

# THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

May 3, 1988

*But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear him,  
and his righteousness with their children's children —  
with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts.*

Psalm 103:17, 18



# LIGHT on the WAY

## meditations on God's Word

COVER: photo by S. Hjermstad

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### THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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## THE CHRISTIAN HOME

**F**or I have chosen him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice; in order that the Lord may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him" (Genesis 18:19 NASB).

The revival society needs most today is the revival of the Christian home. It is more important than the revival of the church. The home is older in God's plan. No revival gets far enough or lasts long enough if it does not affect the home. The character of the church is fixed by the home.

While it is of utmost importance to get people saved, if salvation is to last and get the best results, it will be because of parental example and prayer, because of the holy influences wielded by a godly father and a pious mother in a Christian home.

The home as an institution is fighting for its life. The high cost of living, the rush of modern life, all the fads which claim our time, promising much and giving little, the speed mania, the leisure/recreation mania, all are a menace to the quietness and simplicity of a true home. The table used to be the social center, where all the family met at mealtime, but now it's often difficult to get everyone together for even one meal a day. The bond of common life in the home is broken.

Regard for the sanctity of the marriage vow has declined. Marriages are not only entered lightly but also lightly set aside. Divorces can be obtained for any whim and the court dockets are congested. Living together has become so commonplace that it is even tolerated by many who call themselves Christians. The prevalent low views on marriage are another indication of the decline of the Christian home.

There is also a decline in parental authority. The secret of self-control is lodged in the thought of being controlled. But in the average home parental authority is a joke. If your children are ruling the roost you have been weak enough to permit it. It is bad for you but worse for them. A sense of the value of authority and restraint must be instilled in every child.

There is a decline in religious instruction. Your child's soul doesn't stand a chance if he or she has not been taught how to pray and the great truths about God and eternity. What is the religious life in your home? No doubt you provide well for the physical wants. Are you making provision for the spiritual? Is a blessing asked at your table? That is more important than what goes on the table. Do you have a family altar? If you care anything for your home, for the character of your children, for their present or eternal welfare, beware of a prayerless home.

The Christian home is needed for the sake of the nation. We must have leaders who possess strength and courage to stand up for their convictions and citizens whose ideals are high and clean. No nation is better than the home life of its people.

The Christian home is needed for the sake of your children. You love them and would do anything for them. But are you setting a Christian example? Are you sending them out into life with strong Christian principles so they can stand when temptations come? You feel that leaving your children enough money to be independent will be about the best you can do. It may be the worst. Money is the least valuable thing you can leave them. It so often becomes a curse. Have you ever known personal salvation to be a curse? It isn't money you need to leave your children, but faith in Christ as Lord and Savior, character, willpower, habits of reverence, of industry and devotion to duty.

God help us save our homes! If I had but one message, the chance to say one word to our nation and age, it would be a plea for the revival of the Christian home.



by Rev.  
Jerome C. Nikunen



**P**roverbs 1:8: "My son, hear the instructions of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother."

I have selected the Gospel of John, chapter 14:1-12, for this Mother's Day message, as it speaks of comfort and also the promise that we find in Jesus. This can also be applied to our Christian mothers.

It has been said by great statesmen and many other great leaders that when mothers fail it means the collapse of a nation. It is through mothers that we reach the young minds and produce the development of believers. It is the mothers who form the Christian attitude for our children. Mothers make a victorious church. This makes you mothers today and all days very important, not only in the home, but also all over the world.

Mothers, today we honor you, not just for a day but for every day of the year. The importance of your place in the home, community, church, city and nation is unmeasurable and we see that homes are failing in our nation today, which means that we need to get back to the home and the mothers who bind the home together. We can go on to say many things to you to offer guidance and comfort to your family. It can never be overstated, your place in the home. I ask you this day, can you as Christian mothers keep up the work that is needed to keep us strong? Mothers, today our prayers go out to you; walk with God. Give us your strength to keep going forward with God.

In Isaiah 66:13, it is stated, "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." In John 14:1-12 we find words of comfort and also a promise. We find Jesus saying, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me." Comfort in Christ, this leads me to look at Christian mothers today, how they are the comfort for the whole family. And then Jesus in the next verse gives us a promise. Again on this Mother's Day, I feel in my heart that the promise of the mother is next to the promise of Jesus. We see in these verses a general caution which Christ gives to His disciples against a troubled heart. The disciples were troubled by many things, so Jesus said, "Let not your hearts be troubled." When walking with God we must watch so that we are not troubled. This may lead us into confusion. We must not hurry, we must think things out, we must ask the Lord's guidance in all we do. This, then, is a resemblance to Christian mothers as her children come to her for guidance. It comes from the heart, her love for her children. Just as Jesus is telling his disciples, the word "heart" here means keeping possession of nothing else. Keep your heart in all diligence, open your heart to all of God's works. Keep your heart in tune to all spiritual guidance that has to do with your

# MOTHERS, WE HONOR YOU



life. God will comfort you as you are His disciple.

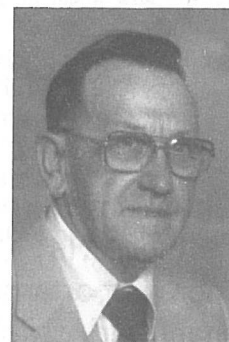
Let not your heart be troubled, no matter how much others are overwhelmed with all the troubles and sorrows of this present time. This should not affect us as Christians. We should know better and put ourselves above all earthly things. We must believe that there is a God and that he is most holy, wise, powerful and good, just as a little child looks upon his mother.

"Believe also in Me." Through Christ we become interested in God's favors and promises, which otherwise, as sinners, we must despair of. By believing in Christ as a mediator between Christ and man, our belief in God becomes a comfort. This is the will of God. We must honor the Son as well as the Father. We must believe in the Son as we believe in the Father. This is an excellent way of keeping trouble from the heart.

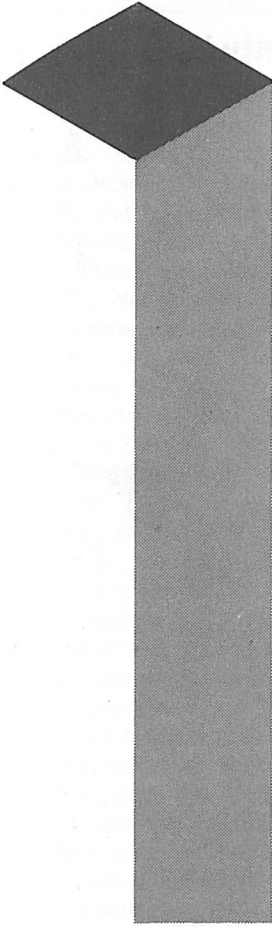
In my Father's house. His house is that of the King of kings and Lord of lords and we know there are many mansions for there are many sons. (Are we among them?) The assurance is built on Christ's Word and His going away for the purpose of preparing a place for his disciples. Yes, He will come again to take them to this blessed place, for He tells us that where He is, there we shall be also.

If He has prepared a place for us, He will prepare us for it. Christ died on the cross to atone for our sin and in the last day will raise our bodies so we can be forever with Him. In this

**"Mothers  
make a  
victorious  
church."**



*by Pastor  
Edwin J. Kjelstrom  
Rugby, N. Dak.*



**I**n such unlikely sounding places as "Church Polity and Administration," a course taught last year by Pastor Robert Lee at our seminary, you are brought into contact with the writings of early Free Lutheran men such as Georg Sverdrup and later presidents of the Lutheran Free Church such as John Stensvaag. In such a time as ours, their answers to the question, "What is a Free and Living Congregation?" are both timely and helpful. In the final exam of the course, Pastor Lee challenged us to look at what they taught and believed concerning the congregation, in terms of its foundation, its framework, and its function.

A. A Free and Living Congregation can be defined as a group of believers which has as its *foundation* the Person of Jesus Christ as revealed in His Word (II Timothy 2:19) and which is inspired by that Word to have a missionary vision to reach the lost. How is this manifested within the group?

First, it must be recognized that a true congregation is one which is made up of believers. This does not mean that everyone who is externally a member of the local congregation is a believer, but rather that all who are believers make up the true congregation. Those who are not believers are not members of the true congregation, even though they belong to the external membership role. With this in mind, and recognizing that God is the judge of man's heart,

# WHAT IS A FREE and LIVING CONGREGATION?

within the congregation it is not taken for granted that all are saved, but rather it is the hope to bring them into a right relationship with Christ through the "quickenings preaching of the Word of God." Room is left for "earnest seekers" to become part of the external congregation, in order that they are brought into contact with the Word and converted.

Yet, the believers within the congregations are to be "set apart" because of what Christ has done for them. Sverdrup noted that the three marks of a living congregation were that they were praying, witnessing and instructing their

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## MOTHERS

"... the role of the Christian mother... is more important than ever before."

hope we will never be disappointed. The promise of the Lord will never deceive us.

Our Lord tells us in these verses, after the instructions that He had given, that they must surely know the place where He was going. "I am the way, the truth, and the life." 1.) Christ is the sinner's way to the Father and to heaven. 2.) He is the truth. This should be the doctrine of the church. 3.) He is the life, and by Christ is the way. He is the resurrection and the life. In the knowledge of God as our Father, the soul is satisfied. Many may know Christ, but not the way. A great weakness of Christ's disciples was that they did not know what to pray for. As Christ instructed Philip, we must also see and follow these instructions. We must see the Father in Him. The Father of light, God as the God of power (shown us through the miracles of Christ). We must look at the holiness of God (shown us in the life of Christ). I and the Father are one.

So I find in these verses that we can turn to God through His Son, Jesus Christ, for our comfort in times of troubles and as God's chil-

dren put all our belief in Jesus, His Son. Let us then look at how Jesus cares for His children, and we are all His children if we believe.

On this Mother's Day, which should be every day, we see how little children depend on their mothers in time of trouble, taking comfort in and believing all things that Mother tells them. So the role of the Christian mother in today's world is more important than ever before. Let us make every day a Mother's Day, in Jesus' name.

### Biographical Sketch

Lay pastor Edwin J. Kjelstrom spent 22 years in the U.S. military service, retiring as a chief warrant officer. He and his wife Leona have been married for 42 years. They have a son, Kent, who is a major in the U.S. Air Force and one, Kerwin, who is a police sergeant, living in Grand Forks, N. Dak. There are five grandchildren. Pastor Kjelstrom reports that he accepted Christ as Savior in a foxhole during World War II. He currently serves Tunbridge Lutheran Free Church.

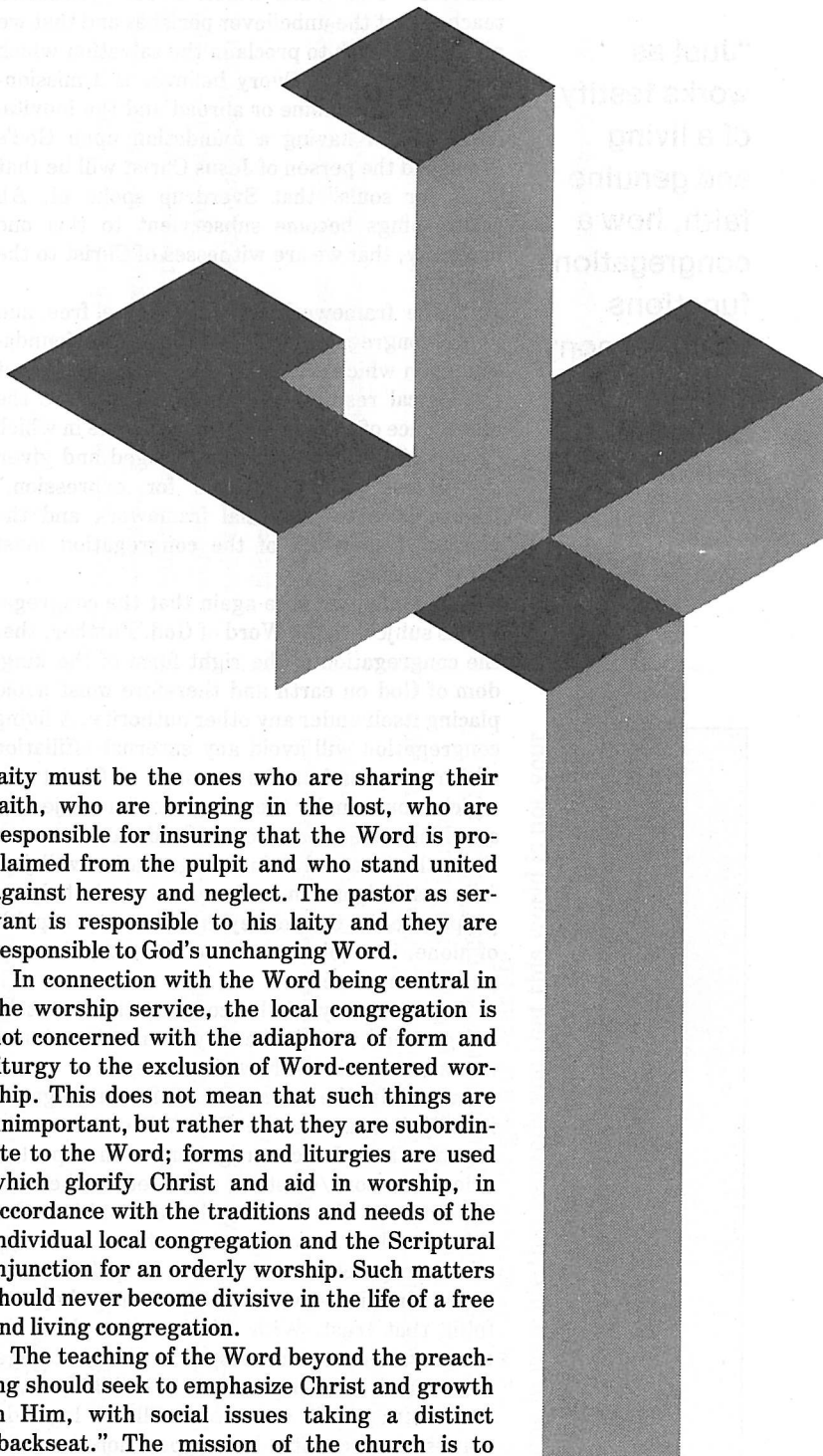


children in the Word. Christians are to be different from the world, set apart as a witness to the truth of God's Word. The living congregation prays that they would grow in Christ, that others would come to Him and "lay all" on the altar before God. It also witnesses not only through "evangelistic meetings" and regular preaching, but through the personal contact of its people in everyday life. This characteristic is seen to be of vital importance, as Sverdrup further noted that the real sign of a free and living congregation is a *love for souls* (Ephesians 5:2). And a living congregation does not neglect the instruction of its own children, that they might be brought up to love the Word of God and apply it in their own lives. To this end the living congregation must nurture the souls of the parents as well, so that they will begin at home to teach and study with their children, in order that a living and vital faith might result.

The free and living congregation will end up being, then, an evangelizing force (Sverdrup) which reaches out beyond its own walls and seeks out the lost, to give them the message of Christ. The tendency is to equate simple numerical growth with success, but this is warned against as well, as we must guard against evangelism simply becoming a "membership drive." Stensvaag notes that "any such attempt to strengthen the congregation will in reality weaken it, and will in the end prove fatal to true congregational life." We are not to be judges, but, as Stensvaag further notes, "by making it clear in preaching and in private that only such as have come to faith in Christ as their personal Savior ought to join the congregation. At the same time, pastor and people alike are under sacred obligation to seek after the unchurched and the unsaved, and to persuade as many of them as possible to attend the services of the congregation."

Once the unsaved do come to our services, it is then necessary to, in the second place, make sure that they hear the Word of God, which alone can save them! To this end, the free and living congregation is *Word-oriented*. Preaching of the Word is central in the worship service. This is imperative, as we recognize that the Word is itself the very foundation of the congregation. The pastor is "the key," in the sense that he is to be a channel for the Word to go out to the congregation and to a large extent will determine whether others are trained in the Word under his guidance, so that "soul-winners" go out from the congregation. Recognizing the pastor as the key does not in any way detract from the necessity of an involved and active laity in the free and living congregation. The

"The mission of the church is to proclaim the Gospel; if it is faithful in that the solving of the social problems will occur."



laity must be the ones who are sharing their faith, who are bringing in the lost, who are responsible for insuring that the Word is proclaimed from the pulpit and who stand united against heresy and neglect. The pastor as servant is responsible to his laity and they are responsible to God's unchanging Word.

In connection with the Word being central in the worship service, the local congregation is not concerned with the adiaphora of form and liturgy to the exclusion of Word-centered worship. This does not mean that such things are unimportant, but rather that they are subordinate to the Word; forms and liturgies are used which glorify Christ and aid in worship, in accordance with the traditions and needs of the individual local congregation and the Scriptural injunction for an orderly worship. Such matters should never become divisive in the life of a free and living congregation.

The teaching of the Word beyond the preaching should seek to emphasize Christ and growth in Him, with social issues taking a distinct "backseat." The mission of the church is to proclaim the Gospel; if it is faithful in that the solving of social problems will occur. If we first

**"Just as works testify of a living and genuine faith, how a congregation functions is a testimony of its basis and belief."**

try to solve social issues without the foundation of conversion to Christ, we will neither solve social problems nor save souls.

Thirdly, then, the foundation of the free and living congregation is reflected in a "missionary mindset." The Word which is our foundation teaches that the unbeliever perishes and that we need to go forth to proclaim the salvation which is found in Christ. Every believer is a missionary whether at home or abroad and the inevitable result of having a foundation upon God's Word and the person of Jesus Christ will be that "love for souls" that Sverdrup spoke of. All other things become subservient to this one necessity, that we are witnesses of Christ to the world.

B. The framework within which a free and living congregation works reflects the foundation upon which it is built. Sverdrup noted that the logical result of evangelism would be the emergence of a living congregation, one in which "every gift of grace was encouraged and given the fullest possible chance for expression." Hence, both the external framework and the internal framework of the congregation must allow for this.

Externally, we note again that the congregation is subject to the Word of God. Further, that the congregation is the right form of the kingdom of God on earth and therefore must avoid placing itself under any other authority. A living congregation will avoid any external affiliation which compromises the message of Christ and which would make the congregation subject to anything other than God's Word. At the same time, the free and living congregation will joyfully participate in endeavors which help to propagate the Gospel beyond what it is capable of alone, i.e., joint mission endeavors, the support of schools, etc.

The autonomy of the congregation must be safeguarded, as it is the only form of the church revealed to us in the New Testament.

Internally, the framework of the congregation is subject again to the Word. We do see the organization of a congregation, with a pastor, elders (deacons/trustees) revealed in the New Testament. We do see the admonition that things be done in order and that those entrusted with the proclamation of the Gospel are free from administrative chores so that they can fulfill that trust. With this in mind, then, the congregation must develop a working arrangement which is consistent with the biblical model. A constitution, in order to fulfill the legal demands of our country in incorporation, is necessary. And, following such a constitution is imperative, lest by our practice we negate what

we say about ourselves. Voting rights, qualifications for church officers, all must be made subject to the Word of God and the necessity for order and safeguarding the church's mission.

This framework is dependent upon an active laity. All that goes on within the congregation is determined by the laity. Without their involvement, there is no congregational life. As Sverdrup notes, "The congregation must acknowledge its ideal and live under it in daily repentance, prayer, and self-dedication. This is the way to growth." Not just the pastor, but the whole people of God! The "framework" or organization of a congregation must then strive to promote such activity and purposeful outreach by its members, never losing sight of the fact that reaching souls for Christ is its only mission. As the congregation organizes and expands, it is necessary to continually bring its actions before the rule and norm of Scripture to determine if its external organization is helping or hindering its ministry.

C. The question of function is in reality the "test" as to whether or not a congregation is a "free and living congregation," which has its foundation in God's Word and its framework built upon that foundation. Just as works testify of a living and genuine faith, how a congregation functions is a testimony of its basis and belief.

In the matter of external affiliations, how would a free and living congregation act? If we truly believe that the congregation is the right form of the kingdom here on this earth, then we protect it and stand behind it! We do not allow for a "synod mentality" which makes the local congregation subservient to anything other than God's Word. We take procedural safeguards to insure that the congregation alone decides upon its pastor, with no external interference. We insure in our constitutions that no authority is given outside of the congregation in matters of property. We insure that each member of the local congregation can vote without censure or fear of external pressure.

As we do affiliate with other like-minded congregations for the carrying out of missions which are greater than can be borne by a single church, we insure that we do not fall into the "delegate system" which makes us subject to a majority rule on the basis of more votes being counted from a larger, "paper" congregation.

Internally, we organize so that pastors are answerable to their congregations and our people so educated in the Word that they can recognize and stand against error. As this question applies to our own AFLC, in these ways we do have free and living congregations!

But we need to look beyond these things,

going back to our foundation, and recognizing again that ultimately the congregation's function is to proclaim Christ to a lost and dying world. To again quote Sverdrup, "It is the love of souls, an earnest desire that all the lost be saved, which is the *real* sign of a living congregation." Growing memberships mean nothing, apart from the lost being saved; just look at the phenomenal growth of the Mormons! Yet, that is not glorifying to God, but rather an abomination. It all comes back to the question of whether

we are reaching out to the lost and taking care of those who come in, in leading them to Christ. If the congregation does not "function" in this manner, then it is not functioning at all, regardless of the number of programs and activities and the number of people involved.

The framework of the congregation must enable it to carry out its function and the function must be the one which the foundation has given us, to go into all the world — proclaiming the Gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ.

by Michael Crowell  
Student, Association  
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Theological Seminary

## A lesson from Luther

# THE FORGOTTEN PEOPLE IN THE PEW

by Rev. Robert L. Lee  
AFLC Schools Faculty

It may seem like a mere history lesson on the surface. But a plea from the pen of the great Reformer over 460 years ago speaks for some forgotten people in the pews of our churches today.

Martin Luther was a writer as well as a preacher and his works touch many topics. *The German Mass and Order of Service* (1526) has been called his most controversial work on the subject of worship. Certainly it marked the most radical departure from Roman Catholic tradition thus far, suggesting an order of service that seemed quite simple in comparison to the old German mass.

Luther never meant his "deutsche messe" to be the last word on worship. "I kindly beseech all who desire to follow this our order of divine worship, that they by no means make a necessary law out of it," wrote the Reformer. Instead, he encouraged those who already had a good order to keep on using it and that those who were capable of preparing a better one should go right ahead and do so. His plea was not for a common service that would be the same everywhere.

Yet Luther also clearly spoke to the need for a definite *order* of worship. Why? Because of three groups of forgotten people in the pews.

The first was those who are not yet Christians. In other words, an orderly worship service was seen as an important tool for evangelism. This writer recalls the remarks of Dr. D. James

Kennedy some years ago at a conference in Moorhead, Minnesota, chiding Lutherans for having a worship service too difficult for unchurched people to follow. Formality can be an obstacle to outreach, but too much formality can also close the door to those whom we seek to reach for Christ. Don't forget the unsaved.

The second group of forgotten people was the simple. This does not necessarily mean those who lack intelligence, but rather those who lack training or education. Luther's concern, translated into contemporary terms, would be that the people in the pew should not need degrees in liturgies in order to follow the worship service, nor should the service be so novel that it would confuse those who were not accustomed to it. Don't forget the simple.

The final forgotten ones (and the most important of all) were the children. It is a fact that some orders of worship may be too complicated for the little ones to follow. But it is also a fact that the lack of order, or an order that varies from Sunday to Sunday, fails to remember their special needs.

Children are creatures of habit. They usually resist change, for repetition is one of the chief ways for them to learn. Some mature church-goers are concerned about repeating the same words, Sunday after Sunday, fearing that worship might become meaningless. Variety becomes the watchword for them, and they will suggest novel forms of worship with different orders

of service for each week. This approach may avoid the danger of vain repetition, but the children have been forgotten.

Although the 1962 AFLC Declaration of Faith states that no specific order of service is recommended, the annual conferences have twice commended the second order from *The Concordia Hymnal* to our congregation. This service is a simple one, containing a confession of sin and the Creed, as well as some musical responses, with the emphasis on the preaching of the Word of God. It is a service that is contained on three consecutive pages in the back of the hymnal, so that the unchurched visitor should be able to follow it without any confusion.

"But most of all it is done on account of the simple and the young," wrote Luther. It would be best for their sake if the same order of worship would be repeated every Sunday so that they can learn it fully and share in it freely.

But is there no place for variety in worship? Of course! Certainly the hymns add something unique to each service and there is always room for some variation even within a common order. One of the best ways to bring variety to worship, however, is to remember festival services of the church year as occasions to introduce some changes in the usual service order. This practice will serve to make the festival even more special for worship-

cont. p. 14



# THE HOMOSEXUAL REALITY

**A**mong gay activists, also in the churches, it is a dogma that homosexuality is predetermined and irreversible. In addition, it is frequently asserted that not to give expression to one's "sexual orientation" is a denial of the way God made one to be. It is a very dubious dogma, although in the last year it has been promoted vigorously in literature issued by, among others, the LCA. *Dialog* recently ran a symposium that was sharply critical of the LCA study document on homosexuality. In a later issue, a reader writes that the symposium neglected "the empirical evidence" about homosexuality. By empirical evidence he apparently meant the much disputed theories of psycho-sexual determinism advanced by the gay activist network. In truth, much of the church discussion of homosexuality does seem to be indifferent to another kind of empirical evidence. The advocacy of homosexuality as "an alternative lifestyle" typically obscures the reality of the homosexual subculture (no longer so "sub") to which most active homosexuals are attached to one degree or another. Any church group discussing homosexuality should obtain a representative sampling of materials reflecting the reality of the "gay world." These are readily available in major urban areas, and probably everywhere else in America. This does not necessarily mean hard-core gay pornography (although that can help answer the question often asked privately, "What do they actually do in bed?"). Sufficient is a sampling of newspapers and magazines that cater to homosexuals, and are likely available at the local drugstore.

## Exodus

Of course many people would rather not know. Such indifference is often called sensitivity and even Christian love, but the readiness to bless whatever people want to do with their lives can be another way of saying that we really don't care about them. Without some knowledge of the empirical reality, it is difficult to understand why so many want to escape from "the lifestyle," and why there are Christian groups designed to help people do just that. One of the more prominent groups of Christian ex-gays is Exodus International, and study groups should at least be familiar with their material (write Box 2121, San Rafael, Calif. 94912). At least one Lutheran pastor is involved in a "liberating ministry" with gays and is eager to be of help to other pastors, individuals, and church groups. He is Pastor Ronald Bennett of Peace Lutheran Church, 1000 W. Ocean Ave., Lompoc, Calif. 93436. Unfortunately, in official church literature such ministries are either ignored or derided. But, at the very least, these growing ministries are an important factor that must figure in any informed discussion of Christian responses to homosexuality.

## Blessing Captivity

There are homosexually oriented Lutherans, perhaps many thousands of them, who are deeply distressed that their church seems to be blessing the very temptations against which they are contending. A letter received from a woman in California may illustrate the problem: "I am a registered nurse with 10 years experience, but most importantly I have a heart for people in the lifestyle. My pastor has strongly supported me in my struggle to leave the lesbian life, and today I really want to help others come out as well. Maybe you've heard of Exodus International? ... Please don't think that we push 'ex-gay' on anyone or that we are homophobic or anti-gay. It's just the opposite really. We know the Lord has a much richer life for us; we know where we can be alive in Him; and we have a strong compassion for those who are still in bondage (as we have come to know it to be) ... My first reading of anything about homosexuality in the Lutheran Church started with an

advertisement by 'Lutherans Concerned' at the meeting of synod. I wrote for their information and was deeply confused. Was my church actually condoning what I was coming to learn was sin in the eyes of God? Through Exodus I was learning of Jesus' power to change lives — what was truth? Fortunately I was walking with the Lord for about a year at that time so was able to keep my eyes on Him."

## Things Old and New

Last year she read the LCA study. "I was being called psychologically sick (egodystonic) by my church, while those in the lifestyle were called OK and pastors were urged to counsel them into self-acceptance. 'This from my church?' I yelled at Pastor. He explained it was just a study, not the church's stand." She and her pastor made an appointment to talk with the bishop and "were met by frank rebuttal." "I was told that I was probably never really a homosexual and that we do injustice to try to change someone, whereas he was spreading God's love by his condoning of what people wanted to do ... Let me tell you, that's like telling an alcoholic, a drug addict, or anyone else in bondage that, 'Hey, it's ok. I'm just gonna love you and you can stay forever trapped in what controls you.' Where is the hope in that, where is the healing, where are the 'old things' that have passed away so that all things can be made new, like St. Paul says?" Where indeed?

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"These are people who are daily praying for the strength to resist inclinations and temptations that for two thousand years Christianity has declared should be resisted."

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## HONOR MOTHER AND FATHER

**M**other's Day isn't a religious holiday or festival in the strict sense, but it comes very close to being one and it does fall on a Sunday.

A religious holiday or festival focuses on the Lord God. For instance, Christmas recognizes the Incarnation, God become man in the person of Jesus Christ. Easter remembers the resurrection of Jesus. Thanksgiving is a time to thank God primarily for His benefits.

Mother's Day is a day to honor mothers. But when we think of the fact that mothers and fathers are God's gifts to us, that they are part of His ordained order, why, then it also becomes a spiritual thing to give this special honor to them.

The Christian, at least, cannot think of Mother without thinking of God. That is especially so if Mother is or has been one worthy of high and noble thoughts, for then she looks beyond the things of this world and seeks to instill spiritual values in her children.

"Honor your father and your mother" was etched on the

stone tablet on Sinai by the finger of God. The commandment remains in force to this day. And later, near life's end, when Moses outlined numerous actions which would bring God's curse upon the people, he included this one: "Cursed be he who dishonors his father or mother" (Deut. 27:16). So it is a serious thing to be flippant about honoring one's parents.

Certainly there are situations where children have very little to honor in their parents. That's sad and very difficult, but even there every effort must be made to love and to give honor even though their counsel and example cannot be followed. We sympathize with all such situations.

How blessed and fortunate are all who can without stint give thanks to the Lord for Mother, recognizing the great impact for good which she has had and the sacrifices she has made for her children. Then it is that "Her children rise up and call her blessed," as Lemuel the king wrote in Proverbs 31:28. Many will do that this Mother's Day with much joy and Mother's heart will be warmed and truly be blessed.

"When truth compels us  
to contend, what love with  
all our strife should blend."  
—unknown

### The Other "Others"

For this woman, and for numerous men and women like her, there is no organization in American Lutheranism such as gay proponents have in Lutherans Concerned. That organization is treated very deferentially by much of the church leadership, and played a leading — some say a controlling — role in the shaping of the LCA study. We are repeatedly told that we must listen sensitively to the hurts of others, and that is surely true. But there are many other "others" out there, and in almost every one of our congregations. These are people who are daily praying for the strength to resist inclinations and temptations that for two thousand years Christianity has declared should be resisted. They are hurting — not least because in their struggle they feel that they are now being abandoned by the ministry of the Church.

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*Forum Letter*, Jan. 31, 1988  
(308 West 46th Street,  
New York, N.Y. 10036)

## Darkest day in nation's history

Dear Editor,

Re: Supreme Court Decision on  
Abortion.

Thursday, January 28, 1988, the day the Supreme Court of Canada threw out the criminal code provision on abortion and swung open the door to abortion on demand is the darkest day in the history of our nation. I appeal this decision of the Supreme Court of Canada on behalf of the unborn before the Supreme Court of Heaven!

"Black Monday," when the stock market fell drastically, was a sign of the economic decay on the international scene. "Black Thursday," the day the value of human life created in the image of God fell drastically, is a sign of the moral and spiritual decay on the national scene and a portent of a dark and violent future.

Over the past nineteen years since abortion was introduced we have chosen to take the lives of approximately one million unborn children in our country, the equivalent of the entire population of Saskatchewan. If our federal government doesn't act quickly to overrule the decision of the Supreme Court and prevent the establishment of

abortion clinics across our nation, there may be one hundred thousand or more unborn children "eliminated" each year.

To say the least, I am not very proud of being a Canadian anymore. We have truly become a "throw-away" society where everything that is "unwanted" can be disposed of, including our unborn children. Abortion is the height and depth of the decadence of a spoiled generation whose selfish desires and quest for self-fulfillment has overruled the right to life for their "unwanted" children and created a violent, abusive and immoral society for their "wanted" children. Yuppiedom is a tragic paradise.

Before it is too late, we need to demand that our federal government put an end to this increasing cycle of violence by overruling the decision of the Supreme Court, clearly affirming the right to life of unborn children in our constitution, and by seeking our life-giving solutions to the problems of pregnant women and their children.

Personally, I could never vote for a political party that won't defend the

By Charles Colson, William Morrow/Zondervan Publishing House, 400 pages, hardback, \$15.95.

Lutherans have often been accused of being indifferent to the moral degeneracy and decay in society. They defend themselves against this charge by saying they do not wish to mix the two kingdoms which exist side by side in the world. People like Zwingli and Calvin and the Anabaptists obviously thought otherwise, for we find clear instances where they attempted to make their world bow to what they felt was the rule of God, and sometimes they did it with the implements of worldly war.

It seems to me that in *Kingdoms In Conflict*, Colson clearly recognizes and understands, at least in part, the two-kingdom concept. He says the two kingdoms are meant to be in continual healthy tension. When either kingdom (worldly government, or the Church, which He sometimes calls the kingdom of God) gains the ascendancy, cruel tyranny results. Surely history proves that. The Church has never been able to handle worldly power any better than have worldly governments. The

solution to the problem of two kingdoms living together on a planet occupied by sinners (saved or lost) is to recognize the legitimacy of both kingdoms. God has ordained that both live together in healthy tension till Jesus comes again. Worldly government is to maintain law and order so people can live together quietly and peacefully. The children of the kingdom of God are to do the works of God here on earth, thus demonstrating the benefits and characteristics of the kingdom of God, keeping worldly government from stepping over the boundaries God has assigned to it. Wars, and all kinds of evil things happen when the kingdom oversteps its boundary. The tyranny that occurred in the Dark Ages in the name of God, when the Church overstepped her boundaries, and the tyranny that occurs in Communist lands today, where neither God nor His kingdom are recognized nor allowed, are good examples.

Colson sees two dangers regarding the Church in the world. The first is to attempt to use earthly government to gain what she believes to be right, putting pressure on earthly government to carry out her plan in the realm of social reform. Thus the Church officially enters into the political arena, making demands and giving high-sounding advice. Colson says church leaders are ill-equipped to direct the affairs, nationally or internationally, for which God has made earthly governments responsible. He reminds his readers that Luther is supposed to have said that he would rather be ruled by a good Turk than a bad Christian. Colson is in full accord with that idea. The second danger regarding the Church in the world is that she sees herself as having no responsibility regarding earthly government. Viewing herself as having no responsibility regarding earthly government processes, she no longer sees herself as salt and light. Colson's position is that those of God's kingdom need to live openly as children of the kingdom and thus show those who are responsible for the functioning of earthly government that God's ways work and are best for peace, prosperity and national secur-

ity. Earthly rulers need to be constantly reminded that God's authority extends over them and that they will someday be required to account for their stewardship. Numerous examples of how the salt and light principle works are given in the book.

An interesting portion of the book is Colson's description of the functioning of present-day governments and governmental people, world-wide. Certainly he has had the experience to tell us, having served President (Richard) Nixon in the White House as a close advisor. He says that with the TV and other news media of our day, it is hard to get down to the business of dealing with facts. After all, facts are often boring. The news media wishes to be exciting and the politicians wish to project a charismatic image. So the media reports only that which is exciting. That's why a lot of news reported is only trivia. As for politicians, they know that most people are turned off by lengthy, factual reports, so they busy themselves with talking about things that make for a good image. Colson claims that's why our top politicians surround themselves with people whose purpose is to counsel them on how to project a good image. That is the thing that gets the votes. Certainly this shows the danger of the times in which we live and the importance of the children of God's kingdom living not by fantasy, but according to what the Scriptures teach them.

It seems to me that we are again talking of things that have to do with genuine biblical, spiritual revival. Surely such revival will include a sincerity and zeal for living in godly ways. And if the Lord tarries, that seems to be the only hope for our country.

Colson has said that some have criticized his stand as represented in this book. You may not agree with some things you find in it, but if you are interested in reading a serious book relevant to our times, I can recommend it to you. You will learn many things from it which will help you as you attempt to serve Christ in His kingdom, in this world.

Pastor Emerson Anderson  
Cleveland, O.

## DARK DAY

right of unborn children to life and to a future in our nation.

In the Ten Commandments, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and Responsibilities that the Lord God our Creator has given us, it is stated: "Thou shalt not murder" and there is no doubt that God included our unborn children in that prohibition. Woe to the nation that cuts its children into pieces and dumps them with the garbage!

Jesus preached, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near" (Matthew 4:17). O Canada, repent for the judgment of the Supreme Court of Heaven will be handed down much sooner than you realize!

Yours for LIFE  
Rev. Alvin A. Pinno  
Frontier, Sask.

(Ed. note: Rev. Pinno is the AFLC pastor in Frontier. His letter appeared in the local newspaper.)



B. *In our character:*

- (1) Romans 5:3-4
- (2) Hebrews 12:10-11
- (3) James 1:2-4

C. *In our outreach:*

- (1) John 15:1-2
- (2) II Corinthians 1:4

11. Trials make God's promises precious to us. God's Word is full of them, but let's look at three: (make them personal — use "I," "me," etc.)

A. Isaiah 43:1-2

B. Romans 8:28-29 (note the words "His purpose" and the goal, "likeness of His Son")

C. II Corinthians 4:16-17

\* \* \*

*"And though I groan and writhe beneath my crosses,  
I yet shall see through my severest losses  
the greater gain."*

\*\*\*\*\*

*Personal Application*

1. Why is it harmful to dwell on asking "Why?" (not for discussion)
2. What are your normal reactions (in the flesh) to trials? What verse can you claim as your very own to help you to live in triumph?
3. Think of the greatest affliction you have experienced. Make a list of ways that God wants to use it for good in your life.
4. Everything in your life that reminds you that this world is not your final home is actually a blessing. Thank God for those "blessings" which can help you clear your eternal focus.

THE HIGHER PERSPECTIVE

WMF BIBLE STUDY #6

JUNE, 1988

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FROM TRAGEDY TO TRIUMPH

\*\*\*\*\*

No one is exempt from trials and afflictions of one form or another, but the key to victory is our *response* to them. Each of us must make a choice: Either we can trust God or we can blame Him. Let's look at God's perspective.

*Asking Why*

1. Is suffering always a punishment for wrongdoing?

- A. John 9:1-3
- B. I Peter 2:19-20, 4:19

2. Pain, sickness and death all came as a result of man's fall into sin (Genesis 3:16-19). Therefore, we must realize that much of our earthly experience is just the natural effect of the deterioration and depravity of this sin-cursed world and we can't blame God or ourselves. When will this curse be completely removed?  
Revelation 22:3-6

3. Even creation illustrates this point. In Romans 8:19-23, how is creation's present condition described and what is its hope?

4. We also cannot blame trials on a lack of faith. Among the heroes of faith listed in Hebrews 11, we find two opposite lists in verses 33-35(a) and 35(b)-38.

- A. In a few words, summarize the differences.
- B. What does God say about *all* of them? v. 39

5. It is dangerous to torture ourselves by trying to figure out *why* some tragedy happened or "Why me?" What truths must we accept and then just leave the questions with the Lord?  
A. Deuteronomy 29:29

B. Isaiah 55:8-9

C. I Corinthians 13:9 and 12

### *Our responses*

What happens to us cannot hurt us unless we develop a wrong attitude. Our response determines if our trials will make us "bitter or better."

6. Job is the key example in Scripture of the suffering of the godly.

A. What do we learn *not* to say to others in their afflictions?

(1) Job 8:5-6

(2) Job 22:5

(3) Job 2:9

B. God did not give specific answers to Job about the mystery of suffering and neither do we have to explain or understand why. He reminds Job of His almighty power and wisdom as shown in nature (chapters 38-41). What response did He desire from Job? Job 42:1-3

C. What attitudes gave Job strength to endure?

(1) Job 1:21

(2) Job 23:10

(3) Job 13:15

7. Leaving the "whys" with God, how should we react to trials that come?

A. I Peter 2:21-23

(1)

(2)

B. I Peter 4:12

C. v. 13

D. v. 16

8. Look for the blessing! In Psalm 119, how does the psalmist teach us to have the right response to our afflictions?

A. v. 50

B. v. 67

C. v. 71

D. v. 75

### *God's Lessons*

God's love for us is so great that He may "sacrifice" our outward comfort to accomplish His higher purposes. His power is so great that He can even turn the worst earthly tragedy into great eternal blessings.

9. We clearly see this illustrated in the life and death of Jesus. What were the effects of Christ's suffering?

A. Hebrews 2:10

B. Hebrews 5:8-9

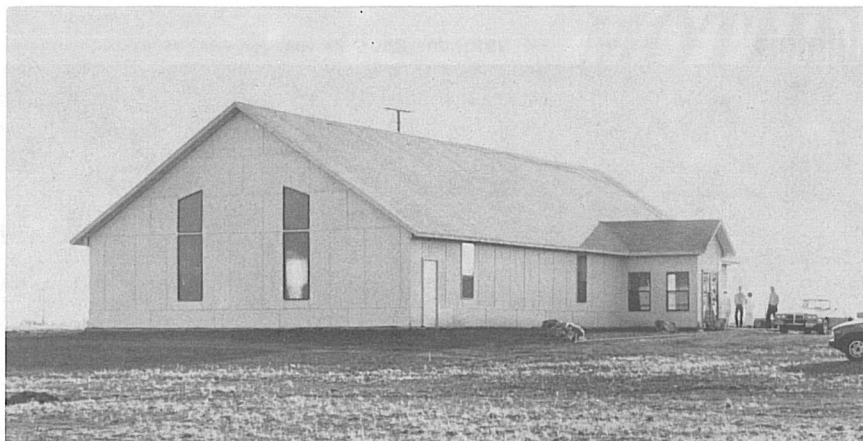
10. What does God want to teach us through suffering?

A. *In our relationship to Himself:*

(1) III Corinthians 1:9

(2) I Peter 1:7

(3) II Corinthians 12:9



The basic structure was up just in time for the Choir Concert at the new home mission congregation in Wichita Falls, Tex.

## Choirs travel north and south

On March 18, two charter buses arrived on the AFLBS campus. Mr. Tom Olson, the Choral Club and Pastor and Mrs. Amos Dyrud loaded a bus and headed north on I-94. Pastor and Mrs. Don Greven and the Choir filled the other bus for 13 days of riding as far south as Mexico.

Voices were excited as "goodbyes" filled the parking lot. The singers knew tours were delightful experiences. But little did they know that this spring's tour would be extra special.

Whether it was in the chilly border town of Warroad, Minnesota or the brand new AFLC congregations in Wheatland, Iowa and Wichita Falls, Texas, the AFLBS choral groups were warmly received. Many host families commented on the student's wholesome Christian testimonies that were seen and heard.

This encouragement was two-sided. For example, the home mission congregation in Wichita Falls, Texas felt that they had finally experienced first-hand some of the AFLC. And for that they expressed great joy and appreciation.

After 10 days of singing from North Dakota to Michigan, the Choral Club returned to campus. The Dyruds, who began the tour, had a family funeral to attend so Seminarian Martin and Arlene Christiansen completed the tour.

Special thanks goes to Emery Otnes, a member of Calvary Lutheran, Fergus Falls, Minn., who arranged to take the

Choir across the border into Mexico to the tourist RV resort he manages.

Appreciation for all the generous hospitality and fellowship shown in every congregation lingers in the hearts of each singer and leader. Students realize they were strengthened in their life as ambassadors for Jesus Christ. For all this they praise God as they return to the normal class schedule.

—S. Hjermstad

### SEMINARY GETS IMPACT FUNDS

Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary, Minneapolis, Minn., has recently received \$1,500 from Lutheran Brotherhood's IMPACT program, Inviting Member Participation in Aiding Lutheran Colleges and Theological Seminaries. The latest payment covers 16 gifts of Lutheran Brotherhood members made during the fourth quarter of 1987.

The IMPACT Program matches, on a percentage basis, Lutheran Brotherhood members' gifts of \$25 to \$100 per year to Lutheran institutions of higher education nationwide.

### YOU ARE INVITED

Annual Spring Concert

May 20, 8 p.m.

AFLT's Chorus, AFLBS Choral Club and Choir

AFLT's and AFLBS graduation service

May 21, 1 p.m.

3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.

## West Coast District Bible Conference

Bethany Lutheran Church, Astoria, Oregon, Rev. Alvin Grothe, pastor, was host to the West Coast District Bible Conference held March 4-6. Also hosted was the District WMF Spring Rally which was held on Friday. Their theme was "Forgiveness With Thee," Psalm 130:4. The theme song was "All In The Name of Jesus." Rev. Richard Gunderson of Lake Stevens, Wash., was morning speaker and Rev. Herbert Franz, Dollar Bay, Mich., was the afternoon speaker for the latter.

Astoria showed its "rainy face" for much of our Conference but there was sunshine in our souls from the Word of God shared and the good warm fellowship together. It was, as usual, so good to have folks with us from various parts of the District. It was a special blessing to have our new friends in the Lord with us from Vernon, B.C., who recently joined the AFLC. We look forward to further fellowship.

The theme of our Bible Conference was "Our God, Our Help," using Psalm 121, and our theme song was "O God, Our Help In Ages Past." Pastor Franz was our main speaker and shared the Word of God with us at Friday night's opening service and on Saturday night, Sunday morning at worship and then again Sunday night, after the closing of the Conference. On Friday he spoke from the theme text, on Saturday from I Peter 1:3-9, and on Sunday morning from I Kings 18:17-40. The topic for his message was, "Revival Is When the Fire Falls." We were so blessed in having both Pastor Franz and his wife Sylvia with us.

Saturday morning Mr. Claire Hoffman of Bethany led us in our prayer time to begin our activities of the day. He brought some very challenging thoughts, using the story of Gideon and his little army, prior to our prayer time. Pastor Gunderson spoke on "God Our Help In the Past" and Rev. Del Palmer of Everett, Wash., spoke on "God Our Help In the Present," Saturday forenoon. After a very delicious lunch served by the Bethany ladies, Pastor Kenneth Moland of Kirkland, Wash., shared on the topic, "God Our Help In the Future." All of these were

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## Introducing new AFLC congregations

### Freedom Lutheran, Ottawa, Illinois

**F**reedom Lutheran Church of rural Ottawa, Illinois, stands on Route 52, about eight miles north of Ottawa. Our sister congregation is St. Petrie Lutheran of rural Leland, Illinois.

The congregation traces its roots to "The Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Congregation," which was organized in 1847. In 1882 the present building known as Freedom Lutheran Church was erected. This building still serves as the main sanctuary with a basement and two additions having been added since. A new front addition was just completed in 1986.

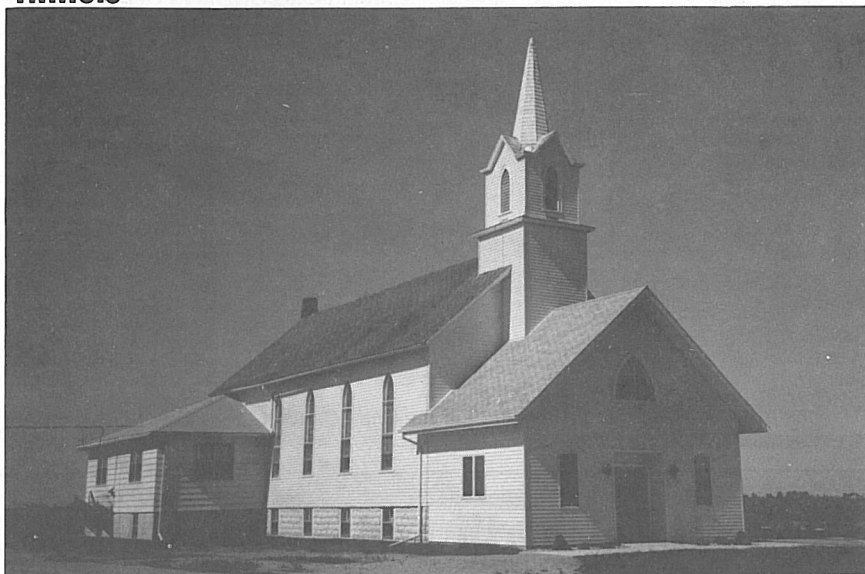
The congregation has been under several synods. The most recent ones being the Evangelical Lutheran Church which was merged into the American Lutheran Church in 1962. We chose not to join the newly formed ELCA. We voted to become part of the AFLC in September of 1987. We have a long history of "low church" with a strong emphasis on evangelism and are therefore happy with what we find in the AFLC.

Freedom Lutheran is served by Lay Pastor Odell Kittelson.

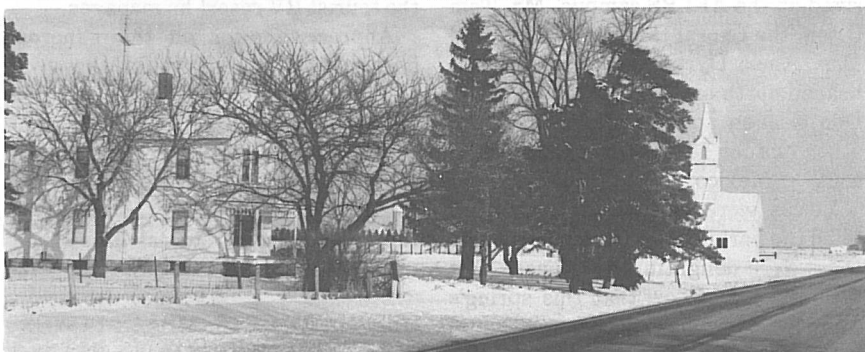
*Lowell Larson*

*Congregational President*

Next time: St. Petrie Evangelical Lutheran Church.



Freedom Lutheran Church



The parsonage with church beyond.

### WEST COAST

such encouraging and challenging studies from the Word of God. Pastor Franz shared Saturday afternoon on the work of the AFLC Home Missions. Pastor Franz is presently the chairman of the Home Missions Committee. Our Sunday morning Sunday School study for the 7th graders through adult was led by Rev. Bill Moberg, Astoria.

Special music for the Conference was provided by a Men's Chorus consisting of the pastors present, a ladies' chorus made up of some of the WMF ladies present and a solo by Pastor Hans Tollefson, who is a former pastor of Bethany and present member and deacon. Pastor Tollefson is now 85 years young and still gifted with a good clear voice. We are so blessed by his singing. Sunday morning our special number was

provided by Pastor Bill Moberg and family together with Pastor Jim Fugleberg and family from Ferndale, Wash. Susan Boyovich and Mrs. (Pauline) Moberg blessed us with organ-piano duets as preludes.

We want to pray for and encourage much better attendance from our West Coast Churches. For our next Bible Conference, in 1989, which will be hosted at Ferndale, the Lord willing, we have Rev. David Barnhart, Eagan, Minn., scheduled as guest speaker. We very much look forward to that day if the Lord tarries.

—Corr.

#### PERSONALITIES

Please make this address change: Rev. Gerald Gettis, 2106 45 Ave., Vernon, B. C., Canada V1T 3M8.

### FORGOTTEN

A Christmas Candlelight Service, for example, can be a holiday highlight for all who share in it.

No, a study of Luther's words on worship is not a mere history lesson. His plea to remember the forgotten people in the pew is as relevant as tomorrow's headlines. Our congregations would do well to give careful heed to his concerns.

### New AFLC congregations

These new congregations have recently been received into the fellowship of the AFLC:

Salem Lutheran Church, Freeman, S. Dak.

Alma Lutheran Church, Argyle, Minn.

## Home Missions News

Faith Lutheran Church, Ottawa, Illinois, the newest AFLC home mission congregation, conducted its first Sunday worship service on April 17th in the local Farm Bureau auditorium.

Ottawa, a north central Illinois city with an 18,000 population, is a key community in the Fox River area where most of our new AFLC congregations in the state are located.

Pastor Robert Lee, AFLC Schools faculty member, will serve the congregation on weekends while a resident pastor is sought. The Larimore, N. Dak., and East Grand Forks, Minn., home mission congregations where Lee has been conducting services since September are now being served by senior seminarian Mark Molstre, who has accepted the call to Larimore.

The Ottawa congregation joins six other new Home Mission congregations that have been established since last Annual Conference.

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The AFLC Home Missions Committee, at a March 29th meeting, voted to establish two new congregations in the northern suburbs of Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minn.

The decision followed inquiries and a newspaper survey of the area, as well as an informational meeting held in the Brooklyn Park High School on March 22nd. An encouraging attendance indicated strong interest on both sides of the Mississippi River, a region that is located equally distant from our other Twin Cities congregations.

## Grand Forks church to build

Trinity Lutheran voted unanimously on Mar. 6 to proceed with construction of a new sanctuary immediately. Presteng Construction of Grafton, N. Dak., will be the contractor. The construction of the sanctuary, with a proposed capacity of 300, along with the remodeling of the present building to make room for Sunday School classes is estimated to cost \$180,000. Volunteer help will be solicited.

Elden Nelson, Home Missions Director is presently investigating possible locations to serve as temporary homes for the proposed new congregations, anticipating that the first worship services can be scheduled for late April or early May.

AFLC friends who know of interested individuals in these areas are asked to submit their names and addresses to the Home Missions office.

## DAY SCHOOL POSITIONS OPEN Minneapolis, Minn.

Medicine Lake Lutheran Academy is receiving applications for teachers certified for both elementary and middle school for the 1988-89 school year.

Direct inquiries to: Mrs. Eugene Enderlein, Medicine Lake Lutheran Academy, 6300 Walker St. (Central Center), St. Louis Park, Minn. 55416.  
**Camarillo, Calif.**

There are teacher openings in the First Lutheran Christian Day School. A Pre-School Director for 150 students is needed, also teachers for pre-school children. A kindergarten teacher and a first grade teacher are needed, as well.

If interested, please contact First Lutheran Church (AFLC), 380 Arneill Road, Camarillo, Calif. 93010. Or call 805-482-8482. Ask for Mr. James Newman or Pastor Orville Hiepler.

**Amery, Wis.**

Mustard Seed Faith Lutheran Academy is receiving applications for teaching positions.

For more information: write Rev. Brian Davidson, Rt. 2, Box 359a, Amery, Wis. 54001.

## In memoriam

Key: The name of the town was the address of the deceased. Following that is listed the name of the deceased, age, date of death, and the church in which he or she held membership.

### MINNESOTA

#### Murdock

**Mrs. Norman (Geneva) Haugen, 66,** Mar. 22, Green Lake, Spicer, Minn. (Mrs. Haugen's husband is the chairman of the AFLC's Board of Pensions.) Newfolden

**Carl Haugen, 83,** Mar. 31, Westaker.

## ANNUAL CONFERENCE

### AGAIN WE REMIND YOU

The people in DeKalb, Ill., who are hosting the 1988 Annual Convention of the Women's Missionary Federation need to know how many women attending will be eating the noon meal at the convention on June 15.

Please let Pastor Dennis Gray know if you plan to eat at the WMF dinner on the 15th. His address is: Rev. Dennis Gray, 112 West Milner, DeKalb, Ill. 60115. Call: 815-758-8727.

Breakfasts and noon meals will be served at the cafeteria each day of Conference.

### RESTAURANTS IN DEKALB

**Fast Foods:** Since DeKalb is a University town there are many fast food restaurants, such as Wendy's, Burger King, McDonalds' and Dairy Queen.

#### Sit-down service:

Hillside Restaurant, 121 N. 2nd, DeKalb, 815-756-4749. Average dinner — \$9.00 (no breakfast).

The New Inn of DeKalb - Village Market, 1212 W. Lincoln Hwy., DeKalb, 815-758-8661. Average dinner — \$7.50.

Matthew Boone's Restaurant, 122 S. 1st St., DeKalb, 815-758-1776. Average dinner — \$9.00 (no breakfast).

Wasco West, 1948 DeKalb Ave., Sycamore, 815-758-2437. Average dinner — \$9.00 (no breakfast).

Carl's Fargo Coach Rooms, State and California, Sycamore, 815-895-4575. Average dinner — \$9.00.

Country Inn, 2496 DeKalb Ave., Sycamore, 815-746-8160. Average dinner — \$9.00 (no breakfast).

Lincoln Inn, 240 E. Lincoln Hwy., DeKalb, 815-756-2345. Average dinner — \$5.00.

Junction Eating Place, 816 W. Lincoln Hwy., DeKalb, 815-758-5441. Average dinner — \$5.00.

#### Pizza:

Pizza Hut, 701 W. Lincoln Hwy., DeKalb, 815-758-6601; 1640 DeKalb Ave., Sycamore, 815-895-9862.

Sgt. Pepper's Pizza, 1022 W. Lincoln Hwy., DeKalb, 815-756-3566; 1598 DeKalb Ave., Sycamore, 815-895-4200.

## OUR NEXT TWO ISSUES

The next two issues of *The Lutheran Ambassador* will contain the program for the 1988 Annual Conference of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations and other pertinent information, including a list of offices to be filled by election.

There will be greetings from the president of the AFLC and from the host pastor, a picture from the campus of Northern Illinois University in De Kalb, Ill., and whatever other helpful information on the Conference that we have in the May 17 and 31 *Ambassadors*.

Conference dates are June 15-19. The Women's Missionary Federation will hold its Annual Convention on the 15th at the same location and also sponsor a mission festival service on the evening of the 16th.

# BRAZIL

## More than just a trip

**W**hen you first get back from Brazil it is a big deal! Your family and friends want to hear about your experiences there. You have pictures to show and stories to tell. But now it's getting close to a year since you came back from Brazil. Is it still a big deal or was it just a nice trip, the memory of which is starting to fade?

The initial excitement of "just coming back from spending six months of my seminary internship on the AFLC mission field" has, of course, faded. Interest in seeing my pictures isn't quite so great. My family and friends have heard my stories, possibly more times than they wanted. I've gotten busy with my seminary studies and life in the United States. Brazil, however, has most certainly not been forgotten.

The beautiful scenery, the experience of living in a different culture, and the ice cream shop in Campo Mourao, were all quite enjoyable. What

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THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR  
3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.  
Minneapolis, Minn. 55441

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Second-class

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made a lasting impression, however, was the opportunity to see God at work in such a tremendous way.

The questions of Romans 10:14 ring out clear in their challenge to me. "How can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?" Can I expect that the billions in the world who have never heard about Jesus will hear from someone else and there's no one for me to tell? I most certainly cannot expect that.

The need for missions became all the more evident to me while in Brazil. God also made something else clear to me. God not only convicts and challenges, He also comforts and encourages. He encouraged me in Brazil with vivid demonstrations of the power of His Word. Romans 10:17 tells us that "faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the Word of Christ." I met numerous people who grew up in much different circumstances than I. However, they had heard the same Gospel, though in a different language, and God, through the Word, created faith. God is able through His Word to create in all varieties of people a living and active faith and a contagious joy and peace. God is able to do this in a different culture from my own without some of the things I often think are necessary.

I saw God working in Brazil through His Word in individual lives, in families, in churches and in communities. Often I have the idea that God needs a fancy building with comfortable pews and a good sound system, a big, eye-

catching sign out front and plenty of newspaper ads. Those may have their place, but it is the Gospel which is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16). I saw the church in the city of Foz do Iguacu. The building isn't fancy but the Sunday School enrollment doubled in three months and the pastor was flooded with requests for home Bible studies. In the city of Londrina people came to special meetings not because of an impressive building. So many came that they couldn't fit in the building and the meetings were held outside. They came and many were saved because a friend had been saved, told them about Jesus and invited them to come and hear. The congregation in the Vitoria area recently moved into its own building, but they had been meeting in a public school. The outside appearance gave no indication that a church was meeting there. Yet it grew by leaps and bounds. People told their families, friends, and neighbors about Jesus and invited them to come and hear. Jesus can do great things.

I invite you to go to Brazil and see what God is doing. That opportunity is being presented to young people this summer in the "BRAZIL '88" program. I encourage young people to take advantage of this opportunity to serve and learn. The AFLC World Missions Department can provide further information. Everyone can be in prayer for the team and encouraging them. It could be more than just a trip. It could be a time for each person to have his vision of God expanded and what He can do.

Craig Johnson  
Seminary Senior