

# 1993 AFLC Bible Camps

p. 3 - 6



## THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

June 8, 1993



### A Century of Faith 1893 - 1993

Immanuel Lutheran Church  
Centerville, South Dakota

# THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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## THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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## CONTENTS

A Vacation That Encourages Your Vocation	p. 3
The Bible Camp Experience	p. 4
Campfire Echoes	p. 5
1993 AFLC Bible Camps	p. 6
Dissent and Dissension	p. 7
AFLBS Summer Teams	p. 10

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## God's Plan for the World

### Romans 11

**A**s we conclude our study of the first 11 chapters of Romans, we can summarize this study: 1) God always has a witness. There shall be followers of God until Jesus comes again. 2) God continues to forgive repentant sinners. 3) God will achieve His plan for the world in spite of wayward, faithless and sinning people, so that indeed "all things do work together for good to them that are in Christ Jesus." 4) God will ultimately punish those who remain unrepentant, hardened sinners.

When we study chapter 11:1-7b, we discover great comfort. We are not alone. What is your reaction when you hear of Christian beliefs and standards not only rejected but ridiculed? How do you feel when you hear that books are used in our public schools which expressly deny biblical truths? When you do, take heart: God has always preserved a witness.

Throughout history we have illustrations of saints who were saved from destruction "as though by fire." Lot is a prime example. We could name many more. The history of Israel is one example of God's long suffering patience. Numerous times they were chastened after which they repented and were forgiven and restored to grace. But let it be understood: one may receive forgiveness but sin's consequences remain!

This brings us to the third point. God will cause all things to work for good to those in Christ Jesus. The basis point of Romans 11 is: God's chosen people, to whom the Messiah had been promised, rejected Him! This was not God's will. He willeth that all men be saved but God used man's disobedience to bring about His will for the good of those "who are in Christ Jesus."

Israel's rejection of Jesus resulted in Christ's crucifixion, which in turn was used by God for the salvation for all mankind. Further, the rejection caused God's offer of salvation to be directed to the Gentile world. That is you and me! That action is so beautifully illustrated by Jesus Himself in Luke 14.

## Light on the Way

The Jews were invited to the "Great Supper" but they rejected His invitation. The supper is the banquet of salvation. The master (God) sent His servants (the missionaries, pastors and Christian workers) to the highways and byways (Rome, Corinth, Europe and your hometown U.S.A.) that His house may be full!

The Lord continues today, in spite of wayward, sinning, faithless people, to make all things work together for good to those in Christ.

But just as we ought to be grateful, let us never become presumptuous and arrogant of His love and grace (v. 17-24). For if God (v. 17) breaks off the natural branches on his olive tree (Israel, God's chosen people), don't assume (v. 21) that God will not break you off! We who are Gentiles are grafted in. So whether Jew or Gentile, you will go lost if, in arrogance (v. 20), you no longer accept Christ as your Lord.

Note in the closing verses of chapter 11 that God will punish the unrepentant, even while accomplishing His will for the world. There is little room for the followers of "eternal security" in this chapter; nor is there hope for the universalist.

Chapter 11 closes with a doxology. The doctrinal teachings are over. The practical results are illustrated in the closing chapters. May these brief comments from the first 11 chapters strengthen your foundational faith and give you courage to share this Good News to Jerusalem, Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the earth. Let us occupy until He comes. May we, with John in Revelation, pray: "Even so come Lord Jesus." Amen.



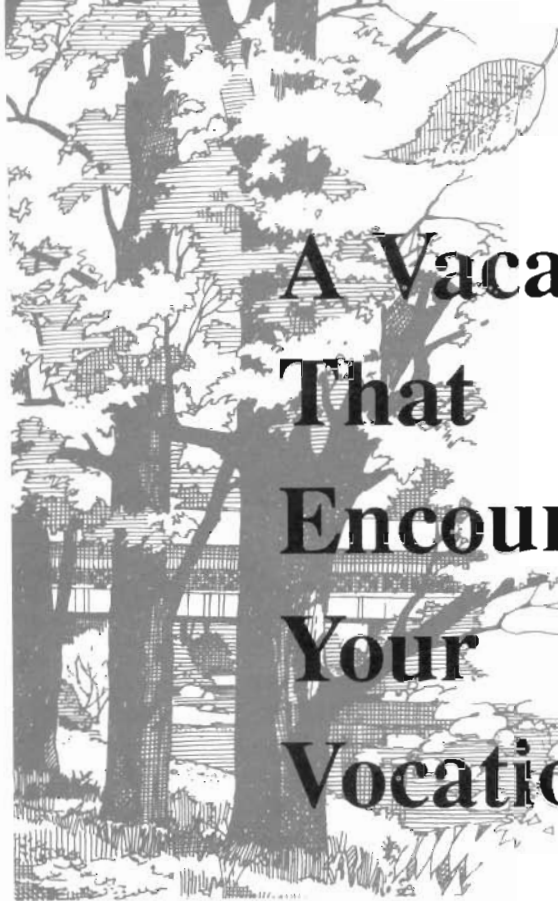
— by Rev.  
Lloyd Bjornlie

Let's take a vacation! Why not? You have one coming! You've been working pretty hard lately and you're due a little rest. Good reasoning, I'd say! But what happens if a person comes home tired from that vacation? That's a possibility.

Well, let's find one that won't demand driving! But then what about the expense of it all? It would be cheaper to just stay home — relax, go to the park, visit the friends and neighbors and catch up on a book or two.

A Christian needs a vacation that will encourage his vocation! Most of us know what a vacation means, but what about our vocation. The vocation is a "person's divine call to a state of union or salvation with God or Christ," (The World Book Encyclopedia Dictionary). This is different from the occupation you have been seeking to fulfill for a few years or more. That means work — the work a person does regularly or to earn his living. Even though one may enjoy his occupation, he or she will need a vacation. Then, no doubt some of you reading this article may already be retired. If so, then your occupation may be completed and you have occupied yourself with a hobby. If so you are still living with your vocation. But what about one's "vocation"? Whether I'm in my occupation or on a vacation, I am still the same person with the same name and address and the same divine call from Christ who give me a very wonderful vocation. The question now arises, how best can a person strengthen and increase the blessing of "vocation"? Might I make a suggestion to you? Take time to attend Family Bible Camp! You may have that on your agenda already, or you may have yet to consider it for the summer. However, your taking a week for Bible camp will be a blessing far beyond what you may have in mind. May I suggest a few reasons for my encouragement to you?

First of all, just as Jesus invited His disciples to take some time with Him; He is also sending out an invitation to you to come and spend some time with Him and His work. Yes it is true that you can study your Bible at home and join your friends in church for weekly Bible study. Yet, this is different. This is a time in God's Word that involves the extent of a week. I am sure that you would agree, a concentration upon Him in His Word will have much more impact upon your life than one day a week. His Word has power! Power to convict of sin means a personal time with Jesus! Only until He can clean house (heart), can He fill it with great blessings. Through the study and the preaching of His Word, God not only gives freedom to repent, but



# A Vacation That Encourages Your Vocation

a time to replenish that heart with the fruits of His Spirit. **Come to camp! Come** just as you are! Give Jesus the freedom to do His good work of renewing!

Second, you are very important to your family! Whether it be your own family at home, your church family, or the family you will become a part of at camp! As an individual, our Lord Jesus has many blessings for you! **Come just as you are!** Bring your family, bring your friends, bring your relatives; but know that Jesus has a personal blessing for you. Then, when He can make that real; all others who are important to you, will soon feel the effect.

Third, you have a real calling in your work, family, church, or fellowship at home. The week of camp can be a week of rest in the Word and the fellowship of believers in order to strengthen you to meet the trials, temptations, and fears that will come your way at home.

Well, how long will it last? It will last as long as you walk with Jesus! Bible camp will get you on His trail. Living daily in Him when you get home will keep you on the trail.

Family Bible Camp is an experience you won't want to miss. I can assure you that it has made a big difference in my life. (Since Jesus is the maker of the big difference, He is the One to make that difference continue.



—Rev.  
Harvey Jackson  
Ishpeming, Michigan

# The Bible Camp Experience

**B**ible camp is a special event! While the Luther League Convention is important, nothing can replace Bible camp. Everyone can gain something from attending camp. Don't miss out.

God calls all of us to "come apart" and sit at Jesus' feet and learn of Him. Bible camp is a place to renew your personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and to grow in Christ. We are to do as Peter admonishes in II Peter 3:18: "But grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Literally hundreds of hours go into the preparation of our AFLC Bible camps. Many Spirit-led ministers will be at our camps preaching and teaching the Word of God.

More important than all else is the fact that many people throughout the church are praying for our camps! Over the years, God has visibly answered those prayers. Each year a number of people respond to the Lord! We are grateful for the many changed lives.

Thousands of dollars are also spent on our camps. Much of the money must come from those of us who have been touched by the Lord at camp. This funding comes outside of the regular budgets for individual camp periods. Not only is the investment of dollars needed but also the numerous volunteers who serve as counselors, life guards, cooks, recreation directors and camp managers. We thank God for each willing servant.

Everyone involved in camping this summer will join with those from previous years in saying: "Seek first the Kingdom of God ..." Have you ever experienced the thrill of being used of God to lead someone to Jesus at Bible camp? Have you prayed for the salvation of a friend and then saw that individual come to the Lord in repentance and confession of sins? Ask Him how you might be used in the camping ministry this summer.

Bible camps do not just happen. Promotion is important! Please do not simply announce camp. Promote camp by talking to each young person and parents regarding your area's camp. Raise funds to help people, even families attend a camp. This is certainly a part of your congregation's outreach and evangelistic efforts.

Introduce your congregation to camping by taking time on a Sunday morning to promote the special opportunity. Perhaps your VBS children can even spend a day at your camp facility. Pastor, you need to be involved. Your confirmation students know you and will respond to God's urging through you. Young people, be strong. Make your stand and urge others to join you.

After camp enjoy a sharing time together. Sing the hymns and songs learned at camp. Pray and share together. Let us allow Jesus to renew our hearts and give us what is needed for today and the future.

— by Rev. Dennis Gray  
Youth Resources Director



Chapel time at Lake Bronson, 1977.



Coffee time at Lake Geneva, 1970.

# Campfire Echoes

For us in the Pacific Northwest, Bible camp starts not at a park gate, but at a dock as we board a Washington State ferry bound for Orcas Island in the Straits of Juan De Fuca. We leave shore and in a very physical and spiritual sense set ourselves apart from the world to study, meditate and rest in God's Word.

When our children were young, we enjoyed pointing out God's creation as evidence of His love and care for us. The deer and rabbits, flowers and tall trees all spoke of His majesty to their tender hearts.

Our older children are now into their teens and have made trips to Bible camp on their own. Amy and Alivia's fondest memories are of campfires held at the lake each evening. As they heard testimonies, the sharing of Scripture and praises to Him for answered prayer, they saw even more evidence of God's love and care for them. These evenings remain and His testimony continues to speak to their hearts.

Over the years at Bible camp, we thank our Lord that our teens have grown from seeing God in nature to experiencing His saving love and sharing Him in their own lives. Bible camp certainly has been a rich part of their spiritual education and life.

—Al and Trinna Tollefson  
Astoria, Oregon

Lake Geneva Bible Camp near Alexandria, Minnesota, site of the first AFLC family camps, holds many fond memories for the Skramstad family of Valley City, North Dakota. Adeline Skramstad was one of the camp cooks from 1963-68. Her husband, Orien, was on the KP staff until he defected to the canteen, where sons Tim and Ted assisted. Adeline stills recalls the day she and Edna Dahl, Hampden, North Dakota, first stepped inside the kitchen and were overwhelmed by the size.

The cooks' days began at 5 a.m. The beautiful sunrises are permanently etched into Adeline's memory. Pearl Aanstad and Mrs. Peterson were in charge of the dining room and the coffee hours. Cliff Holm and Sheldon and Delores Mortrud were other faithful staff members.

One day Sheldon saw Adeline stretching to reach the serving counter. Soon a cement block appeared to bring some relief. This caring family spirit always prevailed. Teenagers took turns using a dishtowel after each meal. The cooks often were asked to heat baby bottles and a young boy named Charlie always asked for cornbread every morning. The washing machine in the back shed was well used as the clothes line was perpetually full of dish towels

drying in the breeze along with an occasional family emergency. The last meal count Adeline remembers was "meals for 500."

One of the favorite Skramstad stories told is the time when Nathaniel Abel decided to "cool off" in the decorative water fountain located in the hub of the camp. The year that the Mortruds added Cindy to their family brought commotion as there was always someone wanting to push her stroller throughout the day. What a joy it was to watch families growing up as they returned to camp each year.

For the Skramstad kids, we knew we were "big" when we could stay in one of the dormitories instead of in the family cabin. Dorm life included having your room cleaned for inspection each morning; unless you got the mumps like Ted. Of course the pillow fights, new friends and devotions were part of the special times in the dorm.

Waiting in the crisp morning air in those long breakfast lines had all campers fully awake by the time we stepped into the warmth of the dining hall. We still hear the bell ringing to call us to chapel or meals. Who can forget the exciting Bible stories told by Priscilla Wold and Pastor Abel! Afternoons were filled with swimming or swinging, depending upon your age.

Sometimes we take Bible camp for granted. It seems there are always one or two camps a year near our home. But when it was not possible to go, we realized how much we missed it! Our years in the military did not permit us to attend AFLC Bible Camps, and now I appreciate them more than ever.

I have blessed memories of Bible Camps within our church. When I was nine years old, my family attended our first AFLC camp at Lake Geneva, near Alexandria, Minnesota. It was there that I understood and received assurance of salvation in Jesus Christ. I will never forget the teachers who spoke to me of the Savior. My spiritual awareness was deepened as I saw adults and children speak openly of Christ in classes and testimony meetings.

Since then, many Bible camp memories have been added. The beauty and quietness of the camp setting accompanied by God's Word, have brought blessings and growth in my walk with Christ.

—by Mrs. Ruth Antal  
Leeds, North Dakota

The canteen quenched our thirst and satisfied our sweet tooth. It was here that Sonja Mortrud taught us how to blow into a pop bottle to make it sound like a train whistle.

The highlight of the day was the evening service. Even the cooks got to sit down and worship. We loved to sing, and what a camp choir we had! After family services, the young people would gather for a bonfire and a time of singing and sharing testimonies. Remember the cross burning adrift on Lake Geneva?

Those days at Lake Geneva hold special memories for all of its campers, but the best ones are the friendships made in Christ. Some people we have not seen since. The song we learned at camp is true: "When we all get to Heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be!"

—by Adeline Skramstad and  
Becky (Skramstad) Schroeder  
Valley City, North Dakota

# 1993 AFLC Bible Camps

## **Association Retreat Center, Osceola, Wisconsin**

Youth Camp: June 21-26

Speakers: Missionaries Dale and Karen Smith

Family Camp: July 4-10

Speakers: Rev. Ralph Tjelta and Rev. Dave Keippela

Family Camp: August 1-7

Speakers: Rev. Gary Jorgenson and Rev. Terry Olson

## **Galilee Bible Camp, Lake Bronson, Minnesota (N. Minnesota District)**

Teen Camp: June 8-13

Speakers: Rev. James L. Johnson, Mr. Bob Halvorson and the Cornerstone Gospel Team

Youth Camp: June 22-26

Speakers: Rev. Paul Larson, Rev. Donald Greven and the Cornerstone Gospel Team

Family Camp: July 11-17

Speakers: Rev. Mark Molstre, Rev. Craig Wentzel, Missionaries David and Paul Abel

## **Cooperstown Bible Camp, (Eastern North Dakota District)**

Youth Camp: June 6-11

Speakers: Rev. Al Monson and Mr. Bob Halvorson

## **Luther League Federation Convention, Estes Park, Colorado**

June 28-July 3

## **Bethany Youth Camps, Bemidji, Minnesota (North Central Minnesota District)**

July 14-22

Speakers: Vern Baardson and District pastors

## **Faith Haven, Battle Lake, Minnesota (West Central Minnesota District)**

Pre-Teen: July 11-15

Speaker: Linda Mohagen

## **Western North Dakota/Eastern Montana District**

July 25-29

Speakers: District Pastors

## **Pickeral Lake, Sisseton, South Dakota (South Dakota/Nebraska District)**

Youth Camp: July 26-August 1

Speakers: Pastor Rodney Stueland, Rev. Roy Johnson and the Cornerstone Gospel Team

## **Southern AFLC Family Camp, Prairie Valley Presbyterian Camp, Whitney, Texas**

July 26-29

Speaker: Rev. Robert Lee and District Pastors

## **Family and Youth Camp, Lake Geneva, Wisconsin (AFLC Illinois District and others)**

July 25-29

Speakers: Rev. Jeff Swanson, Mr. Don Davidson, Mr. Steven Larson, Mr. Rick Tollefson and Dr. Steven Lombardo

## **Orcas Island Camp, Orcas Island, Washington**

August 9-14

Speaker: Missionary David Abel

## **Big Sky Camp, Stillwater, Montana**

Family Camp: August 27-29

Speaker: Rev. Richard Gunderson



Pastors  
Ken Thoreson,  
Herb Franz and  
Harvey Jackson  
at the ARC.



# Dissent and Dissension

**N**ever try to empty a bag of charcoal when you're wearing a white suit."

That was a piece of advice I heard many years ago. The point of the illustration was that there are times when the new problems we create are bigger than the ones we tried to solve. That may be the case with this article, for there are surely some who will misrepresent my intentions.

By raising the issue of dissent, I am not suggesting that disunity and division are rampant in our Synod. On the contrary, I continue to marvel at the generous spirit of unity and cooperation which can only be understood as a gift from our gracious God. At the same time, we must recognize that dissent is a reality not only in the world, but in the church as well. We cannot treat the subject as taboo. There is dissent from the church's confession and practice, dissent within faculties and institutions, and dissent within congregations. In all too many places, the usual Sunday dinner is "roast pastor." Dissenting views and suggestions will be considered at the forthcoming convention.

In and of itself, dissent is not necessarily harmful. It may even be healthy. It all depends on how it is offered, and how it is received. If there were never any dissent from the status quo, there would be no infusion of fresh ideas. We would never find better ways of doing things. Most progress occurs because somebody is dissatisfied with the present arrangement.

If dissent is not properly focused and constructively channeled it produces dissension. A comparison is found in anger. In and of itself, anger may be constructive, even righteous.

Uncontrolled and misdirected, it becomes rage and hatred.

Are there then, some guidelines for ensuring that dissent remains healthy, and does not degenerate into dissension? Let's start with these:

1. Dissent can never violate either truth or love, which are the essentials of all Christian relationships. In most cases where dissension leaves its ugly scars, the first casualty is usually truth. No cause is so just or righteous as to justify falsehood or half-truths. Of equal importance, of course, is love. We sometimes think truth and love are in tension, but it is only because we are incapable of fulfilling either one perfectly. But both are from God, and God's commands do not violate each other. Paul's words still apply: "Speak the truth in love," (Ephesians 4:15).

2. Dissent should never be underhanded or deceitful. If criticism is warranted, let it be open, honest, and above board. Criticism that is anonymous, or that depends on a third party to spread rumors is unbecoming a Christian. Not only is it cowardly, but it creates suspicions against many innocent people as it creeps around in the darkened alleys of our minds.

3. Dissent should be responsible. The one offering dissent should not assume a responsibility that is not his. God has created the world as a world of order. There are structures also in the family, society, and the church. Parents, pastors, teachers, officers, and boards all have authority entrusted to them. Christian dissent uses those channels to find expression. Dissension is created when those not given certain responsibilities act as though it were theirs.

4. Dissent must be patient. There is no human arrangement, be it a family, a nation or a church, that is perfect that it needs no improvement. But improvement seldom comes without time. I must ask, how can I expect others to do something perfectly when I am not perfect myself? I can expect it, I can offer the challenge, but I should not be surprised when it takes longer than I think it should.

5. Dissent requires humility. No matter how righteous and noble we may think our cause is, we always need a healthy dose of humility. Just because I am convinced that someone is dishonest, incompetent, or unqualified, does not make that person so. I need to recognize the beams in my own eye, before I become an expert on the specks in the eyes of others.

When all is said and done, the highest motivation for our life within the church is the mercy of God at work in our lives. Paul admonishes us: Therefore I urge you brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is ... his good, pleasing and perfect will. Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body and each member belongs to all others," (Romans 12:1ff).

— by Dr. Edwin Lehman

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## Missions Corner

### What God Has Done

**A**s we approach the annual conference it is good to look at what God has done with our AFLC World Missions program.

Looking back can be good for us when we use the opportunity to realize God's faithfulness! Looking ahead stretches our faith and causes us to realize how completely dependent we are upon our Father's provisions and mercy!

AFLC World Missions has come a long, long way from its small but energetic beginnings with Pastor and Mrs. John Abel and family as our first called missionaries to the great land of Brazil. One by one other fine missionary families joined them, some to make missions their life's work and some to stay a short time. God has been so good! Today our Brazil outreach includes several strong evangelical congregations led by both Brazilian pastors and our missionaries, a well respected Bible school and seminary, the Miriam Infant Home and a beautiful new clinic, good ministries to some large cities as well as rural areas, a beautiful Bible Camp (The ARCA), Christian Primary Day School and fervor from the Brazilian Christians to not only see their own churches grow, but to also **send missionaries** to Portuguese-speaking Mozambique! We join missionaries Connely and Carolyn Dyrud, David and Janet Abel, Paul and Becky Abel, Jonathan and Tamba Abel in rejoicing that the Brazilian AFLC is led by national Christians!

Our second mission field is Mexico, our neighbor to the south. Missionaries Dan and Debbie Giles are laboring in Aguascalientes, and are preparing to receive the 1993 FLY Team this August. Pastors Samuel and Milton Flores, along with faithful wives and extended family members, along with Pastor Raul Hernandez carry on earnest ministries in several other Mexican cities in the state of

Guanajuato. In northern Mexico, Pastor Gabriel Mercado carries on his faithful ministry in and around the city of Abregon. Another highlight of this past year has been the organization of Partners in Missions and their successful work and evangelism missions into Mexico.

India is a complex country. The Hindus and Muslims are warring factions in that huge country. Christians pay a high price for being true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. We praise God for the 26 national pastors and leaders there! They are preparing for their soon-coming annual conference. Hundreds of people will attend, coming by whatever means they can: bus, ox cart, bicycle, but mostly by foot. At night they will simply find a place on the ground, wrap themselves up in their outer garment to rest, and in the morning walk more miles. The Christians who host the conference are expecting a thousand people and will prepare huge pots of rice and curried vegetables for the one meal a day. Why do so many attend? They clearly are hungering for the solid teaching of the Word of God and true Christian fellowship.

AFLC World Missions has experienced times of joyful refreshing from the Lord and times of severe testing and trial.

One great cause for rejoicing are the four missionary couples who have presented themselves as candidates over the past three years. One (Jonathan Abels) has reached the field; one has chosen to seek further schooling and a ministry of teaching here in the U.S.A. (James Johnsons), and two are eager and ready to be sent to Brazil (David Nelsons) and Mexico (Todd Schierkolks). Praise be to God for these wonderful, willing young couples! Another great cause for rejoicing are the faithful FLY Teams of Free Lutheran Youth who volunteer every other summer to spend time on one of the mission fields in order to be of help and encouragement to our national Christian friends.

Another cause for rejoicing is that three AFLC pastors have become military chaplains in recent years and have

extended our mission outreach to families in the U.S. Army and to other countries. Chaplains Timothy Skramstad, Mark Antal and Michael Crowell have ministered in Germany, Belgium, Kuwait and several military bases throughout the U.S.A.

Many other refreshing blessings have come to AFLC World Missions even this past year, but I will mention the most important one: **God is using people like you.** Yes genuine believers are **praying** for our mission personnel and are **supporting** our programs. Sunday Schools, the WMF, VBS offerings, etc., are all working together to strengthen our world mission outreach. Praise be to God.

Sorrows and testings come too. God tells us not to be dismayed by the fiery trials which come, but to rejoice in that we are partakers of Christ's sufferings. It has been very painful to world missions and to me personally to endure the trial of the India lawsuit during these past four years. What a drain upon time, resources and personal strength this has been! But God has purposes beyond our understanding, and we recall that Jesus knew what it was to be treated scornfully and unjustly. These charges have been dismissed but are currently being appealed in both the U.S. and India courts.

Sometimes the policies and decisions of the World Missions Committee and the Director have been criticized too. It is important for me to emphasize that each of us is very open to good, sound, biblical advice from our Christian brothers and sisters. We only ask that the questions be voiced to us personally so that we may deal with facts and not hearsay. The men on the World Missions Committee and I are earnest believers who want God's great plan for world evangelization to be our first concern as He uses the AFLC in this aspect of His Kingdom work. Oftentimes our decisions are hindered by lack of funds for the full provision for our missionaries or for capital investments on the field. But we each endeavor to present ourselves to God as workmen who need not to be ashamed. Please work with us as partners! Please pray for us!



## Partners In Prayer



"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God" (Philippians 4:6).

**Pray** that the Lord would provide a bi-lingual nurse to work at the infirmary at Miriam Infant Home in Campo Mourao, Brazil.

**Praise God** for the new school year beginning in Brazil. Twenty students are registered, making this the largest student body ever at Campo Mourao.

**Pray** for the safety of Janet Gray as she lives at the ARCA in the home of missionaries Paul and Becky Abel while they are here in the States on furlough.

In closing:

\***God** has blessed His people worldwide. Globally (1990 statistics) there are 1.2 billion people who call themselves Christians and who share their faith.

\*There are 500 million Christians who are "Great Commission Christians." This number grows at an average rate of 6.9% per year, which is faster than the global population rate.

\*About 100 million evangelical believers worldwide are young people. Just one-tenth of one percent of these would field a force of 100,000 new missionaries.

\*Worldwide, Great Commission Christians earn \$2.5 trillion in disposable income. We give about \$8 billion annually to missions — about one-third of one percent of our disposable income. To send a mission force of an additional 100,000 to the unreached peoples of the world would require about \$1.25 billion more — about one-twentieth of one percent.

What do you think? Has God given His people the blessings and resources to actively be a blessing to all the remaining unreached people groups of the earth? **Yes, He has!** It is our choice if we will choose to be a co-worker with God.

— Rev. Eugene Enderlein,  
AFLC World Missions Director

\* Statistics from Lausanne Statistics Task Force, compiled in "Our Globe and How to Reach it," Barrett and Johnson.

**Pray** for a meeting place to buy or rent for the new groups in Laranjeiras and Vila Velha led by missionary Jonathan Abel.

**Praise God** for our local Sunday School teachers in each of our congregations who have faithfully taught God's Word this school year. **Pray** for the ongoing Christian education programs in our congregations this summer, especially for the Vacation Bible School weeks.

**Pray** for the preparations being made for two Parish Education seminars to be held July 9 and August 6 at the ARC.

**Praise God** for the three graduating seniors from AFLTS: Alan Arneson, James Haga and James Molstre. **Pray** for them as they begin their ministries. **Pray** also that the Lord will continue to call men into the ministry to proclaim the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ.

**Pray** that God will lead the man of His choosing to teach at the AFLC

School to replace the position previously held by Rev. Phil Haugen. **Pray** also for the continuing plans being made by Dr. Francis Monseth as he prepares for his sabbatical in Latvia and Estonia beginning on September 1, 1993.

**Praise God** for every member traveling this summer on a Luther League or Bible School Gospel Team. **Pray** that God will grant them safety, strength and joy in His service.

**Pray** for the Home Missions Committee as they make decisions regarding new ministries in San Antonio and Houston, Texas.

**Praise God** for His generous financial provisions in all of the various departments within the AFLC. **Pray** that He will continue to provide for ongoing ministries in each area of work.

**Pray** for the delegates to the 1993 Annual Conference in DeKalb, June 16-20 that Christ's Spirit may guide each election and decision made.

**Pray** for the Luther League Federation Convention in Estes Park, Colorado, June 28-July 3, that young people from throughout the U.S. and Canada would allow the Lord to work freely in their hearts and lives.

## Fly Team To Mexico

Two high school seniors have been accepted to travel to Mexico this August to work with missionaries Dan and Debbie Giles. The two seniors are Joanna Dryburgh, Fordville, North Dakota and Christine Staffon, Cloquet,

Minnesota. It is hoped that more students will be able to join the team. For more information, contact the World Missions Department at the AFLC headquarters or Rev. Dennis Gray, AFLC Youth Director.

## AFLTS Summer Institute of Theology July 26-August 2, 1993

Courses —

1st Week:

*Galatians*, Professor Ralph Tjelta

*The Lord's Supper*, Dr. Francis Monseth

2nd Week:

*Mentors for Ministry*, Dr. Steven Lombardo

*Highlights in American Lutheran History*, Dr. Craig Jennings

A \$15 registration fee. Please register by July 12. Housing is available on campus with limited cooking facilities. Classes are open to all interested pastors and lay people. Contact AFLTS for more information at 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55441; phone (612) 544-9501.



**Barnabas XIX** — (left to right): Dan Pentti, Ishpeming, Michigan; Lisa McClenahan, Portland, North Dakota; Leanne Helwig and Chad Helwig, Mondovi, Wisconsin.

Not pictured **Barnabas XX** — Eddie Britz, Houghton, Michigan; Nathan Dahl (1992 graduate), Borup, Minnesota; Amy Lee (1991 graduate), Crystal, Minnesota; and Becky Monseth, Rogers, Minnesota.



**Ambassadors** — Julie Peterson, Portland, North Dakota; Brad Nelson, Kandiyohi, Minnesota; Mandy Deinanen, Cloquet, Minnesota; Lars Dyrud, Thief River Falls, Minnesota; and Stephanie Johansen, Bismarck, North Dakota.



**Majesty** — Jeremy Larson, Buffalo, North Dakota; Angi Jacobson, Sebeka, Minnesota; Janelle Mellgren, Spokane, Washington; Karina Greene, Grand Forks, North Dakota; and Robert Roed, McIntosh, Minnesota.

## AFLBS Summer Teams Itineraries

### Majesty

June 6-11 — Cooperstown Bible Camp, Cooperstown, ND  
 June 13-18 — Jevnaker Lutheran Church, Borup, MN  
 June 20 — Trinity Free Lutheran, Grand Forks, ND  
 June 20-25 — Grace Free Lutheran, Valley City, ND  
 June 27-July 2 — Bethel Lutheran Chapel, Waubun, MN  
 July 3-10 — Elbow Lutheran Bible Camp, Elbow, Sask.  
 July 11-17 — Simmie Lutheran Bible Camp, Simmie, Sask.  
 July 18-22 — Camp Cherith — Williston, MN  
 July 24-30 — Bethlehem Ev. Lutheran, Calgary, Alberta  
 August 1-6 — Atonement Free Lutheran, Arlington, WA  
 August 9-14 — West Coast Bible Camp, Orcas Island, WA  
 August 15-16 — Bethany Lutheran, Spokane, WA  
 August 17 — Faith Free Lutheran, Kalispell, MT  
 August 18 — Faith Free Lutheran, Brockton, MT  
 August 19 — Bethany Free Lutheran, Sebeka, MN  
 August 21-27 — Maranatha Free Lutheran, Glyndon, MN

### Barnabas XIX

June 5-11 — Our Savior's Lutheran, Argyle, MN  
 June 12-18 — Zoar Free Lutheran, Hatton, ND  
 June 19-25 — St. Paul's Free Lutheran, Fargo, ND  
 June 26-July 2 — unconfirmed  
 July 3-9 — The ARC, Osceola, WI  
 July 10-16 — Calvary Free Lutheran, Arlington, SD  
 July 17-23 — Abiding Savior Lutheran, Sioux Falls, SD  
 July 24-30 — Redeemer Free Lutheran, Canton, SD  
 July 31-August 6 — The ARC, Osceola, WI  
 August 7-13 — Word of Life Free Lutheran, Upsala, MN  
 August 14-20 — Hope Lutheran, Northome, MN  
 August 21-27 — Unity Ev. Lutheran, Massapequa, NY

### Barnabas XX

June 5-11 — Maranatha Lutheran, Coon Rapids, MN and Victory In Christ Lutheran, Maplewood, MN  
 June 12-18 — Westaker Lutheran, Newfolden, MN  
 June 19-25 — Faith Lutheran, El Campo, TX  
 June 26-July 2 — AFLC Luther League Convention, Estes Park, CO  
 July 3-9 — First Lutheran, Oklahoma City, OK  
 July 10-16 — Christ Ev. Lutheran, Tulia, TX  
 July 17-23 — Christ Lutheran, Wichita Falls, TX  
 July 24-30 — Southern AFLC Family Bible Camp, Whitney, TX  
 July 31-August 6 — Neighborhood Bible Church, Oceanside, CA  
 August 7-13 — Shepherd's Church of the Valley, Murrieta, CA  
 August 14-20 — Shepherd Of The Valley Lutheran, Palmdale, CA

true prayer ... In dealing with satanic attack we should pay particular attention to the following areas:

1. Satan will attack our trust in the Lord. He knows if he can make us feel unworthy, unable, and that we are losing trust in the Lord, he will take away our heart to pray.
2. Sometimes he also attacks our body, even our thoughts, nerves, or other facets related to our body. When we feel tired — and without strength — we do not like to pray. Let us guard against these and overcome them. As to the rest of the things which are beyond our control, the Lord will be responsible.
3. Sometimes the devil will attack our appointed time of prayer, both private and in the church ... How subtle is the enemy. If he cannot succeed in having our time of prayer fully occupied with other things, he will see to it that we do not have real prayer at that time.
4. Sometimes Satan attacks our constant fellowship with the Lord by creating a heavy obstructive layer between us and our Lord so that we cannot make contact. It appears as though a mysterious mists separates us from the Lord.
5. Finally, he purposes to push into darkness so that we cannot see the necessity of prayer. He will constantly distract our attention towards other things, thus hurting our prayer life. May we never fall into his trap. We ought to look to the Lord, gather many materials for prayer, and pay much attention to God's interests and needs. Our responsibility in prayer is not a small matter — let us therefore watch and pray." pp. 71-73, *Let Us Pray*, Nee

10. Look up Revelation 12:10, 11. What were the sources of strength for this group of "overcomers"?

11. What is also our abundant encouragement in Romans 8:31-39?

"Onward Christian soldiers, marching as to war,  
With the cross of Jesus going on before:  
Christ, the royal Master, leads against the foe;  
Forward into battle, see His banners go."

— Sabine Baring-Gould

## Lord, Teach Us To Pray



Prayer:

### Spiritual Warfare

Key Verses:

"Then he said to me, 'Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart on understanding this and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty-one days; then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me ...'" (Daniel 10:12, 13).

"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12).

Thus far our lessons on prayer have focused on who is praying, what they are praying for and to whom they are praying. Watchman Nee reminds us there is another realm to be aware of in this spiritual exercise.

"Each time we pray, we need to see three aspects: first, we must see to whom we are praying: second, we must know for whom we pray: and third, we ought to realize against whom we are praying ... our prayer (for God's will to be done) will shake up hell and affect Satan. For this reason, Satan will rise up to hinder such prayer. All prayers which come from God touch the powers of darkness. Here involves spiritual warfare. Perhaps our physical bodies, our families, or whatever pertains to us will be attacked by Satan ... The enemy so attacks in order that our prayer might be discontinued." pp. 20, 35, *Let Us Pray*, Watchman Nee

1. Look again at the key verses from Daniel.

- a. When were Daniel's words in prayer heard?
- b. How long did he wait for an answer?

2. How is our adversary described?

a. By Peter, 1 Peter 5:8

b. By John, John 10:10a

3. How does Jesus explain our human predicament? Mark 14:38

4. Read II Corinthians 10:3-5. What is the weapon of prayer powerful enough to do?

Because prayer is so “effective” the enemy’s attack comes to hinder our prayer even before we start to pray. He allies himself with our carnal nature which is able to bring to mind many excuses for not praying ... too busy ... don’t feel like it ... have more time later ... can’t concentrate ... need to do this first ... another time will be more quiet ... etc.

“Thus our carnal nature aligns itself against prayer, day in and day out. And the man or woman of prayer who is not mindful of this cannot avoid becoming a victim of the stealthy tempter. As long as we think we will ‘get’ time to pray, we still do not know a great deal about our own carnal natures.” p. 89, *Prayer*, O. Hallesby.

5. Look up Philipians 4:6, 7. Scripture tells us our hearts and minds will be guarded “in Christ.” We can turn our restless minds to His control for His will in our prayer life.

6. Read Ephesians 6:10-17 concerning the full armor of God.

a. List the pieces of armor and what they represent spiritually.

b. What does verse 12 tell us about spiritual warfare?

c. What instructions for prayer are given in Ephesians 6:18?

“Prayer is the best offensive weapon against our enemy. Through it we may preserve our line of defense intact. Through prayer we can also attack our enemy and inflict great loss on his plan, work, and power.” p. 58, *Let Us Pray*, Watchmen Nee.

7. Review the following notes from Mr. Nee’s paragraphs explaining scriptural examples of prayers that resist Satan.

Genesis 3:14, 15 — We are reminded that Satan is under the curse of God. We may ask God to keep him under the power of the cross and immobilize him.

Mark 1:23-26 — Jesus did not permit the demons to speak. We may ask God to forbid the speaking of evil, misunderstanding, violence, doubt and resistance to God’s Word.

Matthew 12:28, 29 — This reference speaks to us about binding the strong man. We may ask God to bind Satan and render him powerless.

I John 3:8 — The Son of God came to destroy the works of the devil. We may ask God to fulfill His purpose in Christ, to destroy the devil’s work in us, his manipulation over our work ... his devices in our environment.

Jude 9 — We may ask the Lord to rebuke (sharply reprimand) the enemy.

Matthew 16:23 — We may ask God to put Satan behind us.

Matthew 6:13 — We ask God to deliver us from evil (the evil one).

Colossians 2:15 — We are reminded again of the enemy’s defeat at the cross. “O Lord, we now stand on the foundation of the cross, asking You to again put the devil to shame.” p. 62.

Outline from pp. 58-62, *Let Us Pray*, Watchmen Nee.

8. What does James 4:7 tell us will be the devil’s response to resistance?

9. What is Jesus’ encouragement to us in John 16:33?

“Why does Satan try to resist prayer? Satan is determined to cut off our communion with heaven; consequently, he is willing to pay any price to hinder

# WMF Spring Rally Review

The **North Central District Rally** was held April 3, at Rice Free Lutheran Church, Bagley, Minnesota. The theme for the day was: "Bring all the tithes, God will open the windows of heaven." Nearly 100 ladies attended along with the guest speaker Mrs. Linda Korhonen, Cokato, Minnesota.

The **West Coast District WMF Rally** was held on March 5, at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Kirkland, Washington. Mrs. Ruth Wagley, Lake Stevens and Mrs. Jerri Gunderson, also of Lake Stevens were the speakers for the day. The theme was "God is Able" from Hebrews 7:25. AFLC President Robert Lee and Mrs. John Abel brought greetings to the ladies.

The Spring Rally of the **Minneapolis District WMF** was held at Faith Lutheran Church in Shakopee, Minnesota, April 17. Missionary Janet Abel of Brazil challenged us to become involved in prayer and financial support for our World Missions. Mrs. Katha Tjelta, Director of Parish Education, encouraged us to be teachers and doers of the Word. There were 156 ladies and 12 pastors present for the day.

The **Eastern North Dakota District WMF** held their Spring Rally on April 24, at Living Word Free Lutheran Church, Edmore. Matthew 5:3-12 was the basis for the theme, "Blessed Art Thou." Rev. Wes Langaas,



Mrs. Pat Lewis, Newark, gave the missions report at the Illinois District Rally on April 24, at Faith Lutheran, Ottawa. District President Marilyn Thoreson is seated. Solveig Hjermstad, Faith, South Dakota, spoke on the theme, "Serve In Joy".



The Faith Lutheran WMF hosted their first rally in their new church.

McVile, was the speaker. Mrs. Marlene Rokke, Minnewauken, showed a slide presentation on the Beautitudes.

## A Tribute to Flo

Florence Seeba died on April 15, 1993. She will be missed by her church family at First Lutheran Church, Camarillo, California. Flo was one of those silent, dedicated workers who is so vital in each congregation.

Flo headed the Altar Guild. That was her official title. But she did so much more than that. Each Wednesday she would come over to the church after the Bible Study to clean, pickup and check things out. On Fridays, after bowling, Flo would come in to dust mop the floors, clean windows, water plants, empty waste baskets, change paraments and do whatever needed doing. She never said it was somebody else's turn to do it. The communion ware was faithfully set out properly and the candles were always replaced on time. Truly, First Lutheran Church will miss Flo.

Thank you, Lord, for all the Flos who quietly and faithfully serve You in each of our congregations.

—S. Hjermstad

## Hymnal Fund Grows

At the annual meeting of Faith Lutheran Church, Ottawa, Illinois, last January, it was suggested that a hymnal fund start. February was called "Help the Hymnal Month."

A poster was made with a drawing of a hymnal with 108 squares; each square represented one page paid in full. Families and individuals were encouraged to buy a page or two. Sunday announcements, bulletins, and the monthly newsletter kept people informed with the progress. The enthusiasm was contagious. A total of \$7,850 was sent to the AFLC Hymnal Fund. Praise God from Whom all blessings flow!

(Ed. note: As of press time, \$28,000 is in the Hymnal Fund. The goal is \$75,000.)



## South Dakota Congregation Celebrates Centennial

Immanuel Free Lutheran Church, rural Centerville, South Dakota, celebrated its 100th anniversary on May 1-2. In the 1870s, Norwegian pioneers settled in this southeastern area of the state and began to worship in homes and a schoolhouse. On May 27, 1893, Immanuel Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Hauge Synod was organized. There were 55 members that first year. Five years later a church was built. The pews were planks supported by nail kegs. The Norwegian language was used until 1915, when English began to be used part-time.

Immanuel was a part of a three and four point parish in the early years and remained with Scandia Lutheran in Centerville until 1988, when it became a member of the AFLC and joined with Salem Lutheran Church, rural Freeman, to form a new parish. Rev. Mike Klenner was the first AFLC pastor and continues to serve the parish since his arrival in 1989.

Pastors who have served the congregation in its first century are J. Olbue, L.A. Bree, B.P. Strand, T.T. Carlson, C.J. Olberg, A.H. Trygstad, J.J. Skarpness, J.L. Johnson, J.O. Gisselquist, Peter Ljostveit, I.Z. Hyland, F.A. Berg, D. Natwick, F. Baamgaard, L.L. Peterson, R.H. Fedde, A.N. Grorud and N.R. Wiekert.

"A Century of Faith" was the theme for the weekend's observance. The Centennial Committee published a book of blessing testifying of God's goodness and faithfulness of the church founders. The Saturday evening program featured music and congregational singing followed by a Scandinavian lunch. AFLC President Robert Lee and his wife, Gloria, joined in the weekend services. Rev. Lee brought the Sunday morning sermon. The weekend concluded with a Sunday afternoon historical service

**Badger, Minnesota** — A Praise and Thanksgiving Service was held on April 18 at Badger Creek Free Lutheran Church in honor of the completion of their new church addition. After the service, a farewell party was held in honor of Pastor and Mrs. Martin Christensen, who are leaving to serve the congregation in Elbow, Saskatchewan.

**Rev. Howard Kjos** retired from the parish ministry on May 15. He and his wife have moved from Sacred Heart, Minnesota, where he was serving First English Lutheran Church, to Roslyn, South Dakota. Their new address is Box 173, Roslyn, SD 57261

**Monroe, Washington** — Monroe Free Lutheran Church held their Charter Membership Service on May 16, with 33 people committing themselves to this new congregation. The congregation held its first baptismal service that day as three adults and two children were baptized. AFLC Home Missions Director, Rev. Elden Nelson, was the guest speaker. Special music was provided by the handbell choir from Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in nearby Kirkland. Rev. David Hinrichs, Everett, is the interim pastor of the new congregation, which he serves together with Calvary, Everett.

with memories shared by past and present members. Dr. Orloue Gisselquist, Minneapolis, and Marilyn Quanbeck, McVile, North Dakota, represented their father, the late J.O. Gisselquist. Pastor Robert Fedde was also present. He is a former pastor and the father of Miriam Klemme, an AFLC pastor's wife.

The congregation has been blessed with musical talents and a strong lay leadership. The present church building was moved and remodeled in 1980. A church office was added in 1990. Present membership is 93 baptized and 72 confirmed. The mission-minded congregation has supported Johnny and Becky Pinos since 1982 as "Youth for Christ" missionaries to Ecuador. The congregation has several active organizations. One member reflected the feelings of the people when Immanuel joined the AFLC: "If anything, we are going back to our roots."

## Attention Campers to the Annual Conference in DeKalb!

If you are still looking for a campground, call Camp Sycamore, 375 East North Avenue, Sycamore, Illinois; phone (815) 895-5590, for reservations. No tents, please.

**Pipestone, Minnesota** — Christ the King Lutheran Church will celebrate their tenth anniversary on October 30-31. They plan to dedicate a new addition to the church at that time as well.

**Thief River Falls, Minnesota** — Our Saviour's Lutheran Church hosted their 12th annual Missionary Conference April 25-May 2. Morning and evening sessions were held throughout the week. Special speakers were missionaries David Abel, P.C. Verghese, and Rev. Mark Antal.

**Mrs. Farrell (Ann) Erickson**, Badger, Minnesota, is a member of the AFLC School's Corporation with her term expiring in 1997. Previous listings of the Corporation members indicated Mr. Farrell Erickson as a member.

**South Dakota-Nebraska District** — Congregations in the district have established a fund to begin inquiries for a possible AFLC informational meeting in the Rapid City area of western South Dakota.

**Rev. Mark Molstre**, Larimore, North Dakota, accepted a call from Zion Lutheran Church, Tioga, North Dakota. Pastor Molstre has served Living Faith Church, Larimore, since his graduation from seminary in 1988, as well as Middle Grove Church, Mekinock, which was added to the parish in 1990.

## Iowa Church Approves Affiliation

Trinity Lutheran Church, Forest City, Iowa, approved a resolution early last month to affiliate with the AFLC. The congregation, which was first organized in 1899 as a member of the Lutheran Free Church, has been independent since the 1963 merger and served by Lutheran Brethren pastors. Among Trinity's former pastors were two AFLC clergymen, Rev. Karl Berg and Rev. Karl Stendal, who are both deceased.



## TWO SPECIAL ANNIVERSARIES

This summer marks the 30th anniversary of the first AFLC Family Bible Camp, and, when a history of our church is finally written, it will be hard to overemphasize the importance of these early camps in the life and development of a struggling young fellowship.

We met in the spacious facilities of the Lake Geneva Bible Camp near Alexandria, Minnesota, leased for one week each summer from another denomination, and watched the number of campers grow to record numbers still unequaled by any current AFLC Bible Camp.

The crowds of people, young and old, were a wonderful source of encouragement to the infant association, for many prophesied that we would only be a small handful of dying congregations with a few stubborn elderly Norwegians hanging on until the doors finally closed. But the family camps were visible proof that these prophets of doom were very wrong. I still remember the late Pastor Trygve Dahle standing by the registration building in 1963, positively beaming while the many children were running to and fro around him, as he said, "They told me that this free association was only a bunch of old people!"

A second anniversary which should be celebrated is the fact that this summer marks 30 years since the first AFLC gospel team traveled among our congregation. They were called "The Ambassadors," and the all-male group consisted of five college students, including two from Valley City, North Dakota, who would still be known to many of our readers, Francis Monseth and Roger Strom.

This team, followed by at least two others before the Bible School assumed responsibility for summer traveling youth ministries, also served as an important encouragement to the new fellowship. "The Ambassadors" of 1963 were living proof of an active core of Christian youth in our congregations, and, although only one of the young men became an AFLC pastor, the strong possibility of future students for a seminary.

Both the family Bible camps and the summer gospel teams that began 30 years ago are also evidence of another factor central to the life and development of the AFLC. The primary purpose of these outreach ministries was to present Christ through the proclamation of His Word, with the goal that people would come to know Him and to grow in Him. The Word bore fruit throughout our fellowship, and the many camps and summer ministries today are a witness to the effectiveness of these early efforts.

Let us give thanks to God as we celebrate these anniversaries and as we seek a new vision for what we would do through summer youth and family ministries in this closing decade of the century.

## WHEN THE CONFERENCE IS WRONG

June 14, 1893, is an important date in the history of the AFLC, and a centennial observance is certainly in order. It was on this day 100 years ago that a group of over 200 people gathered in a college chapel to organize a loosely-knit fellowship known as the "Friends of Augsburg," an event which can be considered as the beginning of our own church body. A historical article by Anker Harbo, whose father was a part of this movement, will appear in a forthcoming issue, but it seemed right to include mention of the occasion in the issue that will appear closest to the anniversary date.

A brief outline of the background reminds the reader that the essence of this controversy concerned the future of a distinct approach to the training of pastors. The annual conference of the United Norwegian Lutheran Church made a decision that was opposed by the seminary leaders, and the corporation of the school agreed that the conference was wrong. Lawsuits were filed, and the final result confirmed the autonomy of the seminary corporation.

This conflict was the catalyst for the organization of the Lutheran Free Church in 1897, and helps to explain the form that this church body assumed. The LFC — and the AFLC today — was not an incorporated church body in a legal sense, but a fellowship of several corporations working together in common ministry through the annual conferences. This structure is not accidental but deliberate, and important "check-and-balance" to an open conference that could conceivably be dominated by some faction or another. The existence of the various corporations within the AFLC today are a recognition, too, that conferences can be wrong.

The consequence of this "check-and-balance" cannot be a collection of arrogant agencies that boldly claim their legal autonomy, or our movement would die a well deserved death. The congregations still hold the purse strings, and support can be withheld from any department of the association that loses sight of the need for accountability and submission. But our forefathers would also insist that this does not cancel the need for independent corporations to act in the rare situations when they might prayerfully and fearfully determine that the conference is wrong.

Yes, this freedom can be frightening when we consider the possibility that it could be misused. Yet it is an exciting alternative to the authority that others would impose upon congregations and ministries when the evidence already points to the frequent abuse of such powers.

"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom," (II Corinthians 3:17). May the Lord lead the AFLC, not enslaved but indebted to the past, to the corporate expression of this spiritual freedom that is right for our day.

## Riding First Class

**W**ould it be okay if we put you in first class? I had no trouble deciding how to answer that question when it was put to me by the person behind the airline counter. I was at the Los Angeles Airport, waiting to board a flight to León, Mexico to visit the AFLC congregations in that country. For some unknown reason, the airline representative said I could ride in first class for no additional charge — if it was okay with me.

I had never ridden in first class before and I probably never will again. Previously I had walked past the first class seats and thought, “Big deal! They paid all that extra money to get their meals first and have a little extra leg room. What a rip-off!” I had thought the benefits of riding first class were pretty minimal. I was wrong. I discovered it is nice up there. I rode in coach class with the same airline on the return flight and the difference was readily apparent — no steak dinner, no fancy dessert, no cloth napkin, no warm washcloth, no drinking out of real glasses.

I experienced the difference between coach and first class. In a similar way, the Apostle Paul experienced the contrast between life with Christ and life apart from Christ. He declares there is no comparison. In Philippians 3:8 he says, “I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.” He had previously ridden in what the society of his day would consider first class. He had “reasons to put confidence in the flesh.” He was a “Hebrew of Hebrews.” Yet, he says it is all rubbish compared to gaining Christ. He knew where you need to be to truly ride first class. You need to be with Christ. That is where you receive the best care. That is where benefits unimaginable can be found.

It is utter foolishness to sit back in the coach seats, to go through life without Christ, and think the difference isn’t too great. If you are traveling

without the Lord, you are truly missing out. Come to Him. If you are with Him, don’t minimize or take for granted what you have. You have the greatest seat that can be found.

I was asked if it would be okay with me if they put me in first class. I thought it seemed like a rather silly question. Who would complain or say no to that?! Yet, Jesus also occasionally asks what seems like silly questions. In John 5:6, He asks a man who had been an invalid for 38 years, “Do you want to get well?” Our first reaction is, “Of course he wants to get well. Why bother asking?” The man, though, needed to ask himself if he was prepared to deal with the changes that would come with being healed. Over those many years, he had grown accustomed to being an invalid. In contrast to a change in lifestyle, the nature of which was not totally known, his present situation maybe didn’t seem all that bad.

Do you want to get well? Do you want to ride first class? Many people are asked those questions regarding their spiritual life and they say, “No.”

The devil’s lie is believed. Life without Christ is thought to be not all that bad and maybe even preferable. God calls on people to see the truth. Each individual who is apart from Him is terminally ill and suffering through a terrible ride. Even though it will involve confession of sin and submission Christ as Lord, the change is necessary.

To the one who sees their sickness and doesn’t like the way they’re traveling, the Gospel comes and says, “Look at the ride you can have because of the death and resurrection of Christ.” Why remain sick? Why stay in the cheap seats, getting lousy service? Come to Christ and enjoy first class. Travel as a child of the King.



—by Rev.  
Craig Johnson