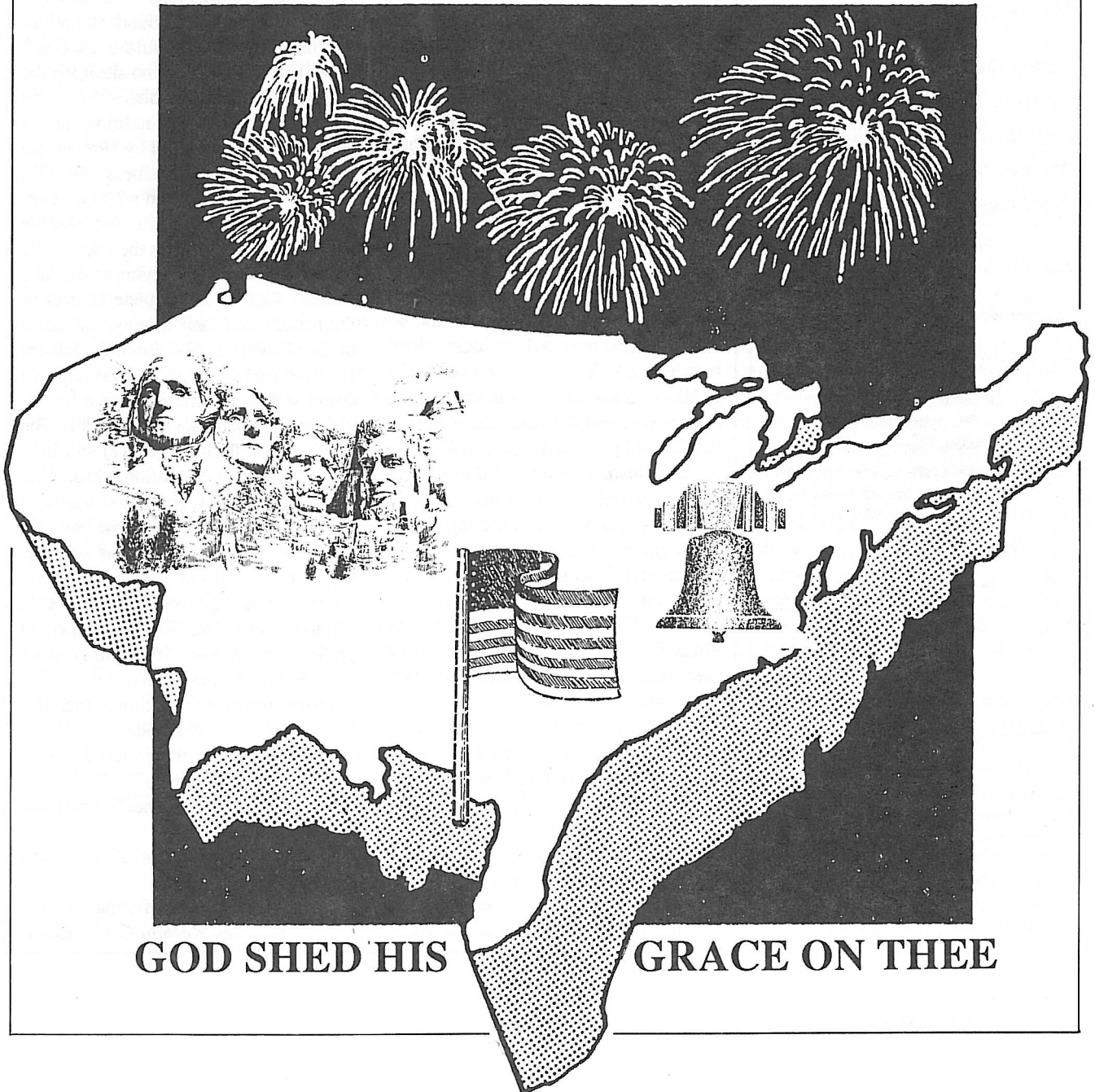


THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

June 25, 1991



A M E R I C A



GOD SHED HIS

GRACE ON THEE

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

June 25, 1991 • Vol. 29, No. 13

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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

CONTENTS

The Christian Citizen	p. 3
Patriotism	p. 4
Serving the Lord in Government	p. 6
Spring Rally Review	p. 8
Our President Writes	p. 10
People and Places	p. 12
Church Prayer Alert	p. 13
The Progress of the Pilgrim	p. 14
Editorials	p. 15

Subscriptions: \$11.00 per year.

Write to:

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

Send all communications concerning this magazine to: Editor, at the above address. Telephone (612) 545-5631, FAX (612) 545-0079.

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.

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Behold our God

The old man mused as he enjoyed the first sprouts of spring in the garden while the warm sun bathed his back and spoke of God's goodness. The news of war had receded; the tidings of cease-fire, peace and homecoming brought joy. The stillness and beauty of the moment refreshed his soul. Life seemed good, but like the flowers of yesteryear, it seemed so fleeting. Grandparents, father and mother long laid to rest and now many of his peers were drifting to their eternal rest. How true the words God gave Isaiah the prophet to remind men of his day (Isaiah 40:6-8): "All flesh is grass, and all its beauty is like the flower of the field ... The grass withers, the flower fades: but the Word of our God will stand forever."

Yes, the Word of our God will stand amid all the changes of life! And that Word was woven into the very fabric and foundations of our nation. It has brought freedom, righteousness, prosperity and victories. In the past, peace and satisfaction were found in its light. Now that Word is being distorted and forsaken in churches, villified and mocked in media, forbidden to our children in our schools and our nation trembles in perplexities and fears. To fearful Judah, who had similarly forsaken God, Zion was exhorted to call out powerfully: "Behold your God!" (Isaiah 40:9).

The old man pondered these truths and wondered, "Why do men of fleeting years spend them gathering power in arrogant greed, crushing their fellowmen in brutality to exalt themselves for so brief a time?" He recalled Kaiser Wilhelm, Hitler, and Saddam Hussein of recent days. They fade away like the grass of the field, their memory only a curse.

In contrast, "Behold the Lord (who) comes with might" ... to do good in love and compassion. "He will feed His flock like a shepherd, He will gather the lambs in His arms, and gently lead those that are with young."

His greatness staggers the minds of arrogant men. The prophet seeks to illustrate by asking how much water

Light on the Way

can you hold in the hollow of your hand? Yet God is so great that He can measure out all the waters of earth (oceans, lakes, rivers) in the hollow of His hand! Today man is constructing telescopes by which he hopes to peer into space 13 billion to 14 billion light years, each year equalling 5.88 trillion miles. But this vast space was measured out by God between His thumb tip and little finger tip, called a span.

As we glory in our nation on our Independence Day, let America humble itself before this God who has made it great and given it victory. At Athens Paul said, "It is this God who has allotted (our time) and the boundaries of our habitation that we should seek God" (Acts 17:26). "It is He who sits upon the circle of the earth" (Isaiah 40:22) and "all the nations are as nothing before Him, they are accounted by Him as less than nothing and emptiness" (v. 17). While men are perplexed with the problems of the nations, to our God "All the nations are like a drop in the bucket of a child returning from playing at the lake shore." God is in complete control of the nations and their destiny, the sinful pride of man notwithstanding. Except for His forbearance and mercy, He could wipe out America like a housewife wipes away fine dust (v. 15b). The words of the Psalmist (33:12) still hold true: "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord!" How good God has been to let us live in this land! How great He has made our history! Let us not now forget our God and perish as did the nation who ignored Isaiah's cry, "Behold your God!" Let us rather, in godly wisdom, learn from history, celebrate and rejoice, singing:

"Now we thank we all our God with hearts and hands and voices

Who wondrous things has done, in Whom His world rejoices;

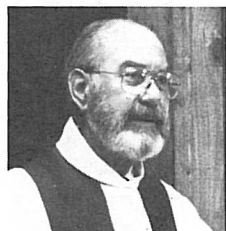
Who from our mother's arms has blessed us on our way

With countless gifts of love, and still is ours today."

(Concordia Hymnal, p. 242)

—Rev. Kermitt C. Grundahl

THE CHRISTIAN CITIZEN



— by Rev.
Willard L. Conradson
Salem, Alabama

Even as a youngster I found it easy as a Christian to be patriotic. Back then we always began the school day with the "Pledge of Allegiance." A dictionary defines a "patriot" as "a person who loves and loyally or zealously supports his own country." I have always been a patriot and after being in many foreign countries my support for the USA has only increased. America has its faults and defects, but I really believe that as major nations go, ours deserves the allegiance of its Christians. Experience and observation in world travel and living lead me to believe that Christians are the glue that is holding America together!

The much-read columnist George Will wrote recently, "America has not done badly in the struggle to achieve that elusive balance of freedom and security that characterizes a society in which the strong may freely strive and the weak need not feel fear."

Is there a biblical reason for being patriotic Christians? Paul, in Romans, said by the Holy Spirit's guidance: "Render to all what is due them: taxes ... custom ... fear ... honor ..." And, "Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God ..." Peter writes, directed by the Holy Spirit, "Honor all men, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king." Paul and Peter so advised us even though the writer of Hebrews says: "For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come." Just because we know we'll not live forever here on this earth hardly means that we should not make the most of the time we are here. And so a Christian does — to witness for the Lord Jesus!

One of my favorite men in America's history is the man who once remarked that when he listened to a Christian preacher he wanted to hear him preach as if he were "fighting bumblebees!" This man of action later became a great president. When he was but 28 years of age (after having served three terms in the New York state legislature), he ranched in the Dakota Badlands. Then, on July 4, 1886, he gave the main address at an Independence Day celebration in Dickinson, Dakota Territory.

This great statesman, Theodore Roosevelt, spoke these words: "But as you already know your rights and privileges so well, I am going to ask you to excuse me if I say a few words to you about your duties. Much has been given to us ... and we must take heed to use aright the gifts entrusted to our care. It is not what we have that will make us a great nation; it is the way in which we use it. I do

not undervalue for a moment our material prosperity; like all Americans, I like big things; big prairies, big forests and mountains, big wheat fields, big railroads, big factories, steamboats, and everything else. But we must keep steadfastly in mind that no people were ever yet benefited by riches if their prosperity corrupted their virtue."

It seems to me that a large part of a Christian's role as a citizen of America is to support a government that protects its people from outside aggressors while at the same time interferes as little as possible with its people as they work out their own individual material destiny and as they worship God guided by their own consciences. We won the "cold war" in spite of the protests of many in our nation over the monetary cost. We won that war because we were adequately prepared in the military sector. Godless Communism attempted to keep ahead of us in military preparedness — and it went broke in the process! And, just in case the Marxist/atheist nations did not get that message, they did get it recently when our military hardware used in Kuwait and Iraq proved itself infinitely superior to the Soviet's best weaponry fielded by Iraq! (An example: One U.S. Air Force A-10 Warthog with a two-man crew destroyed in one day 23 of the best tanks made by the Soviets!)

Peace? We Christians love it! And the peace we love most of all is Christ's "peace that passes all understanding." Without apology we pray: "God bless America!"

Rev. Willard L. Conradson was born and raised at Taylor, North Dakota, and graduated from Luther College, Decorah, Iowa, and Luther Theological Seminary, St. Paul. After his ordination in 1949 by the former Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC), he served parishes in Fairfax and Fairmont, Minnesota, and Anaheim, California.

During World War II military service, he was assistant to a chaplain, which led him to enter the U.S. Air Force chaplaincy program during the 1950s. After duty in Egypt, Libya, Morocco, and Japan, as well as in the United States, he retired in 1976, with the rank of lieutenant colonel.

He and his wife, Becky (Fosmark), a college classmate, are the parents of three children and grandparents of five.

Retirement from parish ministry in 1982 found the Conradsons moving to Salem, Alabama, where he soon "unretired." Pastor Conradson and the new congregation that he organized near Salem both affiliated with the AFLC earlier this year.

★ PATRIOTISM ★ Caught, Not Taught

—by Mrs. Jeanette Larson
Pipestone, Minnesota

Teaching Our Children

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

As we look at the pledge that is commonly said at the beginning of the school day by many children across our land, we see prominently in the center the need for our nation to be "under God." It is in our homes and churches that our children will learn what "under God" can mean to our nation.

The Bible teaches us that we have a responsibility to be involved with the needs of the country in which we live. In Romans 13 it says that we need to be subject to our governing authorities who exist and are established by God. It also points out that we are to remember that our highest authority is God.

As we look at patriotism, we realize that the skills we teach our children about life as a Christian are also skills they need to be good citizens in their country. They need to learn to be loyal, honest, respectful, obedient, and caring. They need to become informed and involved Christians and citizens.

Loyalty to God is passed from generation to generation, now, as it was in Bible times. Our children will learn loyalty to God by seeing us reading the Word, worshiping, praying, singing praises and sharing our love of God through teaching and preaching. In the same way, they will learn loyalty to their country by watching as we carefully follow the laws of our land, show respect to our flag and sing along when our national anthem is played. It is from our example that they learn how to become faithful Christians and citizens.

Honesty is an area that is becoming a great problem among young people today. Many times they seem to be unaware that they are cheating, being dishonest or lying. We need to see God's commandments as a continuing force in our lives. We as parents are instructed to teach our children the commandments. We must also live the commandments. Telling a small white lie, cheating on our taxes, or speeding down the

highway at 69 mph are not examples that our children should see, if we want them to learn honesty. The good citizen follows the laws of the land. The good Christian follows the laws of the Lord.

Obedience and respect seem to go hand in hand. In speaking of a political leader or community leader, I Timothy 3:4 says, "He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with dignity. We are told as parents that we are first and foremost responsible to discipline our children. We must expect them to behave in an appropriate and godly manner. Children will learn to obey and act respectfully only if we expect it of them. We do not do our children or our society a favor by allowing our children to go their own way, undisciplined.

Our nation will benefit greatly if we teach our children about Christian love and caring. The early Christians shared with those who were in need and cared for them in loving ways. Our homes and our churches need to provide this same loving example. Children are very thoughtful and loving by nature. Recently, at the time of the death of my mother-in-law, the children in our Wednesday night church group made sympathy cards for my husband and me. They expressed their love, concern and trust in God the divine Healer, in a way that we adults may need to learn again. As parents, we can encourage our children to share their love of God and His blessings with their classmates and friends. This is the greatest gift they can give to God and to their world.

Patriotism is really responsibility for our country. We demonstrate our patriotism by being watchful of what is happening in our govern-

"Patriotism is
really responsibility
for our
country."



*Lord, while for all mankind we pray, of every
clime and coast,
O hear us for our native land, the land we
love the most.*



*O guard our shores from every foe; with
peace our borders bless,
Our cities with prosperity, our fields
with plenteousness.*



*Unite us in the sacred love of
knowledge, truth, and Thee;
And let our hills and valleys shout
the songs of liberty.*

ment and in our world. Children see by our example that we care about what happens to our country and to the land that they will inherit. We cannot teach this by quietly staying to ourselves. We need to keep informed and prayerfully seek God's will about how He would have us deal with current issues. We need to take an active part by voting and by voicing our opinions to those in authority in our nation. Our Lord expects this from us.

I Peter 2:16-17 says, "act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bond slaves to God. Honor all men; love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king." We are not free in America to do as we please. We are free to become citizens who are involved in honoring, respecting, obeying and caring for our country. We can do this only through seeing our Lord as an example. We can teach it to our children only by being an example.

*Lord of the nations, thus to Thee
our country we commend;
Be Thou her refuge and her
trust, her everlasting friend.*

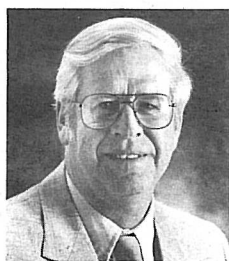
Amen.

Jeanette Larson and her husband, Robert, are members of Christ the King Lutheran Church, Pipestone. She teaches children with learning disabilities in the Pipestone School District.

— John R. Wreford

Serving the Lord in Government

Romans 13:1-4 reads: "Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established ... Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and He will commend you. For He is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for He does not bear the sword for nothing ..."



—by Rep. Tony Onnen
Cokato, Minnesota

The 70s were eventful years. Married to JoAnn (Thorland) Onnen in 1970, Jennifer born 1972, Kristin born 1974, received my assurance of salvation in 1975. In 1976 I became involved in the world of politics.

At the first Bible study after my decision to run for political office, the leader was sharing that Christians should not get involved in politics. As I searched and prayed on what to do, different comments came to me, such as: "Why do you want to get into something as dirty as politics? ..." "Maybe the reason politics is so dirty is because Christians don't get involved."

Government is not dirty. People in government are given the responsibility of making major decisions which can cause temptations as well as pressure. I am reminded of the first term legislator who came to me in tears confronted with a commitment she had made to her constituents and now, understanding the issue better, wanted to reverse her position.

Christians do need to be involved. What we as a state, nation, and world are confronted with in our schools, employment, homes, etc., are decided by, at least in part, government. Whether it be the life of the unborn child to the respect given the life of the elderly, government is involved.

In politics there is the battle of what is right and what is wrong. Those elected decide the freedoms or the rights we should be commended for and the wrongs for which we should be punished as well as the punishment. You can decide who makes these deci-

sions. I have never won an election by myself. A number of years ago "Decision" magazine stated that ten dedicated men could get a congressional candidate elected.

When you think of those who risked and even lost their lives for our freedoms, we can thank God for the blessings He has bestowed upon our nation. At the same time we have to be diligent and involved that while we have the freedoms, we don't lose the rights.

Being a legislator also has its benefits and joys. The many Christians we have met and the awareness that people are praying for us have been such a blessing to our whole family. That family increased to five children with Matt, Ruth and Lori being added in the late 70s. There is also great satisfaction in helping people in need. During Governor Quie's administration, one of my greatest thrills in the legislature was at our fellowship meeting, sharing my Bible with a person who had Bible study with national leaders and even offered to take someone's place in jail. So great was his God-given love.

It is my prayer that God will continue to be with our nation — its leaders and its people, to bring glory to His name.

Tony Onnen was born and reared near Hebron, Nebraska. He graduated from the University of Nebraska. He currently is serving his 8th term in the Minnesota House of Representatives. He and his wife and five children are members of Good Shepherd Free Lutheran Church, Cokato, Minnesota.

"I Will Bring Back Memories"

It was May, 1991, and my year with the Missionary David Abel family in Vitoria was ending. As I packed my bags preparing for my trip back to the States, it seemed like only a few weeks ago I was preparing to come to Brazil. "Do I need this? ... Would this be too hot?" Now I packed away souvenirs and gifts that I either bought or were given to me. But most important I will bring back with me memories.

Memories of the David Abel household; lessons with Tami and Robi, babysitting, picnics at the beach and making lefsa for Christmas. Life here was usually anything but boring!

Memories of the church and the people will be with me forever. I will miss them very much and their smiles and laughter. We shared the good times, as well as the bad. They adopted me into their family.

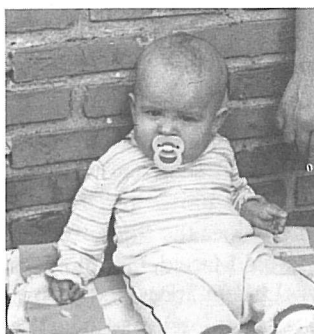
One of the special times came in January, during the two-day journey to Campo Mourao for the annual conference. I went along with about thirty-five other members of the church in a chartered bus. What an experience!

The annual conference went well. I stayed longer with Janet Gray and the Paul Abel family for the kids camp and teen camp. At teen camp, about ten young people gave their lives over to Christ. The Holy Spirit was working in our hearts that week!

The time soon came for me to return to Vitoria. I was anxious to return, but found it difficult to leave my new friends.

Back in Vitoria (after being stranded in an eight-hour traffic jam in Rio, due to flooding rains), I had a little over a month to leave Brazil in order to renew my visa. Instead of going to Paraguay, I went with a friend from the church to Bolivia to see the work of the Norwegian Lutheran Mission.

From what the Brazilians told me, I was prepared for the worst! But I was



From the Miriam Infant Home

Hi! My Name Is Adrinao

As you can see, I've been well taken care of, but that can fool you. My short life so far hasn't been very good. I was told my mommy walked away and left me in the hospital where I was born; now only Jesus knows who she is. I was then up for adoption and an older couple took me to try to save their marriage. They treated me really good, giving me plenty to eat, nice clothes and a big home to live in. But there was no real love for each other. I tried my best to make them love each other, but I couldn't do it because they didn't know Jesus.

I can't talk yet because I'm little, but now I see Jesus' love here at the "Miriam Home" and that makes me very happy. You may ask, how did I get into the "Miriam Home"? It all happened so fast that I can't really remember, but I was told that one night while I was sleeping, my adopted mommy gave up trying to make the marriage work. She knew that if a divorce came, I would be given back to the Juvenile Judge, so she tried to run away with me and hide me. I remember waking up suddenly and crying because I was afraid.

I heard shouting and screaming as the police came with red lights and bright stop lights. They grabbed me, and my adopted mommy, and that was the last I saw of her. I was taken to the "Miriam Home" and mommy went to jail. I try to be happy when I think about my two mommies, but I feel so bad that they didn't have the same chance I have to hear about Jesus. Big people make many bad mistakes. Would you pray for my two mommies and two daddies, even if you don't know their names? I know Jesus knows who they are and He understands.

Don't forget to pray for me by name and all my little brothers and sisters in Jesus who are in the same place I am. I'm so happy that Jesus touched the hearts of the people in the AFLC church in Brazil to open up a little place of love for us.

Happily in the Infant Home,

Adrinao

relieved to find out that the renewal of my visa was a smooth process. God had truly gone before me, as that renewal process often is difficult.

Thank you for the love, prayers, letters and financial support you've given me! I pray that the Lord would bless as we continue to advance His Kingdom throughout the world.

— Sonja Dahl
Felton, Minnesota

Janet Gray and Sonja Dahl (row 2, far left) with a group of Brazilian young people. Janet hopes to continue her work in Curitiba with the Paul Abel family if her visa can be renewed.

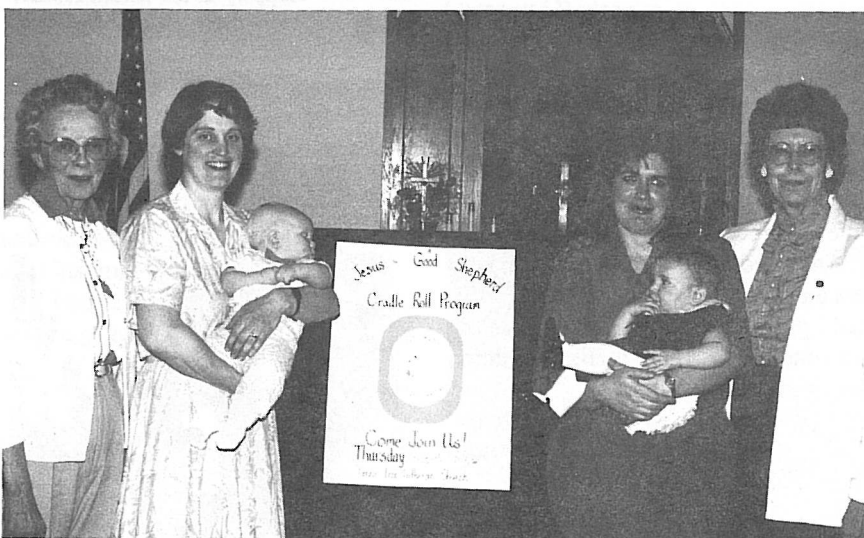


WOMEN

Spring Rally Review

The Southwest Central Minnesota District WMF held its Spring Rally on May 7, at Kvam Free Lutheran Church, Dalton. The theme was taken from Matthew 28:18-19, "All Power Is Given." Rev. Tony Stockman, Brandon, gave the morning Bible Study and Mrs. Dennis Torkelson, Foxhome, led the afternoon study. One hundred twenty-one ladies registered for the day.

St. Paul's Free Lutheran, Fargo, hosted the Spring Rally for the Eastern North Dakota District WMF on May 4. "God Is Faithful," from I Corinthians 1:9, was the theme for the day. Rev. Harold Masted, Grafton, was the speaker. LuVern Jones and Donna Hass led the devotions. Martha Petsinger, Harriet Vigness and Elvira Moen provided the special music along with a group from McVile. Marie Fragodt, Minnewauken, showed slides taken during her visit to the AFLC mission field in Brazil. One hundred-eight ladies registered for the day.



Edinburg, North Dakota — Grace Free Lutheran WMF graduated Jared Ohma and Mark Thorson from their Cradle Roll Department. New enrollees, James Thorson and Kelly Gemmill, are pictured with their mothers and grandmothers, Hazel and Linda Thorson and Leona and Susan Gemmill.

The Minneapolis District WMF Spring Rally was held at Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, Zumbrota, Minnesota, on April 20. Morning treats were provided by the ladies from Zion Lutheran, Dexter and Mt. Sion, Kasson. Mrs. Ruth Peterson, Eagan, spoke of the "Joy of Holiness," based on I Peter 1:16b. Music was furnished by ladies from Amery, Wisconsin, and Mrs. Robert Benson, Kenyon, Minnesota. The theme song was, "May the Mind of Christ My Savior."

The North Central Minnesota District WMF Spring Rally was held at Bethany Free Lutheran Church, Bemidji. The theme for the day was, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts." Rev. Lynn Kinneberg, Fertile, led the morning Bible Study, and Pastor Pat Spicer, Bemidji, spoke during the afternoon session.

On April 20, St. John's Lutheran, Finlayson, Minnesota, hosted the Lake Superior District WMF Spring Rally. The theme for the day was, "The Seed and the Sower," from Isaiah 40:8. Rachel Tuura led the Bible Study and Seminarian Jim Haga gave the message for the day. Christine Hanson and Rachel Tuura sang solos. The Fall Rally will be at Our Savior's Free Lutheran Church, Mason, Wisconsin, in September.



Tioga, North Dakota — Norman Lutheran WMF honored Mrs. Penny Gohrick with Honorary Membership.

The Northwestern Minnesota District WMF Spring Rally was held April 13, at Roseau Free Lutheran Church with eighty-one ladies registered. "The Lord Liveth," II Samuel 22:47, was the theme for the day. Lori Nash was the singspiration leader, with Donna Broten as pianist. Judith Wold and Randy Alme led in devotions. The chime choir from United Free Lutheran, Greenbush, provided the special music, along with Sheryl Aakry, Tami Sundby, and Bev Rivard, who sang in a trio during the afternoon. Jeanette Johnson, East Grand Forks, led the morning Bible Study and Rev. Tom Olson, Cumberland, Wisconsin, spoke in the afternoon. Judith Konerza shared about the home mission work in her congregation, Christ the King, East Grand Forks.



Freeman, South Dakota — Salem Free Lutheran WMF enrolled Melissa Ann, daughter of Micheal and Carmen Moeller in their Cradle Roll Department. Anna V. Smidt was honored by the congregation on her 90th birthday. She was given a certificate of appreciation.



Valley City, North Dakota — Grace Free Lutheran WMF officers are (left to right): Mrs. Ardell Grothe, Mrs. Emil Hass, Jr., Mrs. Tobias Larson, Mrs. Paul Bjornson, and Mrs. Reuben Emberson.

Children of the Heavenly Father

"Children of the heav'nly Father
Safely in His bosom gather
Nestling bird nor star in heaven
Such a refuge e'er was given."

We've all sung that song so many times. I, like many of you, learned it as a little girl in Sunday School. I loved the words and the beautiful tune, but probably understood little of the song's deeper meaning. But as the years passed, the Lord had many lessons for me.

"Neither life nor death shall ever
From the Lord His children sever;
Unto them His grace He showeth,
And their sorrows all He knoweth."

In my early teens I attended my 17-year-old cousin's funeral, the result of a car accident. The choir sang this song and it seemed to bring assurance and comfort. Yet one question kept haunting me, "What if I would have been the one to die? Would I be ready?"

"God His own doth tend and nourish;
In His holy courts they flourish.
From all evil things He spares them
In His mighty arms He bears them."

That question seemed to pop up all through my teen years. God would not give up on me, even though there were times when I turned my back on Him. Finally at Lake Geneva Bible Camp I admitted that I was a lost sinner and asked the Lord to forgive me and be my Savior. He had "kept me" for that

day when I would surrender to Him.

"Praise the Lord in Joyful numbers
Your Protector never slumbers.
At the will of your Defender
Ev'ry foeman must surrender."

Two years later I sang this song with the AFLBS choir. I felt such joy and contentment while singing with all my brothers and sisters in Christ. It seemed as though nothing could stop me from being a victorious Christian. Of course, my life was just beginning and still many lessons to be learned.

"Though He giveth or He taketh,
God His children ne'er forsaketh,
His the loving purpose solely
To preserve them pure and holy."

Several years passed and I had married a fellow AFLBS student. It was the baptism day for the third of our four sons. The baby was two weeks old. Tears of joy fell as the soloist sang this special song. Little did I realize, in just a few short weeks, those words, "Though He giveth or He taketh," would echo in my head as I saw my baby lying in a hospital bed hooked up to all kinds of wires and tubes. He was diagnosed with spinal meningitis. I wanted to cry out to God, "Why? ... Why?" But then His Holy Spirit comforted me and I was reminded that God loved my child even more than I ever could. I had to pray what even our Lord Jesus prayed, "Thy will be done." God saw fit to let our little son live free from any side-effects from his illness. Another lesson had been learned, though: how often God has to use such drastic measures to get our attention.

I've just begun to see how frail I am and how I desperately need a "heavenly Father" to hold me close and guide me — to be my refuge.

"It is the Spirit Himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him" (Romans 8:16-17).

— *Mrs. Jerry (Anita) Stulen
Spicer, Minnesota*

Newark, New Jersey (EP) — Less than ten percent of Americans are deeply committed Christians, according to noted pollster George Gallup, Jr.

Although results of the survey Gallup referred to will not be released until early next year, he gave a preliminary report to the conference. Only about six to ten percent of Americans fall into the category he describes as "high spiritual faith."

"These people are a breed apart," Gallup said. "They are more tolerant of people of diverse backgrounds. They are more involved in charitable activities. They are more involved in practical Christianity. They are absolutely committed to prayer."

Additionally, he said, they are "far happier than the rest of the population. These are the quiet saints in our society who have a disproportionate, powerful impact on our communities."

Gallup said previous studies have shown:

- * An ongoing one-third of Americans say they have had a religious experience.

- * Virtually all Americans say they believe in God or a universal spirit. Most believe in a personal God who watches over and judges people. Many say they have felt the presence of God at various times in their lives.

- * A substantial majority believe they will be called before God at judgment day to answer for their sins.

- * Half of Americans believe in a personal devil.

- * The majority of Americans believe that the Bible is either the literal or inspired Word of God.

- * Four in ten say they attend church or synagogue each week. Seven in ten say they are church members.

Fairbury, Nebraska — Faith Lutheran Church dedicated their new church building on June 9, 1991. Dr. Francis Monseth, AFLC Seminary Dean, preached at the morning worship service. Faith Lutheran was accepted into the AFLC earlier this year. Rev. Ray Klug is the pastor.

THE SOUL'S THIRST FOR GOD

"As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" (Psalm 42:1-2).

In our last article, we wrote about intercessory prayer. It is needed so desperately in the Church, and yet so sadly lacking. The result is that the Church is often weak and ineffective as it seeks to build the Kingdom in an unfriendly world.

Today I ask you to think with me on a different aspect of prayer. We find David expressing a desire for fellowship with God akin to that of a deer, hard-hunted, who thirsts for the cooling water from the brook. It pants for that water. Is my prayer life motivated by such a thirst for God that it becomes a priority in my life? Then all my other needs, goals and desires will be completely set aside for that time to simply be in God's presence, for one purpose only and that to spend time with the Almighty.

Skippy was only a mongrel, but he did a spectacular thing. His feat made the newspaper columns from coast to coast. This is what happened.

Skippy's owners were moving from the coast to the Midwest. It didn't seem advisable to take the dog with them, so before the van pulled away, they gave their little pet to a neighbor. It was only a short time after they arrived at their new destination that they received a letter from these friends, saying that the dog was missing. He was simply gone; where, they didn't know. Eight months passed with no trace of the little dog. Then one day, way out in the midwestern Minnesota town, someone heard a frantic pawing at the door. To their utter amazement there was Skippy on the doorstep. His paws were bruised and bleeding after nosing out his family over eighteen hundred miles of strange roads. But it was Skippy, happy as a furiously wagging tail could say it, to be reunited with his own.

Skippy was only a mongrel, but he possessed the capacity to find his way across the country to be reunited with his family. God has created us for fellowship with Himself. We find rest and peace only in God. Because of the riches of His grace, we can know peace and have that fellowship with our Creator and Redeemer.

On our journey through life, we face burdens and heartaches. We have our crosses to carry. But "there is a place of quiet rest, near to the heart of God." Only God can satisfy the thirsting of our souls.

To desire to be in God's presence and to find it our greatest delight is the secret to a richer life of prayer.

— Richard Snipstead



AFLTS Summer Institute

July 22 — August 2

Studies in I Corinthians, Rev. Ralph Tjelta, Instructor
Music in the Congregation,

Rev. Don Greven, Instructor

Themes from Exodus, Rev. Phil Haugen, Instructor

Biblical Principles of Disciple-Making,

Dr. Steve Lombardo, Instructor

The Person and Work of Christ,

Dr. Fran Monseth, Instructor

Introduction to New Testament Greek,

Rev. Philip Haugen, Instructor

Register at:

Association Free Lutheran

Theological Seminary

3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.

Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLBS Ambassadors Schedule

July 1— Kalispell, Montana

July 2— Spokane, Washington

July 3— Eugene, Oregon

July 5— Murrieta, California

July 5— 7 a.m., Palmdale, California

July 5— 7 p.m., Camarillo, California

July 9— Nogales, Arizona

July 10— Tucson, Arizona

July 11— Tulia, Texas (Tentative)

July 12— Wichita Falls, Texas

July 14— Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

July 15-19— National Luther League Convention

July 21— a.m., Fairbury, Nebraska

July 21— p.m., Radcliffe, Iowa

July 23— Scandia Lutheran, Glenwood, Minnesota

July 24— Upsala, Minnesota

July 25— Bluegrass, Minnesota

July 28— a.m., Medicine Lake, Minneapolis, Minnesota

July 28— p.m., Kenyon, Minnesota

July 29— Chillicothe, Illinois

July 30— DeKalb, Illinois

August 1— Canal Winchester, Ohio

August 3-10— Tuscarora Inn, Pennsylvania

August 11— a.m., Massapequa, New York

August 11— p.m., Stanhope, New Jersey (Tentative)

August 13— Walden, New York

August 14— Ambridge, Pennsylvania

August 15— Chesterland, Ohio (Tentative)

August 16— Newark, Illinois

August 18— a.m., Milford, Illinois

August 18— p.m., Wheatland, Iowa

August 20— Ontonagon, Michigan

August 21— Pelkie, Michigan

August 22— Ishpeming, Michigan

August 23— Escanaba, Michigan

August 25— a.m., Amery, Wisconsin

August 25— p.m., Coon Rapids, Minnesota

Christians Fall For Hoaxes

—by Doug Trouten

Washington, D.C. (EP) — Have you heard the one about Madalyn Murray O'Hair trying to ban religious broadcasting? Millions have, and though there's no truth to the rumor, that hasn't kept protest mail from clogging up the Federal Communications Commission's Washington office.

You've probably been exposed to this hoax through its most common form: a photocopied petition, warning "Madalyn Murray O'Hair, an atheist, whose efforts successfully eliminated the use of Bible reading and prayer from all public schools fifteen years ago, has been granted a federal hearing in Washington, D.C. ... The petition, R.H. 2493, would ultimately pave the way to stop the reading of the Gospel on the air waves of America ... Madalyn is also

campaigning to remove all Christmas programs, Christmas songs and Christmas carols from public schools."

The often-photocopied form says that one million signed petitions are needed, and that "This would defeat Mrs. O'Hair and show that there are many Christians alive and well and concerned in our country." Readers are urged to sign and mail an attached form to the FCC, and to make ten copies of the flier to give to friends and relatives.

The hoax has generated enough response that the FCC has "religious petition" as one of the options you can select with your touch-tone phone when calling the agency's computerized switchboard. That triggers a recorded message declaring that the "rumors are absolutely false," and that "over the past 15 years this agency has received over 30 million pieces of mail on this subject."

FCC spokesperson Maureen Perati-

no says that despite repeated efforts to kill the rumor, it remains alive and well. "It holds steady," she says. "We receive a couple of million pieces of mail each year. We don't see any let up in the phone calls, either. Our consumer assistance office handles anywhere from 200 to 300 phone calls a month on this, and our field offices may be receiving similar numbers."

Not only isn't there a petition to ban religious broadcasting, but no such petition would have a chance of succeeding, says Peratino. "Under the First Amendment the Commission does not involve itself in the programming content of radio and television stations ... There's nothing under the First Amendment or in the Communications Act that would allow the Commission to ban any particular type of programming."

The FCC petition hoax is perhaps the best-known of a number of rumors continued on p. 16

God grants liberty only to those who love it, and are always ready to guard it.

— Daniel Webster

Rev. Herbert Franz, Dollar Bay, Michigan, has accepted a call to serve as the pastor of Grace Free Lutheran Church, Pelkie, Michigan. He will also continue to provide interim service for Redeemer, Ontonagon. Pastor and Mrs. Franz will still live in their home at Dollar Bay.

Paul Pillman, who attended AFLTS this past school year, has accepted a call to serve as lay pastor of Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, Zumbrota, Minnesota. Pastor Pillman, his wife, Josie, and their five children, returned to the U.S. in 1990 from

Ecuador, after ten years of service there with the World Mission Prayer League. Their new address, effective July 1, will be 815 West Avenue, Zumbrota, MN 55992.

Rev. Michael Brandt, Cloquet, Minnesota, accepted a home mission call to serve Abiding Savior Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, beginning in late summer. He has been the senior pastor of St. Paul's, Cloquet, since 1987.

The new address for **Rev. Dennis Gray** is Box M, Greenbush, MN 56726.

Milford, Illinois — St. John's Church will host their annual Fourth of July prayer breakfast and worship service, beginning at 6:30 a.m. Rev. Harry Gimberg, DeKalb, Illinois, will be the guest speaker, with the theme, "Freedom Isn't Free." All are welcome, and no reservations are required.

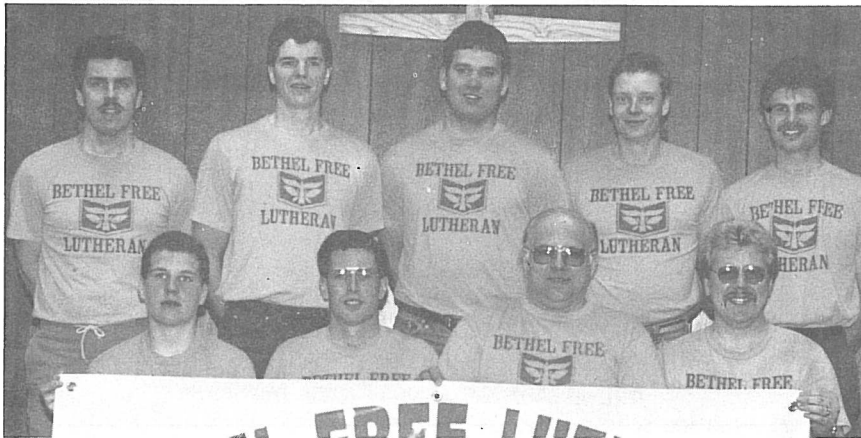
Eben Junction, Michigan — Calvary Church will celebrate the 25th anniversary of her organization as an AFLC congregation on September 1. Rev. Jim Johnson, a son of the church, and Rev. Herbert Franz, will be the guest speakers.

Mason, Wisconsin — Our Savior's Church hosted an ethnic dinner on June 2. Numerous unusual foods were shared, making this fellowship dinner something quite special.

DeKalb, Illinois — Grace Free Lutheran Church enjoyed several special services recently, beginning with a Sunday evening concert on Memorial Day weekend by "The Witnesses."

Rev. Harold Schafer, first pastor of the congregation, and his wife were special guests on Sunday, June 2, in celebration of the final payment on the church mortgage. The morning worship hour duplicated the service first used in the new building.

An outdoor service was held on the second Sunday in June at the Froeming home, followed by a picnic lunch and lots of fun and games. "Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good ..." (Psalm 136:1).



Minot, North Dakota — Bethel Free Lutheran Church captured the 1991 Minot Christian Athletic Association Basketball Championship, pictured are: (back row) Craig Storseth, Pastor Jerry Moan, Jason Olson, Jamie Routledge, Roger Spelhaug; (front row) Trevor Manteufel, John Odland, Ed Manteufel, Dennis Jacobsen. Not pictured, Ross Johnson.

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences -- February 1 - May 31, 1991

FUND	TOTAL BUDGET	REC'D IN MAY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	%* TOTAL
General Fund	\$ 276,830.00	\$14,333.12	\$61,152.75	22
Schools - (AFLTS) ..	151,900.00	7,565.03	24,768.85	16
(AFLBS) ..	193,950.00	11,901.54	35,625.48	18
Home Missions.	433,616.00	16,064.17	91,064.84	21
World Missions.	373,715.00	19,626.76	70,184.35	19
Capital Investment ..	25,000.00	969.54	10,026.31	40
Parish Education ...	62,670.00	1,788.56	7,648.27	12
ARC	20,000.00	176.09	2,254.50	11
TOTALS ...	\$1,537,681.00	\$72,424.81	\$302,725.35	20
1990 - 1991	\$1,441,565.00	\$81,691.28	\$293,133.18	20

*Goal 33%

Church Prayer Alert

A news update provided by World Relief and its unique network of evangelical churches worldwide.

Bangladesh —

The death toll after a 140-mile-an-hour cyclone slammed into Bangladesh may reach 200,000 according to Paul Munshi, World Relief's director in the country. "It is so terrible, I can't describe it," Paul reported by phone after seeing bodies of people and animals floating everywhere. Poisonous snakes also are a life-threatening danger for survivors. Water as deep as 15 to 20 feet still covers much of the land near Noakhali and Chittagong. Pray that 25 workers and volunteers mobilized can provide food, medicine, clothing, blankets and shelter to avoid greater counts in an ever-climbing death toll.

Turkey/Iraq —

While military troops set up refugee camps for thousands of Kurdish refugees, their health needs are still life-threatening. "According to the people on the ground now, the health needs are still severe," reports Richard Anderson, World Relief's Middle East director. When Anderson was in the Turkish and Iraqi mountain camps he saw refugees with nerve and chemical burns caused by Saddam Hussein's deadly bomb arsenal. "We're being asked to send in a special medical team of two doctors and four nurses by this Friday," Anderson added on May 6. Ask for God's continued provision for the Kurdish refugees and for World Relief's ability to meet their ongoing medical needs.

Peru —

Within just a few weeks, churches on the scene have been devastated by an earthquake — measuring 6.8 on the Richter scale; a cholera epidemic; and ongoing persecution of the church by leftist guerrillas who recently attacked a Pentecostal congregation and killed 33 worshippers. Cholera is threatening about 150,000 people now in Peru and could spread throughout South and Latin Americas where an estimated

120 million people are vulnerable to the disease. At one time, health experts could not get supplies for dehydrated children in the Middle East because supplies were being used at such a rapid rate in Peru.

Costa Rica/Panama —

An earthquake rocked these countries April 22, registering 7.4 on the Richter Scale. Many evangelical churches serve in this area and are ready to help as many of the countries' estimated 17,000 homeless as possible. But the churches also have faced severe hardship. The Assemblies of God lost 27 churches when the quake hit. World Relief has dispatched a team leader to Costa Rica to explore ways of helping families rebuild their homes. Following a deadly earthquake in El Salvador, World Relief helped evangelical churches organize a housing reconstruction project where 5,000 families rebuilt their own homes with help from local churches. Pray that God would open doors so the church can organize again to respond in this disastrous situation.

Liberia —

Gus Marwieh, the first president of the Association of Evangelicals of Liberia, recently said he sees the church playing a large role in the reconstruction of his homeland, devastated first by war and now by famine. With a devastated economy, food is in short supply — and expensive. Twenty Liberian dollars for one cup of rice, fish for \$15 and a small pineapple for \$12.

Rwanda —

Since last fall, residents have been trying to recover from a surprise invasion of their country when rebel forces killed hundreds of civilians. Gary Scheer of the Conservative Baptist Foreign Mission Society reports: "Rwanda is in for a long time of rebel attacks and economic hardship that could easily become a severe famine, depending on crop production and distribution in the coming months. The north is the bread basket of the country, and it is the most affected by the attacks."

Burkina Faso —

Seventeen of Burkina Faso's 30 provinces had poor or no fall harvests, creating the need for immediate food relief. "We are facing a catastrophe. We estimate that 90 percent of the fields have been completely destroyed by drought in many areas. The people are facing the future with nothing," says Herbert H. Nehlsen, a veteran Christian and Missionary Alliance missionary on the scene. Pray for World Relief's response through local churches in the region.

Malawi —

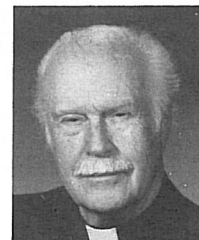
More than 500 people are dead and 150,000 homeless following a severe flood and resulting mud slides in Malawi. Through local Nazarene congregations, World Relief is providing food, clothing and temporary shelter.

The international assistance arm of the National Association of Evangelicals, USA, P.O. Box WRC, Wheaton, IL 60189. Phone, 1-800-535-LIFE.

If the Son
therefore
shall make
you free,
you shall be
free indeed.

— John 8:36

The Progress of the Pilgrim



—by Dr. Howard B. Franzen
Hastings, Nebraska

Through the Valley of the Shadow of Death

We humans face two essential crises during our existence. These are living and dying. Left on our own resources, we do not do a very good job of either one.

John Bunyan, in "Pilgrim's Progress," depicts the main character, "Christian," as experiencing one spiritual trauma after another as he goes through life from lost to saved. At one perilous point, Bunyan has Christian confronted with the "Valley of the Shadow of Death."

Christian had already been given a glimpse of "Immanuel's Land" (Heaven and Eternal Life), but had to pass through the "Valley of Humiliation." Bunyan writes: "Now at the end of this Valley was another, called the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and Christian must go through it, because the way to the Celestial City was through the midst of it. Now, this Valley is a very solitary place. The Prophet Jeremiah describes it: 'A wilderness, a land of deserts and of pits, a land of drought,

and of the Shadow of Death, a land that no man (but a Christian) passeth through, and where no man dwelt.'"

Christian asked two men who had seen the Valley of the Shadow of Death what it was like. They told him: "Why, the Valley itself, which is as dark as pitch; we also saw there the Hobgoblins, Satyrs, and Dragons of the Pit; we heard also in that Valley a continual howling and yelling, as of a people under unutterable misery, who sat bound in affliction and irons; and over the Valley hangs the discouraging clouds of Confusion; Death also doth always spread his wings over it. In a word, it is every whit dreadful, being utterly without Order."

One of the great solaces for our spiritual existence is Psalm 23:4, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me ..." Perhaps in our technological world, John Bunyan's pictorial conceptualization of the Valley of the Shadow of Death does not fit. We have progressed too far in our march of modernity to conceive of the reality of Hobgoblins, Satyrs, and Dragons of the Pit. Yet the fundamental feature presented by Bunyan is an absolute. There is death! The shadow of death is always at hand. The shadow is the reminder that I will die.

Interesting, is it not, that in the darkness, shadows do not show? So it is with the lost and unsaved. Loving the darkness, the unsaved see no shadow. In their spiritual blindness, they deny death. They will neither see nor want to admit the inevitability and certainty of death. One can ask if the shadow of death is still there in the darkness? Yes, it only needs the Light

to reveal it. But the Light, Jesus the Light of the World, makes the shadow look different.

We speak of three deaths, spiritual death, physical death, and eternal death. Of these three, the only one we cannot avoid is physical death. Here is where the shadow hangs over the human personality. But spiritual and eternal death we need not endure. In Christ we have life, both temporal and eternal. In Christ, the threat of the shadow is gone.

Yet what of the word, "valley"? This word from a psychological orientation conjures up in our minds images of things negative; such as down in the dumps, feelings of despair, depression, doubt, uncertainty and anxiety. We like mountaintop experiences. As I travel through any mountain range, I know that for the mountains there will be the valleys. Some valleys are beautiful. Some valleys are hideous. Death Valley, California, is no "heaven on earth." So we do live in our own spiritual valleys, which can be desolate. As we face death, we can feel abandoned. Also, when we begin to sense a gap between us and God, we are experiencing a foretaste of death, for we define death as eternal separation from God.

If this is death, what then is life? Jesus said that He came that we may have life. "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth on Me, though he die, yet shall he live." Yes, the shadow of death is with us. But because of the cross and the empty tomb, the shadow of death has lost its fearful grip on our lives, for we see it as it is. The shadow in the valley leads us to the mountain of salvation, and Jesus is surely King of the mountain!

from a
counselor's
study

A WORD OF CAUTION FOR AMERICAN CHRISTIANS

Happy Fourth of July! Independence Day will be celebrated this year with a new excitement and enthusiasm, as the people of the United States of America seem to have recovered a renewed spirit of patriotism in the wake of the Persian Gulf War. The stores are still selling the Desert Storm trinkets and trivia, and it appears that the U.S. flag and the yellow ribbon are major fashion accessories of the season.

The Lutheran Ambassador joins in celebrating the renewal with this special patriotic issue. Our readers in Canada and other nations are asked to be patient with us, and are encouraged to apply the various articles and expressions of love for country to their own lands.

A word of caution is necessary, however. It was disturbing and discouraging to hear our president speak of those who died during the current conflict as going on to a better place. Any expressions of "crusade" theology that promise a place in heaven to all who die in battle (on our side) are not acceptable to Bible-believing Christians, and should not be promoted or even tolerated in silence.

Patriotism can become another false "ism" when we lose sight of the fact that American and Christian are not necessarily the same. Only Jesus saves! An uncritical love for country can blind us to the crying need for revival in our nation, a need that becomes even more crucial in light of world events.

Yes, to echo Pastor Conradson's call earlier in this issue, may God continue to bless America! Our blessings are boundless, not because we are so good, but because God is so gracious. Convinced that the greatest blessing of all is the knowledge of salvation, let us be committed anew to the proclamation of sin and grace, so that more and more citizens of America might also become citizens of heaven.

THREE WORDS

It is time, once again, to say both a word of welcome and a word of farewell to several writers. Rev. Alvin Larson concluded his series for "Light on the Way" in the last issue, and Rev. Kermitt Grundahl will minister to our readers through this column for the remainder of the year. Rev. Howard Franzen soon concludes his series. "From a Counselor's Study," and we will commence a new one by Rev. John Abel, AFLC missionary-evangelist.

The third word is one of appreciation. Rev. Larson's meditations were rich with Scripture references, and helped us to reflect on some of the foundational doctrines of our faith. I

especially appreciated his emphasis on the blood of Christ and justification by grace through faith. Dr. Franzen's unique series also focused on foundational truth, and his use of "Pilgrim's Progress" as a vehicle to present it was readable and refreshing.

Thank you to all who write for *The Lutheran Ambassador*, whether it be one article, or many. This ministry depends on the commitment of many dedicated Christians, and I pray that you might be blessed in your service even as the Lord is using you to be a blessing to others.

HURTING PEOPLE AND HARD HEARTS

Bangladesh, Iraq, Liberia ... so the list continues as the news reports show us the hungry and homeless, the diseased and dying, in these areas of the world that have been devastated by war and natural disasters. The cry for help from multitudes of hurting people cannot be ignored.

You will read elsewhere in this issue a "church prayer alert" from World Relief, the international assistance arm of the National Association of Evangelicals, but it is probably already outdated, as new reports of additional calamities come from other nations. So the list grows longer.

The scope of these disasters is almost too enormous for us to comprehend, and the frequency of appeals for aid adds to our sense of hopelessness and helplessness. What can I do, after all, in the face of such appalling tragedies? Any gift that I could give would only be a drop in the bucket. Also, reports of aid that never reaches the needy and agencies that channel most of their contributions to overhead increase our feelings of frustration. A definite hardness dulls our hearts to the pathetic pleas for help from the hosts of hurting people. Some call it "compassion fatigue."

The Holy Spirit still melts hard hearts. You and I cannot meet every need, but we can meet some of them. Yes, there are ministries to maintain and buildings to build, and this is certainly the Lord's work, too. But has He not also given us enough to share with some whose broken bodies and empty stomachs make some of our earthbound concerns seem insignificant in comparison?

Gifts to World Relief can be channeled through the AFLC offices. "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for Me'" (Matthew 25:40).

Our civilization cannot survive materially unless it be redeemed spiritually. It can be saved only by becoming permeated with the spirit of Christ and being made free and happy by the practices which spring out of the spirit. Only thus can discontent be driven out and all the shadows lifted from the road ahead..

—Woodrow Wilson

HOAXES

that have taken root in the Christian community. There are other "Christian legends," none of which can be substantiated:

- * The president of Procter and Gamble is falsely alleged to have appeared on Phil Donahue's talk show and admitted that his company gives its profits to the Church of Satan, and that its familiar "moon and stars" logo is a satanic symbol. Variations have had the president of McDonald's appearing on "The Tonight Show," and Liz Claiborn appearing on "Oprah" to make similar admissions about their corporate ties to satanism.

- * NASA scientists are reported to have been puzzled while calculating the historical orbits of the planets because of a "missing day." In this legend their dilemma was resolved when a Christian member of the team showed them passages in the Bible where God stopped the sun. The stoppages, we're told, exactly equalled the unaccounted for "missing time" that had stumped the scientists.

- * The Christian version of the "Vanishing Hitchhiker" story has a person, often a pastor, stopping to pick up a hitchhiker, who delivers a prophetic warning (often of Christ's imminent return), then vanishes. The hitchhiker is often assumed to be an angel of Jesus Christ. This story recently turned up in Australia and New Zealand.

- * Amsterdam and Brussels are popular locations for a rumored super computer that the anti-Christ will use to usher in his one-world government. The computer, said to be nicknamed "The Beast" by its operators, will contain information about every person on earth. Some versions of the story have "666" as the code command that activates the computer's plan for world domination.

- * Another legend with a "666" component has a retired pastor or missionary going to the social security office to get a check for a missed payment. In this rumor, the director of the office provides a check with the number "666" in the lower left corner, then hurriedly takes it back, explaining that

a mistake has been made that those checks aren't to be distributed yet.

- * Scientists in the Soviet Union are alleged to have drilled a hole straight to Hell. In this story, scientists on an oil drilling platform in the North Sea drilling the deepest hole ever stopped when they heard human screams of anguish and smelled sulphur, leading them to conclude that they had drilled right into Hell. This supermarket tabloid story was recently reported as truth by the Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN). A bogus English-language translation of a non-existent Norwegian account of the incident was sent to TBN as a hoax by someone who wanted to see if the network would bother to check its sources; TBN didn't check.

In September of 1989, Bob Passantino delivered a paper at the Evangelical Ministries to New Religions conference in Rockford, Illinois, that touched on the Christian community's susceptibility to fanciful stories like the FCC petition hoax.

Passantino says that the consequences of Christian gullibility go beyond the time wasted fighting a non-existent petition.

"It's not just a 29-cent stamp we're wasting," he says. "It's our credibility. Our credibility is on the line ... People might think if Christians are stupid enough to fall for this falsehood, maybe early Christians were gullible enough to fall for the resurrection story. In my

view, there are consequences."

Passantino offers several tips for identifying false legends. "Be extra cautious if the story fits any of the following characteristics," he warns.

- * "There's no evidence to back it up. Sometimes there is no evidence because of the very nature of the story. That doesn't mean such a story can't be true; it just means that it's not a story that can be considered trustworthy research. At most, it's an illustration or example."

- * "Its strongest commendation is that it ought to be true. Be careful that you are not persuaded to believe a particular story simply because you wish it to be true. This can be a strong temptation, but don't give in to it. God won't excuse us for supporting made-up stories because they served a useful purpose."

Rensselaer, Indiana (EP) — A federal judge ruled that the Rensselaer, Indiana, school district can allow representatives of The Gideons International to distribute Bibles to fifth grade students.

Chicago, Illinois (EP) — In an effort to cope with less-than-projected revenues, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) terminated sixteen persons on May 10. Another nine positions are being eliminated through attrition, as people retire or leave positions voluntarily. In all, the ELCA is reducing its 1991 spending by \$5.2 million.