify with it? Leviticus 3:2 _____

What happened to the blood? Leviticus 3:2 _____

The fat of the inward parts was burned as a sweet aroma to the Lord. The priests and the one who offered it shared in the meat. It was enjoyed by God, the priests, and the individual presenting the sacrifice.

3. What were the reasons for giving this sacrifice?

Leviticus 7:12 _____

Leviticus 7:16 _____

This was a freewill offering given after they had offered the sin and trespass offerings. After they had acknowledged their sin and accepted the atonement and forgiveness of God, they brought a peace offering then.

OUR PEACE OFFERING

4. Who is our peace? Ephesians 2:13-18 _____

What are some results of Christ's death for you and me? vs. 13-15

vs. 16-17 _____

vs. 18 _____

Discuss what this means to each of us. Romans 5:1-2

When we come before God with repentant and contrite hearts and accept Jesus Christ and His shed blood as our perfect sacrifice, then we want to bring all our praises to Him. He has made peace with God for us!

5. Look again at the reasons for the Peace Offering.

How do they apply to us today?

THANKSGIVING - What are we to offer to God and how often?

Hebrews 13:15 _____

When is praise a sacrifice?

Ephesians 5:20 _____

Do we remember to praise and thank Him as we make requests of Him? We need to thank Him even for the difficult things He brings into our lives because we are being molded by Him.

I Peter 2:5 _____

What are these spiritual sacrifices that are pleasing to God?

Are you a criticizing or complaining Christian? Is your life a sweet aroma to the Lord and to those around you?

A VOW - pledge. What must we remember about making vows to God?

Numbers 30:2-3 _____

Psalms 56:12 _____

Psalms 116:14a _____

VOLUNTARY - by one's own choice. What are some of the vows we make to God? Discuss each of these.

Baptism -

students, that conservative, Bible-believing professors provide the training for future pastors.

The depth of conviction to uphold orthodox Lutheran theology is largely traceable to the spiritual influence of Professor Roberts Feldmanis, an elderly theologian who has served as the mentor of most of the younger pastors; often in secret sessions during the communist era. (It was interesting to learn as I met with him that he is a close friend of Dr. Uuras Saarnivaara of Finland, one of the first professors at our seminary in Minneapolis when it began in 1964. Dr. Saarnivaara has visited Latvia frequently as a guest lecturer during the last several years and has been a great encouragement to many pastors and students who hold him in high regard. One of his books has been translated into Latvian.)

Opportunities to Serve

We could mention many more special moments for us during this wonderful year in eastern Europe but space does not permit it. When we came here as a family, Ellen, Ben, Rhoda and I, we prayed that we might each be able to serve the Lord in some way. God has answered that prayer. Each of us has had many opportunities to minister in various ways. There are many individuals whom the Lord has brought into our lives — Zigrida, our dear landlady; Baiba, our helpful neighbor and her teenage sons; Julia, our Russian translator who has been very close to Rhoda; the Russian teens who play basketball with Ben and the list could go on. We are praying that we may meet each of these people again, if not in this life, in heaven forever.

There are so many who have been a special part of this year through their encouraging letters and assurances of prayer support. We have sensed strong prayer support throughout these months away. We cannot explain the incredible way many opportuni-

Promise Keepers making an impact on America

One of the most exciting Christian events in recent years happened last year as over 50,000 Christian men came from all 50 states as well as from all over the world to Boulder, Colorado for the Promise Keepers National Men's Conference. This conference was one of the goals God had placed on the heart of University of Colorado Football Coach and Promise Keepers founder Bill McCartney for the men of this nation.

Promise Keepers was born in March of 1990, out of the burden God had placed on the heart of Coach McCartney to find a way to move men from spiritual immaturity to maturity. Expectations for the 1994 conferences that will take place in six locations range from a conservative 130,000 to possibly 200,000!

So what is it that is drawing men to Promise Keepers? What is all the excitement about? Promise Keepers President Randy Phillips believes "We are right now in the midst of a sovereign move of God's Spirit, and He is seeking to redeem the spiritual heritage and the spiritual purposes of His sons in this nation." Indeed, Christian leaders from all across America

are sensing God's Spirit stirring the hearts of the men of this nation. Promise Keepers feels honored to be used of God as a tool to "ignite" men to become promise keepers to God, their wife and family, and to their local church.

Mike Anenson is the Promise Keepers Point Man at Emmaus Lutheran Church in Bloomington, Minnesota and has attended the last two Promise Keepers National Conferences. I asked Mike if he had seen any changes in his personal life or in his men's ministry.

Mike, how has the ministry of Promise Keepers affected your spiritual life?

"Promise Keepers has helped me to realize that I am not alone in the struggles that I face in being a Christian man; at work, at home, and at church. That's where the benefit of a strong men's ministry has really made a difference."

How has being a Promise Keeper affected your family?

"The whole process of Promise Keepers has challenged me to be not only the spiritual leader in my home, but to educate my wife and children on my desire to be the spiritual leader."

(continued on next page)

ties to serve have come to us. We can simply thank our gracious God for His faithfulness to answer the prayers of His people.

Continue to pray for the church in eastern Europe. Although there has been remarkable progress in spiritual restoration and growth, there is so much need. Pray that the Lord of the harvest will send the needed workers here to stand alongside in assisting His church. This is a day of unprecedented freedom for the gospel here; really a miraculous chapter in the history of missions. How long this freedom will last is unknown.

Pray for mission organizations that are seeking to channel work-

ers and resources to this part of the world. These include: Eastern European Missions Network, Pastor Don Richman, director; Lutheran-Estonian Americans Friends, Pastors Charles Eidum and Robert Lee, co-chairmen; and Good News for Israel, Pastor Kearney Franzen, director. Thank God for raising up these mission agencies to help coordinate the efforts to assist the courageous and beloved church of eastern Europe!

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

PEOPLE and PLACES

Rev. Wesley Langaas, McVile, North Dakota, has resigned as pastor of Bethany and New Luther Valley congregations in Binford and McVile, in order to accept the call to serve the newly formed Abundant Life Lutheran Church in Thief River Falls, Minnesota, an independent congregation. Pastor Langaas has served the Binford-McVile parish since 1980. He will begin his new ministry in July.

Wilderness Bible Camp, Lake Park, Minnesota, can use your old Concordia hymnals. If your church has any of these hymnals to give to the camp, please contact the camp board secretary Pastor Bruce Dalager at 701-772-1846.

Roseau, Minnesota — Roseau Free Lutheran has organized a group called Busy Young Disciples. About 20 young people from ages 3 years to 6th grade meet once a month. Activities during the past year include: a hayride; serving 175 people at church a turkey dinner; Christmas caroling; and making gifts for Mother's Day. Leaders are Sharon Lofstedt and Wally Simmons.



Detroit Lakes, Minnesota — Pictured are the new members of Faith Free Lutheran Church, an AFLC Home Mission congregation. The pastor, Rev. Paul Larson, is standing in the back row, far right.

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard

Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences - January 1 - April 30, 1994

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN APRIL	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$256,591.00	\$17,860.39	\$66,620.15	26
Seminary	148,000.00	7,401.38	29,651.23	20
Bible School	232,562.00	13,808.02	48,632.82	21
Home Missions.	319,086.00	19,256.54	66,845.19	21
World Missions.	342,788.00	26,606.27	106,064.24	31
Capital Investment	37,395.00	1,616.77	5,934.27	16
Parish Education	67,868.00	3,780.58	11,011.85	16
ARC	8,600.00	227.00	1,217.46	14
Church Extension	10,000.00	1,393.01	2,447.13	24
TOTALS	\$1,422,890.00	\$91,949.96	\$338,424.34	24
1993 Goal 33%	\$1,347,747.00	\$84,197.16	\$377,650.70	28
1994 Goal 33%				

PROMISE KEEPERS —

How have you done that?

"I now take the time to tell my children that 'Daddy doesn't just have another meeting to go to, but he is going to meet with other Daddies to talk about Jesus.' Also, when they see me reading my Bible or leading family devotions or praying, they see that I think these things are important."

Mike, what would you say are the greatest benefits to attending a promise Keepers Conference?

"I would have to say there are two primary benefits. First, the

opportunity to see and listen first hand to some of the really great speakers of our generation, dealing with the issues that are relevant to Christian men, without distractions and in the context of being there with 50,000 other Christian brothers. And second, the fellowship and the worship are incredible. I really believe it might be a glimpse of what heaven will be like."

This year, Promise Keepers will be holding six regional conferences around the United States anticipating over 130,000 men to attend. The three remaining conferences

will be in Dallas on June 11; Portland, Oregon, on June 18; and Boulder, Colorado, on July 29-30.

If you would like more information concerning the Promise Keepers National Conference in your region, you can contact Promise Keepers at 303-421-2800. If you would like to know more about the ministry of Promise Keepers or how to begin a men's ministry in your church, you can contact Seminarian Randy Nelson at 502-365-4263, who is an Ambassador for Promise Keepers.

— Randy Nelson
Deshler, Nebraska

Even the Lone Ranger had Tonto

People who do not attend church regularly were asked the main reason why, as part of a survey taken in 1993 in Eugene, Oregon. The most frequently mentioned response, given by 46%, was "God can be worshiped without going to church." Twenty-nine percent gave the second most common response, saying they were "not interested in being part of a church." Many have an interest in God, the Bible and spiritual matters. For various reasons, however, they have no desire and feel no need to be part of a local congregation.

A biblical truth that we uphold and cherish is the wonderful fact that through Jesus we can have a personal, intimate relationship with God. While we stand firm on that good news, we must not compromise the truth that this personal relationship with God is lived out by being a part of the body of Christ. We stand as individual children of our heavenly Father but we grow by being a part of the family of God. Christians are not expected to, and we are not to even try, to make it on our own. As humbling as it is to admit, to stay walking with God and to grow in Him, we need others.

The Bible says, "Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it" (I Corinthians 12:27). The hand is extremely useful as long as it is connected to the body. It can do nothing when the connection is broken. It is the same with the other parts of the body, and it is the same with us as individual Christians. God can use each one of us in incredible ways. For this to happen, however, He says we must remain connected to the body. We must be part of a local congregation in order to experience true spiritual growth.

Sometimes the body is not extremely attractive. The hand does not say, "I'm going to get away from this ugly body and do my own thing." The hand knows he needs to stay connected so he remains and tries to clean up the body. Christians as well are called to remain connected, even though congregations at times can appear to be unattractive bodies. For every Christian, there is a congregation God desires for them to be a part of. None of us are called to be spiritual Lone Rangers, striving on our own to fight evil, touch lives for Christ and make a difference for Him. Even the Lone Ranger needed his companion and helper, Tonto. We are believing a dangerous lie if we think we can get by fine in the Christian life all by ourselves. God has given us a tremendous gift by permitting us to be a part of His body. Let us see its value and receive the gift with joy and thankfulness.

Trusting in the Spirit, not in the Structure

Our method of operating as an Association of Free Lutheran Congregations has possible problems written all over it. We let any member of an AFLC congregation come to the annual conference and vote. Some say, "But a large congregation could come and pack the conference and sway things a certain way." Yes, that could happen. We do not require congregations to give a certain amount to the finances of the church body. "But what if a bunch of congregations decide to give nothing?" Yes, that could happen too. The local congregation's worship style is not dictated by the headquarters office of the Association. "But who knows what kind of weird things they might start doing?" Yes, that is possible. Our Association has purposely been created in such a way so that the potential for disaster looms just around the corner.

We do not have man-made safeguards that human reason says are necessary. Some may believe we should have a delegate system or required dues or more stringent checks and limits. The thought is that those things are needed to keep congregations in line and the church body operating. Our response is we trust in the Holy Spirit and not in man-made safeguards. Yes, terrible things could happen. The annual conference could make terrible decisions, the money needed to support the various parts of the work may not come in, congregations may go down all kinds of bizarre paths. Our only hope is that the Holy Spirit will do the work we believe He will do. Our hope for free congregations here and in other countries of the world is not based on having someone approved by the Coordinating Committee leading them or, on the mission field, because an American is present. Our trust is not in the human leader, but in the Spirit Who will work through the Word of God that has been shared.

The structure of the AFLC forces us to be dependent on God. We have nothing else to trust in. If He fails us we are doomed. The good news is He has promised to never leave us nor forsake us. So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid" (Hebrews 13:5, 6). We have only God to trust in, and that is enough. It is good to be forced to cling to Him. Leaning on Him alone is the safest and most secure position in which we can be.

One hundred years of ministry

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

Second-Class

On July 2-3 one of the charter congregations of the AFLC will celebrate 100 years of existence. This group was also one of the original Lutheran Free Church congregations.

Maple Bay Free Lutheran Church of rural Fertile, Minnesota, was organized in 1894, at the farm home of Gullick Iverson.

It was at this time there was a controversy within the newly formed United Norwegian Lutheran Church. A local pastor, Rev. S.E. Sorenson was serving Maple Lake Lutheran Church and took a stand with a group known as *The Friends of Augsburg*. When he was asked to leave Maple Lake Lutheran, a minority of members of the congregation left with him. This group had learned to love and respect Rev. Sorenson and knew him as a faithful servant of the Lord. He was a pastor in his private as well as his public life. This bond led the little group to meet at the Iverson home for an informal meeting.

The first meetings were around a large kitchen table next to a wood burning range with a coffee pot always on it. There they decided to meet again and a new congregation was being born.

The members of this new congregation were farmers, having only recently homesteaded their land. Their small, log houses reflected meager incomes, but such circumstances brought these people close together with themselves and their pastor. They shared their joys and sorrows in a true Christian spirit.

In March of that same year, a church building was constructed and the congregation held its first service in their new building in June of 1894, with thankfulness to the Lord and humility in realizing how much work was yet to be

done. A Sunday school was formed along with a ladies aid and a confirmation class was enrolled.

On December 3, 1930, tragedy struck and the church burned to the ground. The members quickly forged ahead and reconstructed the basement, where services were soon held.

Construction for the new building came to a standstill due to the drought of the '30s, the depression and then World War II. Finally in 1947, construction began again to build up from the basement. This was completed in 1948. Rev. Waldeman Anderson was the pastor during this time.

In the fall of 1962, when the Lutheran Free Church voted to merge into the American Lutheran Church, Maple Bay Lutheran voted

to withdraw from membership in the Lutheran Free Church. Together with the nearby congregations of Dovre and Union Lake, the three-point Winger Parish was formed as they became charter congregations of the new Association of Free Lutheran Congregations. The Lord richly blessed the AFLC and Maple Bay Lutheran Free Church.

In 1988 the parish re-organized and Maple Bay went alone in calling Rev. Lynn Kinneberg to be their pastor.

The congregation is grateful to those who came before with a vision and willingness to follow God's direction. The church and its work are in themselves a memorial to them. May God give the grace to continue the work they began. To Him be the honor and glory.

Orville Myron 1915-1994

Orville Myron, Tucson, Arizona, passed away on April 18, 1994, in a Tucson hospital following several strokes.

He was born June 6, 1915 in Meckling, South Dakota. After dairy farming for 20 years he became an administrator for the Good Samaritan Homes in Nebraska and a retirement home in Michigan. After his retirement in 1981, he moved to Tucson where he was instrumental in forming Living Faith Free

Lutheran in October 1982. Much of his time was spent serving the Lord in maintenance of the church building and also leading home Bible studies.

He is survived by his wife, Iris; a son, Paul; a daughter, Ruth; four grandchildren; two great-grandchildren; two sisters; and many other relatives and friends.

A memorial service was held April 20, with Nogales, Arizona pastors Ted Kennedy and Lawrence Dynneson officiating.

Blessed be his memory.