



THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

March 22, 1994



B
E
C
A
U
S
E

H
E

L
I
V
E
S



THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

March 22, 1994 • Vol. 32, No. 6

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

CONTENTS

The Resurrection	
What if the Proof	p. 3
Because He Lives	
I Can Face Tomorrow	p. 4
All Fear is Gone	p. 6
Life is Worth the Living	p. 7
An Interview with	
Missionary Candidate	
Todd Schierkolk	p. 8

COVER: Artwork by Sue Brue,
Centerville, South Dakota
— from Apostles' Creed poster
AFLC Parish Education Department

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

Write to:

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

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

USPS 588-620 ISSN 0746-3413
Second-class postage paid at Minneapolis, Minnesota, and additional mailing office.

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

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

Editorial Board:

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

Prince of Peace

Easter Sunday, the greatest day of all, is soon here! A friend of mine once noted: "Everything we say about Easter is an understatement." I agree, for the resurrection realities are glorious beyond our ability to verbalize. Yet we try, and I'd like to focus on the fourth name of the coming Messiah from Isaiah 9:6 as a worthy subject for an understated Easter meditation.

"And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, **Prince of Peace.**" Isaiah's troubled world desperately needed peace; our world needs it no less! The only reliable source for meaningful peace is the Prince of Peace, the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ. What sort of peace does He give? One of the most beautiful words in the Hebrew language, the word *shalom*, describes it perfectly.

We most often think of peace as merely the absence of war. *Shalom* is that, but it is also so much more! It is an overall sense of well being, of wholeness, of serenity that encompasses one's entire being and provides a calm center to life, even though all sorts of storms rage. Such profound peace is only possible through the Prince of Peace, for only Jesus can make us to be at peace with God. "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things ... by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross" (Colossians 1:19-20). Apart from this foundation, *shalom* is impossible to experience.

Shalom is prosperity (i.e. not mere monetary wealth, but rather the immeasurable riches of a full and meaningful life). "I have come that they may have life and have it to the full," Jesus said in John 10:10. That is *shalom*; that is what the resurrected Prince of Peace longs for

each of His followers to enjoy.

Finally, *shalom* is the absence of war. This was most beautifully expressed by Isaiah just after he named the Messiah "Prince of Peace." The prophet's very next words were "His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace" (Isaiah 9:17; NRSV). Isn't it refreshing to think about *endless peace*? What a blessed thought as "wars and rumors of wars" continue to rage on Planet Earth!

My heart longs for *shalom* in all its multifaceted fullness. Oh yes, I know the Prince of Peace, for Jesus is my Savior and Lord. I know something of His supernatural peace, but I have many struggles trying to experience it in our violent and broken world.

As I meditate on the Easter triumph of Jesus over death and the devil, I begin to long more deeply for the day when the Prince of Peace will obviously reign as King of kings and Lord of lords. I yearn for that glorious day when "The wolf will live with the lamb"; when "They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore" (Isaiah 2:4).

With expectancy I look up and wonder: Lord Jesus, sweet Prince of Peace, *could* this be the year ... or month ... or day ... or hour? With Paul I pray "Maranatha, Come, O Lord!" (1 Corinthians 16:22).



— by Rev.
Jerry Holmaas

"If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men" (1 Corinthians 15:17-19).

The Resurrection



What is the Proof?

With these words, the Apostle Paul puts his entire life and ministry at stake. If it can be proven that Jesus did not rise from the dead; then Paul will admit that his message is all a lie, his life of sacrifice has been wasted, the hope he has given is false. A dangerous proposition, but Paul was not the first to make this proposition. Jesus also staked His entire ministry and teachings on His resurrection as the **one proof** of His authority, His truthfulness, His deity and His messiahship (John 2:18-21; Matthew 12:38-40; 16:1-4; 27:62-66).

Without the resurrection there is no Christian faith because that would mean Jesus failed. We are "still in our sins." We are "lost." We are "to be pitied" because we have believed a lie. Christianity stands or falls on the proof of the resurrection.

So what is this proof? This writer neither has the space nor the capacity to lay out all the arguments. I would refer you to a source which can and does: "Evidence That Demands A Verdict," chapter 10, by Josh McDowell. I will, however, offer here those proofs which most impress my mind and heart.

1. The prophecies. It is clear from the Scriptures that the Messiah's resurrection was always the plan. It was prophesied in the Old Testament (Psalm 16:10; Isaiah 25:8; 53:10, 12). Jesus' own prophesy of it is found in at least 16 places in the four gospels.

2. The historical proofs. First, the account of Jesus' resurrection squares historically with Jewish and Roman customs and laws and the conditions of the times. If there was something inaccurate or untrue, it would have been spotted by the people of the time. But, in spite of attempts by the Jewish Rulers to spread at least one false story, the resurrection account stands as an unrefuted historical fact.

Secondly, there are the appearances. Josh McDowell records 15 post-resurrection appearances of Jesus (p. 224). Two of these appearances were to large groups, (500 — 1

Corinthians 15:6 and likely 120 — Acts 1:3-15): How do you explain these sightings, where over a period of 40 days, He talked to them, ate with them, touched them, and convinced them despite their surprise and unbelief?

3. The activity and power of Jesus in people's lives. If Jesus did indeed arise from death; then we would expect to see evidence of His being alive. This we do see in the changed lives of all who come to know Him. Do you want proof of the resurrection? Then look at the once denying Peter standing before the crowds on the day of Pentecost, refusing to deny before the Council, and boldly preaching the resurrection at home and in distant lands. Look at doubting Thomas, now believing. Look at the Christ-hating Saul become Paul and pour out his life as an offering to the risen Jesus. Look at the disciples cowering behind locked doors, then going forth to all the earth, so firmly convinced of His resurrection that they laid down their lives for the Good News.

It does not end with those who witnessed His resurrection. All through New Testament history He has been changing lives. The immoral Augustine, the guilt-ridden Luther, the unbelieving C.S. Lewis, the innumerable masses of changed lives that have led to changed societies and a changed world. Where is there anything good in this world that is not the result of His living presence?



— Rev. Donald L.
Voorhees,
Dannenbrog,
Nebraska

BECAUSE HE LIVES

I Can Face Tomorrow

Five years ago my husband, Allen, was diagnosed with a chronic, incurable disease. He has Multiple Sclerosis. Our youngest of three sons was a one-year-old. In Allen's case, the disease has been progressive and his treatment options are restricted, so he is losing his ability to use his body. At the time of his diagnosis, our family was faced with many questions about the future. Currently, he is back in the hospital taking an intensive therapy program and

we are again faced with the uncertainty of tomorrow. How can I face tomorrow? God continues to teach me that I can face tomorrow because He lives!

I can face tomorrow because I know Who holds the future! The Lord has shown me through His Word and in my life that He is in control. In Genesis we read of Joseph and see a perfect example of God's ultimate control in a man's life. Joseph was sold into slavery, falsely accused of a crime, thrown into jail to be forgotten. Then, in God's perfect time, he was elevated to a place of authority in order to save his family. Joseph could explain it to his brothers this way: "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good" (Genesis 50:20).

When Allen was first diagnosed with MS, it became necessary for me to find a job. I thought this was the worst thing that could happen to me. I believed it was my "calling from God" to stay home with my children. But God had other plans.

One afternoon I stopped at my favorite fabric store to pick up some thread for mending. A "Help Wanted" sign was displayed. I asked for an application. Right then the manager set up an interview, even before seeing my application. I was hired and started in a part-time position within a week. Within a few months, I was offered a full-time position with benefits which included a health insurance plan that would cover my husband. I am now a department manager with better hours and a commission on my sales. Not only has this job been God's way of providing for my family's specific needs, but has opened new opportunities for sharing my faith and building friendships.

I have not always understood the "whys" of the happenings in my life, but "God's way is perfect: the word of the Lord is flawless, He is a shield for all who take refuge in Him" (Psalm 18:30).

In reflecting on the trial and crucifixion of Christ, it appears that Satan was in control. But Judas' betrayal, Pilate's behavior and the hanging on the cross were all a part of God's plan for our lives even today. Each tomorrow

PROOF

The final and ultimate proof of His resurrection is not found in amassing intellectual evidence, but in the fact that He has entered my heart and changed my life. I experience His resurrection power in my life as He changes me day by day. Do you want to be convinced of the resurrection? Then you must experience it yourself, by allowing Him to come inside you and change you from the inside out. Then you will know ... He is alive!

*He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today!
He walks with me, And talks with me,
Along life's narrow way.
He lives, He lives, Salvation to impart!
You ask me how I know He lives?
He lives within my heart.*

—Alfred H. Ackley

The author spent his early years in southern Idaho. After high school he attended Seattle Lutheran Bible Institute. He graduated from the College of Southern Idaho in 1980. He received his M.Div. from Faith Evangelical Lutheran Seminary, Tacoma, Washington. He has served Christian Faith Lutheran Church, Bozeman, Montana; Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Pleasanton, Texas; and recently began serving St. Peder's Lutheran Church of Dannenbrog, Nebraska. In 1977 he married Heidi Kallstrom and they have two children, Charity, 9 and Joseph, 6. He was recently accepted on the AFLC Clergy Roster.

is something to look forward to with anticipation. What will God do for me tomorrow?

I can face tomorrow because I know Who holds my hand. There are times when the day looks dark and fear creeps in. I am encouraged during those times from Isaiah 41:10: "So do not fear, for I am with you; I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

Jesus Christ "suffered when he was tempted," and so "He is able to help those who are being tempted" (Hebrews 2:18). Temptation not only means an enticement to sin, but can also mean a trial or testing. Jesus has known trials and testings so He is sympathetic to my needs at those times. "God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear ... He will also provide a way out so you can bear up under it" (I Corinthians 10:13).

Two years ago, Allen was hospitalized for treatment of his MS. The drugs given him caused severe psychotic reactions. The hospitalization turned into a nightmare. Those were extremely difficult days of not knowing what was happening to my husband. Psalm 46:1-3 ministered to my hurting heart as I felt a real nearness of God through His Word. God provided people to give me support and comfort. In those very real ways God was holding my hand.

Ultimately for each of us, there will be a tomorrow that will bring death. Yet, even that tomorrow can be faced with hope and certainty. The resurrection of Christ we celebrate at

Easter is the victory over death. I Corinthians 15:57 is our victory song: "Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

*Many things about tomorrow
I don't seem to understand.
But I know who holds tomorrow
And I know who holds my hand.*

— Ira P. Stanphill

— Joanne Herset
Faith Free
Lutheran Church
Kalispell, Montana

**"Each tomorrow
is something to
look forward to
with anticipation."**



Butter

Because He Lives All Fear is Gone

This phrase from a well known gospel song holds new meaning this Easter for me and six others who survived a plane crash on August 13, 1993.

Between the time the second engine on our twin-engine airplane ran out of fuel and the moment our plane hit the Bering Sea, each of us prayed for similar things we discovered when we later talked together. Our prayers included: "Lord, restart the engines (even though the tanks were out of fuel, this would be no problem for God). Lord, let us see our families and loved ones again. Also Lord, send someone to find us. The one thing that not one of us prayed for was the salvation of our souls. That had been taken care of by each person long before that plane crash. There was no fear of where we were going had we not survived the crash. We clearly realized that eternal life with Christ was closer than any of us ever experienced before. We knew that, because of what Christ had done at Calvary and His resurrection on Easter Sunday, we now had nothing to fear in our dying and what lay ahead was far more than any of us could fully realize. Indeed, because He lives all fear is gone!

It is amazing to me, even though I should know better, that God truly is in control. Through the whole ordeal, God provided people to do for us what we could not do for ourselves. The rescue helicopter pilots did what is supposed to be impossible and hovered the aircraft at the water's surface in spite of the

four to six foot swells. Those men put their lives in jeopardy to save our lives. Hospital workers were prepared and made our recovery swift. Local pastors who heard of the crash made their way to the hospital to pray with and for us and then made arrangements for our safe return home to our families. Plus, there were many others who showed no fear. Through the lives and actions of these people we can say, because He lives all fear is gone!

I am so thankful that Christ overcame fear to complete the work of His Father through the cross of Calvary. How can I not give Him my life to use as He sees fit for the ongoing work of His Kingdom?

People all over the world need to know about Jesus. They need to know that where they are now without Christ and where they can be with Christ is like night to day. People need to know that He can rescue them from whatever it is that would try to pull them down and cause them to fear; and Jesus can lift them out into joy and fulfillment. But we, you and I, need to tell them.

Words from another gospel song speak also of God's love and protections:

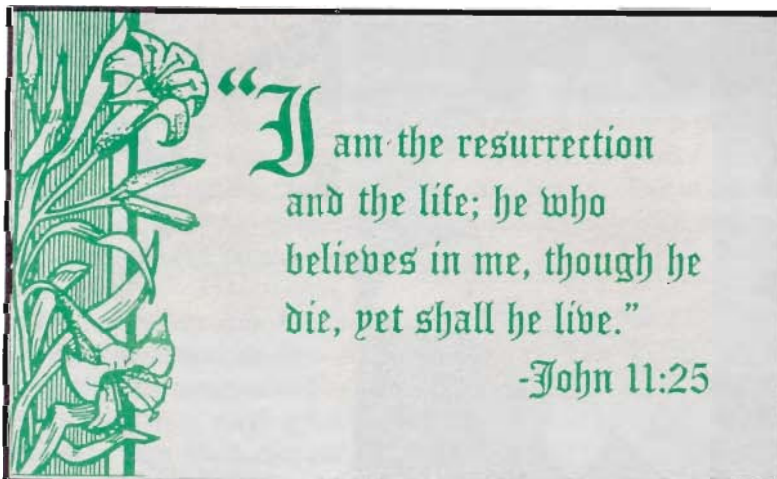
*Hidden in the hollow of His blessed hand,
Never foe can follow, never traitor stand;
Not a surge of worry, not a shade of care,
Not a blast of hurry, touch the Spirit there.*

*Every joy or trial cometh from above,
Traced upon our dial by the sun of love
We may trust Him fully all for us to do,
They who trust Him wholly, find him
wholly true.*

*Stayed upon Jehovah, hearts are fully blest
Finding as He promised perfect peace
and rest.*

Saying "because He lives all fear is gone" may be easier than doing or living. But we can live in the victorious hope of the risen Savior! Because He lives all fear is gone in our daily walk, in relationships, in work, in play, in life or in death and in the glorious life to come!

— by Cary Dietsche
Amery Free Lutheran Church
Amery, Wisconsin



Life is Worth the Living

Nothing can come to us in life unless it first passes through our heavenly Father. That is a comforting promise for the Christian. Though we may face difficult circumstances, we can know our risen Savior loves us and sees from an eternal perspective while we can only view the now.

It has been over eight years since Ken went home to be with the Lord. Losing one's mate is difficult at any time and perhaps more so when there are still young children at home. I learned quickly to lean upon the Lord and realized how much I had depended on my husband. That is fine to a point, but in the final analysis both should depend wholly on Jesus.

During the time of Ken's illness and death, I experienced my own health problems which forced me to draw even nearer to my Lord. A thought in a recent devotional said: "Our afflictions are designed not to break us, but to bend us toward God." Life is like a river, flowing steadily onward. Sometimes storms arise and ruffle the surface waters, but underneath is that strong current of God's love and strength. His inner peace sees us through. As Isaiah 43:2 promises: "When you pass through the waters I will be with you, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire you will not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you."

I have concluded that anything that comes my way in life is okay as I know my God is in control. My life is in His hands and everything has a purpose, whether or not I understand it. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). I confess there are times Satan is successful and I become anx-

ious mainly in regards to my financial future; but when this occurs I need to recall God's promises to care for His own. Hebrews 10:23 reminds me that He is faithful.

Eight years ago I determined I was not going to sit home and feel sorry for myself. Although life does take a turn in the road when your mate is gone, I told myself I was going to keep on doing the things that I had been doing. Occasionally a little self-pity enters and I can feel like a fifth wheel, but I have tried to not let that bother. The love and support of my family, church family and friends have meant so much! I have learned how I need to reach out and befriend others. The elderly in my community have given me much more than I have given them while doing their errands, fixing their hair or simply visiting over a cup of coffee.

I just returned from spending ten days with my daughter and her husband and my new granddaughter, Dianna Elaine, born January 24, 1994. This is my first grandchild and I never understood the thrill of being a grandma until now. It is almost like experiencing motherhood all over again. Life is so precious! As I held her the words in the song, "Because He Lives" became real. "How sweet to hold a newborn baby, and feel the pride and joy he gives, but greater still the calm assurance, this child can face uncertain days because He lives."

Praise the Lord! Life is worth living because Jesus lives!

— by Mrs. Dorothy Pentti
Ishpeming, Michigan

(Note: The author is the widow of the late Rev. Ken Pentti, 1940-85. He was the AFLC evangelist/youth worker from 1979-85.)

**Because I live,
you also will live.**

John 14:19b

An Interview with Missionary Candidate Todd Schierkolk



(Pastor Schierkolk is currently serving Ebenezer Free Lutheran Church in the Chicago suburb of Evergreen Park, Illinois. He and his wife, Barb, have one child, Rachel. They are expecting their second in June.)

How did you get interested in being a missionary? Believe it or not it was the "wallpaper" in my bedroom. It was practically wallpaper anyway. I had so many maps on the walls there was not room for much else. I would stare at those maps and dream about going to faraway places. My interest at that point, though, was not missionary; it was cultural.

I began studying Spanish in seventh grade and continued off and on until I graduated from college with a minor in that language. During my senior year of college, I was sitting in the office of my pastor, Michael Brandt, at my home church in Amery, Wisconsin, telling him how much I wished I could practice my Spanish. The next thing I knew we were in his car headed for the World Missions office in Minneapolis where I met Pastor Enderlein, the director. It just so happened that he was working on getting a FLY team together to go to Mexico that summer. Well, the Lord supplied the finances to go on that trip and while we were there He began working on my heart. The Lord began to open my eyes to His work of bringing the good news of Jesus to people in other countries.

I started Bible school the next fall and was elected president of the Missions Club on campus. I was to promote missions, but I discovered it is hard to get other people interested in missions without getting more interested yourself. I found myself being fascinated by the mission stories we heard from speakers and watched in films.

Everything came to a head one evening during the campus Missions Conference my second year at AFLBS. Pastor Enderlein was bringing the message and as he spoke I could feel my heart pounding. God was speaking. When Pastor Enderlein gave the call for full-time workers in the kingdom, I could not stay in my seat. I went forward and committed myself to His work.

Have you had any doubts about being a missionary since then?

I wouldn't say doubts. I know I wondered about being a pastor but not about being a missionary. There have been competing interests and obstacles along the way. Perhaps that is a part of refining the call. I have been reminded numerous times of the apostle's words: "Faithful is He who calls you, and he will bring it to pass" (I Thessalonians 5:24).

Do you think the time you've spent serving a congregation in the U.S. has been beneficial?

Yes, far more than I thought it would be. It was no small jolt for me when I met my first white, middle-class individual in Chicago who had never been in a church and knew almost nothing about Christianity. The mission field is here in America as well!

Needed: Wheels for Missions

AFLC World Missions is in need of vehicles for mission service. A 1985 high-mileage Buick Skylark is in service by David Abel. A dependable vehicle is needed to help the David Nelson family as they begin deputation. If you have a vehicle that you can loan or give to serve with AFLC World Mission, please contact the mission office Minneapolis; phone 612-545-6472.

AMBASSADOR Hymnal Update

- Minimum goal for pre-publication sales: 3,000
- Pre-publication sales, as of Feb. 17: 8, 265; 5,222 blue copies; 2,796 red copies; 247 accompanist editions.
- Projected number of copies to be printed: 10,000
- First AFLC congregation to order: St. Petrie Lutheran Church, Baker, Illinois. Three congregations sent contributions over a year ago to be applied to future orders; Valley Free Lutheran Church, Portland, North Dakota; Alma Lutheran Church, Argyle, Minnesota; and Hope Lutheran Church, Northome, Minnesota.)

I've gained some perspective on the ministry as well. I will be a new missionary when, Lord willing, we get to Mexico; but I won't be a brand new pastor anymore. That should help to make the transition.

Two other blessings stand out from our time here at Ebenezer. First of all, the Lord has been reminding me of how dependent I am on Him for whatever spiritual progress is made in a congregation. A verse from Zechariah has run through my head these last 18 months: "'Not by might, not by power, but by My Spirit,' says the Lord." The second blessing has been to experience the beginnings of that shepherd-heart that I have heard pastors talk about. It's making me look at ministry in a different way because I'm realizing that missions isn't just a job ... God really cares about people with all His heart.

In thinking of Mexico, what are you looking forward to?

Getting there for one. I'm anxious to work with Pastor Dan Giles, speaking Spanish fluently and getting accustomed to the culture. I'm looking forward to the first time that I am able to communicate God's love in Christ in Spanish and seeing someone respond to Christ's offer of salvation. I'm looking forward to seeing a church planted; to working with future FLY teams; to learning how to disciple young Mexicans to be followers of Jesus Christ and to playing basketball with a bunch of guys that are only five and a half feet tall — I'm 6'2".

How does your wife feel about all of this?

Barb grew up on the mission field and has always wanted to be a missionary herself, so it is our mutual desire. Our internship trips to Mexico and Brazil served as further confirmation for her of God's call on her life. That doesn't mean there are no concerns about home and family life. We both get nervous sometimes when we think of the future. It's a big step. But I got nervous before football games and someone told me that if your palms weren't sweaty before the game, you weren't ready to play.

Are you concerned about bringing your daughter up in a developing country like Mexico?

No more than I am about bringing her up in Chicago. We often ask her where she wants to go and she always says: "I want to go to Mexico." Granted, it's a trained response.

What is your timetable for getting to Mexico?

We'll begin full-time deputation in September, 1994, to share our vision, enlist people to pray for us and raise the rest of our financial support.

If you could say one thing to the people reading this interview, what would it be?

Please pray for us. God works through the prayers of His people. I would also challenge any young people to consider foreign missions as a career.

- First non-AFLC congregation to order: Christ Lutheran Church (TAALC), Chetek, Wisconsin.

- Largest order: Helmar Lutheran Church, Newark, Illinois.

- Most unusual order: Rev. Oskar Salge, a retired pastor who lives in the San Antonio, Texas area, ordered copies for the new AFLC congregation that he prays will bring there someday.

Price: \$14 through August 1, 1994.

For order forms, shipping information or more information contact:

AMBASSADOR Hymnal Sales

3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.

Minneapolis, MN 55441 (612) 545-5631

AFLC Promotion Calendar March 1994 Parish Education

Parish Education News

God blessed the gifts to Parish Education in 1993, so that the necessary printing was done and basic office needs were covered.

Parish Education receives five percent of any undesignated gift to the AFLC and 100% of any gift designated to the department. From the 74% of the budget met last year we are reprinting *Believer Free From the Law*, Martin Luther's *Small Catechism in Illustration* was completed, the subsidy to General Fund was met and the department remains out of debt.

Thank you, dear friends in Christ, for your gifts to Parish Education during 1993. Thank you most of all for remembering to pray for us. There is no doubt about it, without prayer and encouragement from the brethren and God's blessing, our ministry to you would be only our efforts.

There is good news regarding our curriculum revision. All of the fourth grade teachers' manuals are now completed with the spiral binding. The third quarter manual has an excellent section: "The Holy Spirit" (chapter 8) and "The Way of Salvation" (chapters 9 and 10), reprinted from *Ten Studies in the Creed*, by Jacob Tanner.

In fact, all of the revised teacher's manuals contain extra information to assist the teacher in personal devotions, in lesson preparation and in becoming a more effective teacher.

The board members and director are putting concerted effort into the revision of the kindergarten books and we ask for prayer for this project.

—Katha M. Tjelta
Director

Our President Writes

A Vision for Freedom from Debt

"Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another (Romans 13:8).

One of the important goals of the current AFLC — 2000 program is freedom from debt. My report to last year's annual conference stated that our total debt was \$460,000, including the administration building, the ARC, operating expenses deficit, and World Missions.

Many are asking about the current status of this debt, and it is my pleasure to announce that it has been reduced by almost one hundred thousand dollars since the conference report was prepared, to a total of \$360,737.31. For those who wish for specific details, this means that the World Missions deficit has been totally eliminated, the loan of \$22,700 paid off by the ARC, and approximately \$34,000 of the administration building notes redeemed, to mention the most significant reductions.

It is also important to emphasize that the gifts

toward freedom from debt have been over and above regular donations to AFLC ministries. In other words, these amounts were not included in the budgetary totals for the past year, which means that our financial condition is even more encouraging than the 1993 reports indicate. One fact that can be forgotten, too, is that every dollar given to debt reduction means that less is required for interest payments, thus releasing even more funds for ministry.

I am convinced that AFLC people do not approve of debt, and will continue to work together that this burden might be lifted. Thank you for your generous gifts to every area of our common endeavors, as well as for your support of the vision for financial freedom. Let us share together prayerfully in this goal that we might gather at the annual conference in June with the debt totally eliminated.

—Rev. Robert L. Lee

Schools Receive Funds

The Association Free Lutheran Seminary and Bible School have received their fourth quarter, 1993 IMPACT/IMPACT PLUS money. The Seminary was give \$2,635 from 28 gifts and the Bible School received \$4,060 from 50 gifts. Inviting Member Participation in Aiding Lutheran Colleges and Theological Seminaries programs match Lutheran Brotherhood members' gifts of \$25 to \$100 per year to Lutheran institutions of higher education. 1993 was the fourteenth year of the program and the schools have received a total of \$241,011 from IMPACT/IMPACT PLUS.

Annual Alumni Basketball Tournament

April 8-9, 1994

North Hennepin Community College



The 1993-94 AFLBS Choral Club.



The 1993-94 AFLBS Choir.



AFLBS women's basketball team, Wendy Qualley, coach.



The men's basketball team, John Greven, coach.

Teams to Play at Nationals

AFLBS basketball is more than just playing to win. Our teams consistently give their all in playing to the best of their ability.

Despite the fact that we have no gym of our own, and are able to practice only twice a week in King of Glory's gym in Eden Prairie, the teams have won the honor to play at the NBCAA national tournament in Oklahoma City March 17-19!

CONGRATULATIONS AFLBS CONQUERORS!

Our players are a credit to our school and the Lord they live for. From other Christian colleges who are our opponents, we often hear statements like: "It's good to see Lutherans who really love the Lord!" In many cases our teams clearly testify to the Lordship of Christ in their hearts. We thank God for those who live Colossians 3:17: "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father."

—Rev. Donald Greven, Dean

AFLBS is all about. It is the focus of the student life here on campus. Thankfully the Lord has given the students the opportunity to play basketball while strengthening their spiritual walk. We can speak from experience that the fellowship and fun time spent together as a team are great! Our goal as coaches is that each player would not focus only on the scores of games, but rather on playing their hardest and always giving 100%. We pray that is the desire of each player.

—John Greven and
Wendy Qualley, coaches

Treasuring God's Word is what

Spring Tour Schedule Choral Club

Marian Christopherson, director

April 4 - Salem Lutheran, Radcliffe, Iowa.

April 5 - First Lutheran, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

April 6 - Christ Ev. Lutheran, Tulia, Texas.

April 7 - Christ Lutheran, Wichita Falls, Texas.

April 8 - Our Saviour's, Durant, Oklahoma.

April 10 - Immanuel Lutheran, Springfield, Missouri.

April 10 (p.m.) - St. Paul's Lutheran, Branson, Missouri.

April 12 - Lamb of God Lutheran, Topeka, Kansas.

April 13 - Abiding Word, Deshler, Nebraska.

April 14 - Immanuel Free Lutheran, Centerville, South Dakota.

April 15 - Grace Free Lutheran, Valley City, North Dakota.

April 16 - Good Shepherd Free Lutheran, Cokato, Minnesota.

April 17 - Morgan Avenue Lutheran, Minneapolis.

April 17 (p.m.) - Redeemer Lutheran, Cambridge, Minnesota.

Choir

Jerry Nelson, director

April 4 - Zion-Sarpsborg, Dalton, Minnesota.

April 5 - Zion Lutheran, Tioga, North Dakota.

April 6 - Bethel Lutheran, Frontier, Saskatchewan.

April 7 - Faith Free Lutheran, Kalispell, Montana.

April 8 - Atonement Free Lutheran, Arlington, Washington.

April 10 (9:30) - Elim Lutheran, Lake Stevens, Washington.

April 10 (11 a.m.) - Calvary Lutheran, Everett, Washington.

April 10 (p.m.) - Our Redeemer Lutheran, Kirkland, Washington.

April 11 - Spencer Creek Lutheran, Eugene, Oregon.

April 12 - Bethany Lutheran, Astoria, Oregon.

April 13 - Bethany Lutheran, Spokane, Washington.

April 15 - Bethel Lutheran, Faith, South Dakota.

April 16 - Abiding Savior Lutheran, Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

April 17 - Christ the King, Pipestone, Minnesota.

April 17 (p.m.) - Living Word, Eagan, Minnesota.

Baltic Bulletin No. 6

Our family had been invited to spend the night in the little village of Mustvee, Estonia on the Russian border. We had enjoyed a delicious meal and had settled into comfortable chairs around the fireplace in the spacious living room. We were in the home of Pastor and Mrs. Eenok Haamer and his family. Pastor Haamer is the rector of Tartu Theological Academy as well as pastor of four Lutheran congregations in the Mustvee area.

After singing some of the familiar hymns and choruses together, we asked Eenok to tell us some things about his early life and how the Lord had led him until the present time. I had heard part of the story before but wanted my family to hear firsthand of God's faithfulness in this man's life.

Eenok's father, Harry, had been a well-known and much-loved Estonian Lutheran pastor at the time the communists took over the country in the early 1940's. Because of his courageous stand for Christ and his unwillingness to compromise his Christian ministry for the sake of peace with the communists, Harry was arrested by the KGB and sent to Siberia where he remained in a prison camp for nearly eight years. His wife and two children, including Eenok, escaped and hid in the forests of southern Estonia during most of that time; all the while hunted by the KGB who were intent on sending them to Siberia as well. At night they lived in underground dirt shelters. Often during the day, they were invited to spend time in the homes of people nearby. It was mainly Christian believers who sustained them with gifts of food and shelter all those years.

The family was spared arrest several times in miraculous ways. At one point, 40 soldiers surrounded a house where they were staying but were strangely kept from detecting the presence of the Haamer family inside.

Another time, soldiers, unaware that they were on the wanted list, examined the registration documents of Eenok's mother and failed to notice that the documents had expired long before. After many years, the Haamer family was reunited and Harry continued preaching, teaching and writing until his death in the 1980's. Eenok's mother is still living as is his sister who is a well-known opera singer and fervent Christian witness in prisons and hospitals.

Through the long and difficult years under communism, Eenok has served as a pastor. It was not until the mid-1980's that there began to be some religious freedom. Now, with the complete freedom for the Christian faith as well as the openness and desire of people to learn about the Bible, Eenok wants to use every moment to the fullest for the spread of the gospel.

The needs are very apparent in Estonia. Though the nation has made more gains economically than its Baltic neighbors, many people, especially the elderly, are barely able to eke out a living. Political tensions remain high because of the continuing presence of Russian army units in Estonia. Recent threats from Russian leaders have made many Estoni-

ans fearful that they will soon lose their precious independence once again. Estonian Christians observe that the long years of communist indoctrination and influence have twisted the moral values of many people. The most obvious evidence of this is the prevalence of fraud and deception on all levels.

The root problem is the great spiritual vacuum that was left in the wake of communism. An indication of this is the drastic change in church affiliation. For example, in 1940, 80% of the population were members of a Lutheran congregation. Now, only ten percent claim any church connection and a mere one percent attend church regularly. Adding to the spiritual crisis is the coming of eastern and western cults to spread their false teaching.

Sadly, some of the Lutheran pastors who cooperated with the KGB during the communist era are still in positions of leadership in the church. These are some of the same ones who appear to be the most resistant to current efforts toward spiritual renewal and evangelism. Lord willing, in our next month's article, we will describe a major effort toward the restoration of spiritual life in Estonia as we focus on the ministry of Tartu Theological Academy.

—by Dr. Francis Monseth
AFLTS dean on a teaching
sabbatical in Latvia.

Notice on Church Extension Fund Loans

Effective March 1, 1994, the rate of interest paid on loans to Church Extension was lowered from seven (7) to six (6) percent. The funds continue to receive loans with the stipulation that new loans shall not exceed \$50,000. The Home Missions Committee as custodian of the fund lowered the rate so as to bring it more in line with commercial rates. For information on loans to Church Extension, please contact the Home Missions office.

— Rev. Elden Nelson, Director of Home Missions

1994 Youth Leadership Conference

"Foundations For Life"

July 18-22 at the Bible School campus.

Register by May 1, 1994 (612) 545-5631

Generational Gaps in the Church

Outside of the family, congregations should be the seat of the warmest Christian fellowship on earth. No generational gap should ever be present. The Body of Christ does not function well if one part (member) lords it over another.

Children are brought to the Lord in Holy Baptism. But they must be nurtured in that faith, taught the Scriptures, upheld by prayer, and inspired by example. The older generation alone can do that.

In some homes the time may come when the youth feels the parent has no more to offer except support, and counsel and warning is rejected. Many of our present educators foster this. This is devastating to the home, a heartbreak for the parents, and results in tragedy for the children as some of them will realize later.

The same can happen in a congregation and church body. The young may reject the concerns and counsel of the seniors, who are far from perfect but have borne the heat of spiritual struggles that are largely foreign to the young.

When the AFLC was established it was said it would not last because most of the organizers were either gray-haired or bald. This was the strength of the group, however. The seniors recognized the allurements and pitfalls. They were devoted to the simplicity of Scriptural truths. The proclamation of the law and the gospel was the center, not exciting innovations.

The youth are an important part of the church. They are not the church of tomorrow but a vital part of the church of today.

Paul had left Timothy, a young pastor in his thirties to minister Ephesus. In the Timothy epistles Paul, inspired by the Spirit, writes to Timothy with counsel all believers must heed.

"Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set

an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity" (I Timothy 4:12).

Some looked down on Timothy because of his youth. They were not to do that. The young have much to contribute in the church. They are to be loved and patiently understood. However, they are not to be feared and thought infallible as dotting seniors might. As with all believers, they must face the trying of the spirit (I John 4:1). This may be resented.

This verse places a tremendous burden on Timothy and every believer. That part of the verse is often ignored. Timothy was to be an example to the believers in his congregation. The young are to be examples to the believers. Note, they are not told to be an example to the world. Some try to win the world in ways that are offensive to mature believers. This influence on the world, if there is any, will be fleeting indeed. They are to be examples to believers, not to lead outwardly primarily, but "in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity." If they are not examples in these ways they should be very cautious in their expressions and actions. If these virtues are

absent they should not be given overt opportunities for service in the church. Zeal and/or gifts are not the primary criteria. This is true for all ages. While they may appear out of step to some, and are not infallible, there is no doubt but that the Scriptures give the leadership in the church primarily to the mature believers.

Tragically, ambition, pride, jealousy, envy, and self-preservation are common sins in the church. These are the reasons most of the gaps come between the generations. Humility, genuine love, followed by confession and communication, is the only remedy. We must not forget that wisdom is not to die with any of us, as we read in the book of Job.

Unfortunately the church itself may foster generational gaps by its program and activity, so easily akin to our humanistic culture instead of the separation and godliness taught in the Scriptures. This is a great tragedy — the church committing suicide — while it may be looking outwardly successful.

— Rev. John P. Strand
Remer, Minnesota

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences — January 1 - January 31, 1994

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN JANUARY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$253,591.00	\$15,183.52	\$15,183.52	6
Seminary	148,000.00	8,959.78	8,959.78	6
Bible School	232,562.00	10,549.66	10,549.66	5
Home Missions	319,086.00	15,016.34	15,016.34	5
World Missions	342,788.00	29,592.55	29,592.55	9
Capital Investment	37,395.00	1,223.36	1,223.36	3
Parish Education	67,868.00	2,924.96	2,924.96	4
ARC	8,600.00	197.15	197.15	2
Church Extension	10,000.00	300.37	300.37	3
TOTALS	\$1,419,890.00	\$83,947.69	\$83,947.69	6
1993	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0
Goal 8%				
*No totals due to 11 month fiscal year.				

PEOPLE and PLACES

Rev. Curtis Emerson, Sartell, Minnesota, resigned in January from Granite Free Lutheran Church in nearby St. Cloud. His future plans are indefinite.

Binford, North Dakota — Bethany Lutheran Church is completing construction of their new building located next to their 91-year-old facility. The congregation expects to hold their first worship service in the new sanctuary on Easter Sunday.



Edwin C. Mathison
1907-1994

Edwin C. Mathison, 85, of Bagley, Minnesota, died at Greensview Health Care Center, Bagley, on January 10, 1994.

He was born in Sinai, South Dakota, on June 30, 1907, to Ole and Kari Mathison. After high school he attended the Red Wing Seminary and the Mohler Barber College in Minneapolis, Minnesota. On August 16, 1933, he married Mildred Holm. A year later they moved from South Dakota to the Rice and Minerva Township area near Bagley. Ed was a farmer, a school janitor, a Rawleigh dealer and an insurance salesman. As a lay pastor, he served congregations in Bagley, Shevlin, Redby, Bemidji, Winger, McIntosh, Fosston and Newfolden, Minnesota, and Tioga, North Dakota.

Survivors include his wife, Mildred, of Bagley; one daughter, Clarice Austinson of Ada, Minneso-

Therefore ... stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

I Corinthians 15:58

Mrs. M.E. (Jennie) Helland

Mrs. M.E. (Jennie) Helland, 99, passed away at a hospital in St. Cloud, Minnesota, on January 20, 1994. She had lived in a rest home in Sartell, Minnesota, since 1988. She was the widow of Rev. M.E. Helland, a pastor in the former Lutheran Free Church.

Mrs. Helland was a contributor to *The Lutheran Ambassador* in its early years. She was also one of the last of a generation of pastors and pastors' wives, as noted by her age.

She is survived by three sons, Philip, Burnsville, Minnesota, Jean, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and Rev. Erling, Fairview Park, Ohio; one daughter, Florence Borman, Montevideo, Minnesota; 12 grandchildren and ten great-grandchildren.

She was preceded in death by a daughter, Mildred, a granddaughter, Mary, and nine brothers and sisters.

Her funeral was conducted at New Luther Valley Lutheran Church, McVille, North Dakota, where she was a member. Rev. Wesley Langaas officiated at the January 27 service. Interment was in the church cemetery.

Blessed be her memory.

ta; two sons, Roal Mathison of Battle Creek, Michigan, and Earl Mathison of Granite Falls, Minnesota; nine grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren; numerous nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his parents, six brothers and four sisters.

His funeral was January 15 at Rice Free Lutheran Church, Bagley, with Pastor Lyle Twite officiating. Burial was at the church cemetery.

Blessed be his memory.



Pastor Verle E. Dean
1924-1994

Pastor Verle E. Dean, 70, of Spicer, Minnesota, passed away on February 8, 1994, in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

He was born on February 6, 1924 near Butterfield, Minnesota, to Fred and Florence (Buche) Dean. When he was a young boy, his family moved to the Spicer area. After high school, Verle served in the U.S. Navy during World War II. On May 10, 1944, he was united in marriage to Clarice Freese at Willmar, Minnesota. He drove truck before beginning to serve as a lay pastor. From 1956-64 Verle worked with Youth for Christ. He served the Redby, Minnesota, Lutheran Indian Mission until 1972, after which he went to Culbertson, Montana. He served congregations in Ferndale, Washington; Scandia of Sedan Minnesota; and was serving Gausdal Lutheran of New London, Minnesota, just prior to his death.

Verle is survived by his wife, Clarice; their five children, Vernon Dean of Spicer; Patricia Dahl of Starbuck; Faith Banken of Morris; Daniel Dean of Farwell; and Troy Dean of Prior Lake, all in Minnesota; nine grandchildren and five great-grandchildren; three brothers, Floyd, Eldon and Gordon Dean; numerous nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his parents, one brother and one sister.

Funeral services were held on February 12 at Green Lake Lutheran Church of Spicer. Rev. Wendell Johnson was the officiant. Interment was at Green Lake Lutheran Cemetery.

Blessed be his memory.

How He Said It

I don't remember much of what he said, but I will never forget how he said it. Pastor Verle Dean spoke at our district Bible camp and at special meetings in my home church one summer. Snappy phrases and heart-warming illustrations are not what I recall from that time. What I remember is being a young man who was touched by a man who loved Jesus and wanted others to love Him too.

God brought Pastor Verle Dean's time on this earth to a close recently. Hearing the news reminded me of that summer. It also reminded me of what is evangelism and pietism.

Evangelistic and pietistic are possibly two of the words used the most to describe who we are in the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations. Many different ideas may exist, however, as to what these terms mean.

Pastor Dean had an impact on me because Jesus and His gospel made a difference to him. He spoke of what God had done for him; how He had saved him and changed his life forever. He preached because he knew the love of God.

Evangelism begins with a heart that has been moved by God. An evangelistic person is one who knows the great things God has done for him in giving Jesus to die on the cross and rise again from the dead. Out of overflowing love for Christ comes a desire to share the good news with others.

I did not consider Pastor Dean to be evangelistic because of the methods he used. Experiencing the love of God and then sharing it is what makes one evangelistic.

Knowing God's love and having your life transformed by it is also an essential part of pietism. Pastor Dean claimed to be a changed man because of what God had done. I remember him sharing his testimony one evening about how restless and weary he had been. Someone encouraged him to read Matthew 11:28. Jesus' invitation to "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" changed his life.

The way God leads different people to live out their faith will vary. True pietism is not about assembling a bunch of toy soldiers who all talk and walk exactly alike. It is about having beliefs that impact how we live.

Some have sound doctrine in their head that has never reached their heart. They know the right things, but they have never acted on it. The gospel

has been heard, but not permitted to do a work of transformation.

Doctrine has done its job when it has made a difference in our lives. An evangelistic and pietistic individual is first of all a transformed person. He is a person who has been filled with so much love from God that he just has to share it and live it.

What Happened to the Body?

The newspaper article claims the university professor's book, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*, "sheds light on 'real' Jesus." The traditional Christian beliefs regarding Jesus are dismissed as simply ideas concocted by the early church. Contemporary scholarship, according to the professor, has shown the "real" Jesus to be not the same man talked about in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

The professor's research cannot come up with the answer to a crucial question. While he does not believe Jesus literally rose from the dead, he is forced to admit "I don't know what happened to the body." Like so many others who have attempted to disprove historic Christianity he is thwarted by the fact that, while a death occurred, no body was found in a tomb.

His opponents hated Jesus so much they put Him to death. After they crucified Him, they had His tomb sealed tight. When His followers spoke of His resurrection, the best way to squelch the movement would have been to produce the remains of this one they said was alive. If it had been possible to put the dead body of Jesus on display His enemies would have and could have done it; but they could not.

Not long after the crucifixion over 500 people said they saw the body of Jesus. It was the most alive body they had ever seen. That body was never laid in a tomb again.

The Christian's faith does not rest on cleverly invented tales. It is not simply traditions we maintain or feelings we generate. Our faith rests on an event whose validity meets the strictest of historical standards. I know Jesus is alive — no one has ever produced a shred of solid evidence to the contrary. I know He is alive — the testimony of eyewitnesses and countless others throughout the centuries is irrefutable. I know He is alive — I meet with Him every day. I hope you do too.

Why Would a Good God Allow Evil and Suffering?

One of the toughest days I have faced as a pastor came about six months ago. My phone rang at the office and the voice on the other end informed me that the young mother of three who I had been ministering to over the last year had died during the night after a long and bitter battle with cancer. I gathered my things and went over to her home to be with the family.

When I arrived I was met by family members who all looked exhausted, their faces filled with tears and pain. We hugged and cried, and I expressed my deepest sympathy to them. It was then that the husband of the deceased cried out, "This isn't fair. God has left me with three small children to raise, my wife is dead before her 30th birthday, and the last year has been pure torture for all of us. My kids don't understand what has happened to their mom, and all I have to say is, how could a loving God do something like this?"

It's a good question. It is a question that often comes to the surface when one comes face to face with pain or tragedy.

Atheists have long taken advantage of tragedy and suffering to prove once and for all that there is no real God. They use this philosophical argument: If God desires there be evil in the world, then He is not good. If He does not desire there be evil, yet evil exists, then He is not all powerful. So if evil exists, God is either not loving or not all powerful. On the surface, that may sound like reasonable logic, but it has some major flaws.

To understand evil and its nature, one must go back to the first three chapters of the Bible in the book of Genesis. We can summarize those three chapters this way, God created the heavens and the earth and all things on the earth including ani-

mals and people, and He said that everything He created was good. Therefore, in the beginning there was no evil in the world. We can further summarize that God created people with a purpose to be in a relationship with Himself, and therefore seeks to be a personal God and not some abstract spiritual concept or impersonal force.

But God also created us with a free will and this ability gives people the capacity to know and love God in return. This love for God can not be forced. There was and is no divine arm twisting! God does not force us to love Him. He simply chose to love us and gave us the capacity to respond to His love. However, God's first-created people chose to disobey God, and that free choice put them and all of us on a collision course for evil to exist henceforth. In a nut shell, evil was not created or condoned by God, rather it was chosen by man!

Evil has produced terrible consequences. It initially separated us from God. But another devastating consequence of evil is suffering and hardship. Physical sufferings and diseases, for example, are a result of a fallen world. Evil's impact can be seen and felt in loneliness, breakdown in the family, broken relation-

ships, sadness, depression, isolation ... all from a fallen, evil world.

But there is good news about evil, too! God has promised to destroy evil once and for all and the terrible consequences that it has unleashed on our world. He tells us in His Word that Christ will come again to destroy evil and bring about a new Kingdom where there is no more pain and no more tears. Most importantly, Christ has come to repair the broken relationship that has occurred because of evil and sin, the relationship that was broken when Adam and Eve disobeyed.

You and I had no choice when we were brought into this world; your parents made that decision. But you do have something to say about where you spend your eternity.

To be continued ... Next month we will conclude this topic by asking, "How does one cope with suffering and trials while we are still on this earth?"



— Rev. Jim Ritter