

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

May 5, 1987

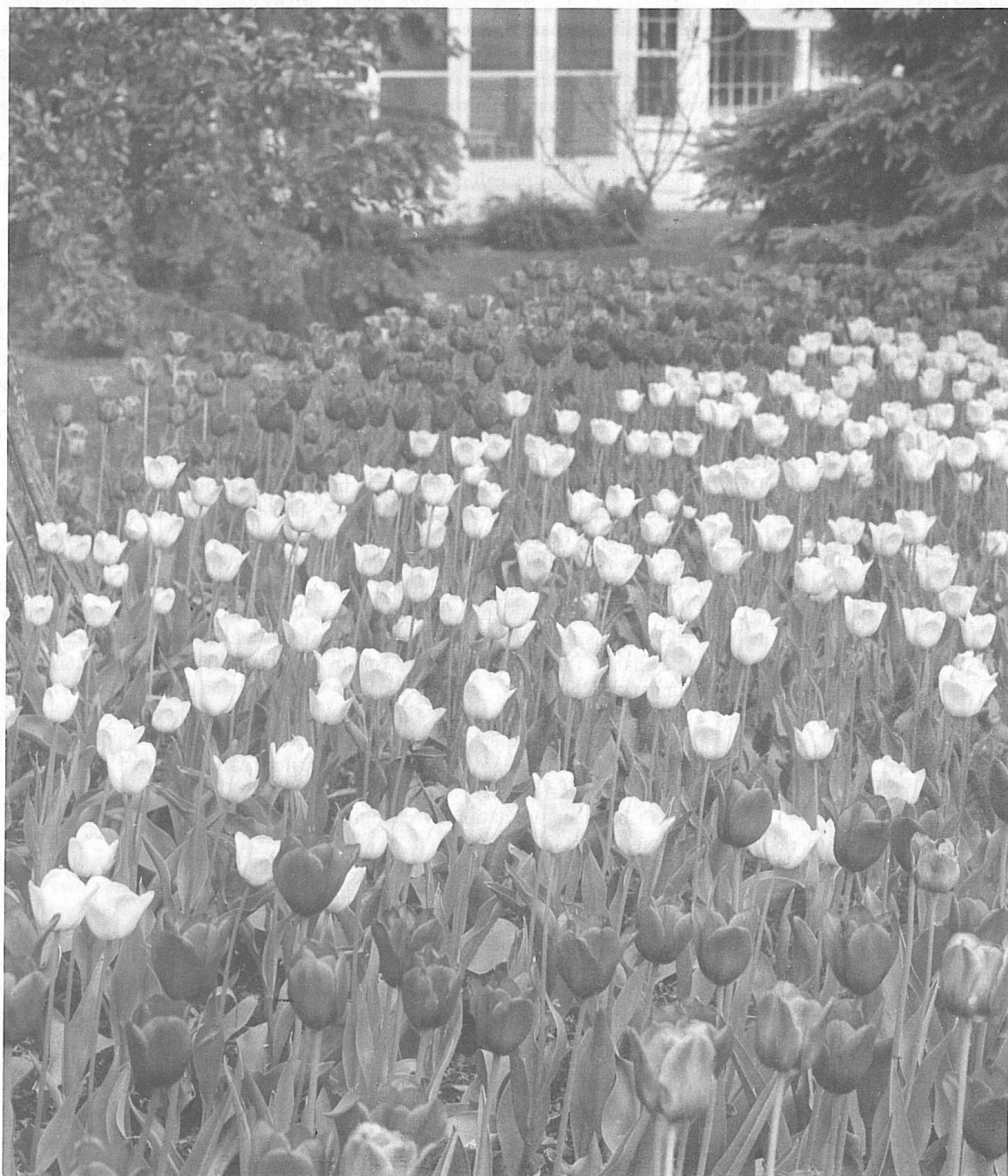


Photo by Roger C. Huebner, D.D.S.

at the MASTER'S FEET

The church's fundamental task

"I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, and intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone — for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth" (I Timothy 2:1-4 NIV).

As we live in the aftermath of that ominous day we know bluntly as "tax day" (April 15th), one has to wonder just how one's tax monies are used. When we consider some of the social ills that are around us and are even funded by tax monies, another question comes to mind, namely, what is our relationship as believers supposed to be with a government that has constitutionally sought to exclude God from its functioning?

A few weeks ago I was talking to a man on the street in Fargo, N. Dak. Our conversation was about spiritual matters and as we talked we began to discuss how, or if, Christians can really influence their nation through social and political change. I commented to him that I thought it would be difficult to legislate morality in America. His response was that while we may not be able to change people's hearts through politics and legislation, God's people should be active in calling for legislation that would restrain the "heartless."

The apostle Paul urges us again, in Romans chapter 13, that we are to submit to the governing authorities, because "there is no authority except that which God has established." What is our response, though, when that same government begins to go contrary to what God's Word has to say and veers remarkably from its historic Christian roots? Do we rise up in armed rebellion? Hardly, for Christ Himself told Peter that those who live by the sword will die by the sword.

One of the tremendous results of some of the world's great awakenings was the instituting of social and political change that came not prior to the conversion of souls, but became an almost natural outgrowth of the salvation that people experienced by God's grace. Do we change our nation by seeking to change people's minds or does God change a nation by changing people's hearts?

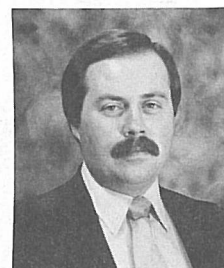
I personally believe that God's people must address evils that exist in our day and seek to bring about positive change through the opportunity of "due process" that is part of our fundamental freedom in this country. Christians *should* write letters, they *should* "wire their congressman," they *should*

stand in their communities for justice and morality. Christians *should* be on the cutting edge of what is happening in society.

But more than all of these, Christians *need* to be people of prayer. What will change people's hearts is the hand of God and what will move the hand of God is God's people united in prayer. After all, what does it matter if we can change someone's attitude and have them remain lost? The task of the church today is the mandate that Christ gave us at the ascension, to go and make disciples of all groups of people.

Paul is suggesting and encouraging us to come to believe the truth that as God's people pray God will cause His Holy Spirit to move in the hearts of people, causing them to be converted and begin to walk in righteousness.

As society seeks man-made solutions to combat huge problems such as the AIDS epidemic, alcoholism, drug abuse, the abuse of women and children, poverty, abortion and post-abortion trauma, — let God's people truly become "believers" in the God of the universe who can change the hearts of men and bring about change. As God gives individual assignments, using us as His hands and voice and feet, let's be faithful to believe that He can and will work as He brings people to repentance and faith.



by Pastor
Robert Lewis

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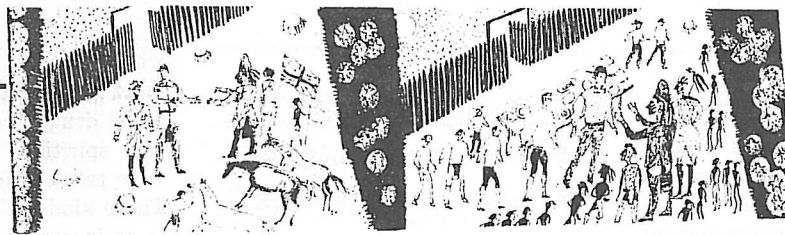
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Volume 25 Number 9



We covet
your prayers

Work among Native Americans

by Rev. Paul Larson,
White Earth, Minn.

"After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb" (Rev. 7:9-10).

This wonderful verse reminds us that there will be people from every race, tribe, and even every language, in heaven. God knows and remembers each group.

In White Earth, where I have been serving two mission churches, we live with people who are of Chippewa background. Although everyone speaks English, there are some "old-timers" who can still speak the Ojibwa language. Even my five-year-old girl, who is part Chippewa, can say some "Indian" words. It's encouraging to know that there will be some who spoke the Chippewa language gathered before God's throne also.

In many ways our work on the White Earth Indian Reservation is like serving the Lord anywhere. There are some who choose to follow Christ and some who do not. I personally am thankful for the people at our two churches that are born-again Christians. Together we are reaching out to others who are still unsaved and we can sense God's Holy Spirit working in many lives preparing their hearts to accept Christ.

Our little church in Elbow Lake village, about 20 miles west of Itasca State Park, has had the joy of seeing many come to Jesus for salvation.

Although the church is still not self-supporting, it is growing and the Christians make it an exciting place to be. There is a spirit of revival and concern among them. We all wait anxiously to see who will be the next to accept the Lord as his personal Savior.

Of course, even though we live on the Reservation, not every one living around us is of Indian descent. There are many people who are of Scandinavian or French-Canadian descent. Because of inter-marriage there are few if any full-blooded Chippewa Indians left on the Reservation.

"In many ways our work
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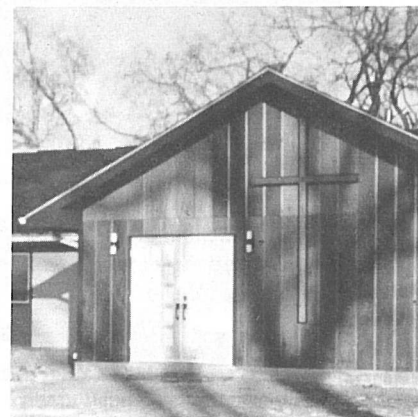
Scripture tells us that "all have sinned," so whether we live on the Reservation, the farm or in the city, we find people all have the same need, salvation through Jesus Christ. In that sense the Lord's work on the Reservation is no different than any place else one might travel.

However, there are some unique problems in our work, especially in White Earth where some people seem to use race differences to drive a wedge between people. The A.I.M. (American Indian Movement) organization is one such group. Unfortunately, this group has been funded by many religious organizations, including some of

the big Lutheran synods. Their work on the reservation is mostly that of discrediting Christianity as a "white man's" religion. Their constant preaching of hatred towards the white man can and does make it difficult at times to reach people with the Gospel.

Because they say that any "Christian" church is a white man's church, it's difficult to present the Word of God without someone trying to make some racial problem out of it. The A.I.M. group accuses Christianity of being a white man's religion even though many people of Indian heritage have in the past and are today born-again Christians. The unfortunate thing is that even though some may not support the A.I.M. movement openly, they listen to them and let their words of hatred seep into their minds. Walls of resentment and bitterness are built up and only the love of Christ can overcome them.

If this kind of open attack on Christianity doesn't work, then they begin



The White Earth Chapel

NATIVE . . .

to work on cultural differences. People are told that if they become Christians they aren't "real" Indians. They are led to believe that to be Indian means you must accept and follow the old Indian religions. In this religion much significance and importance is put on the power of certain animals. What the animals do determines what will happen to a person, at least those who believe this religion believe this to be true. The eagle is honored and held in reverence as one of the most important animals. Superstitions often control the actions of the people who follow the ways of the old Indian religion. Some may find it difficult to believe that people in a country like ours would choose to worship like this, but we have actually seen an increase in the number of those who now follow the teachings of the Indian religion.

**"People are told that
if they become Christians
they aren't 'real' Indians."**

Let me make it clear, however, that the majority of the people do not follow this old religion. The danger lies in the influence that this minority group is having on the people. In the Episcopal Church for instance, a larger than life sculpture of an eagle is what the priest stands behind when he talks to the people. I have also attended funerals in that church where I have seen eagle feathers and food placed in the casket with the deceased.

We have also seen an increase in the number of "sweat lodges" on the reservation. These are places where those

who follow the old Indian religion will meet for spiritual guidance. Hallucinogenic drugs are used in these places and spiritism and demonic activity have taken place within these places. These kinds of activities have also led to an increase in occult activity. Combine this with the drugs and pornography found everywhere in our country and one can begin to see the bondage Satan has people in.

How good it is to know that we serve a Savior who has broken the bondage of Satan. Our job is to get that good news out, so people know that there is hope and freedom in Jesus Christ. Speaking of Christ, Isaiah said, He came "to preach good tidings unto the meek . . . to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." Yes, Jesus can set us free, give us hope and eternal life. Through Christ there is victory over the power of Satan.

Satan, too, knows the power of Christ so he continues to deceive and hinder people in every way possible. Even though he may have a strong hold on the people of White Earth, we know that God's Word is powerful. By preaching the Gospel people can be brought out of darkness into the light. What a joy it is when we see friends and neighbors choose to follow Christ rather than the ways of darkness.

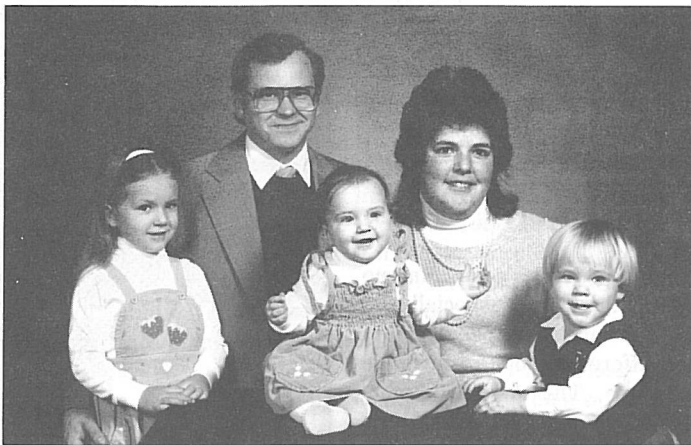
We covet your prayers for the people and the work of the Lord here on the White Earth Indian Reservation.

PASTOR PAUL LARSON

Paul Larson was born in Rochester, Minn., in 1952. His home church is Mt. Sion Lutheran, Kasson, Minn., now an AFLC congregation. His parents, Rev. and Mrs. Alvin Larson, worked in Texas for the Latin American Lutheran Mission and in northern Minnesota with Northern Lutheran Missions. His education beyond high school has been at Detroit Lakes (Minn.) Vocational School, Association Free Lutheran Bible School, North Hennepin (Minn.) Community College (A.A. degree) and the Independent Lutheran Seminary

(Candidate of Theology). He served internship at Bethel Lutheran, White Earth, Minn., and received his first call from the NLM Board. Paul Larson was ordained into the ministry at King of Glory Lutheran Church, AFLC, Eden Prairie, Minn., on Aug. 2, 1981. He has now been accepted on the clergy roster of the AFLC.

Paul Larson and his wife, Dawn, were married in 1974. The couple has four children, Heather Marie, 5, Seth Paul, deceased, Aaron Lewis, 2 and Natalie Dawn, one. Pastor Larson is a brother of Mary, Mrs. Donald Greven.



Pastor and Mrs. Paul Larson with their children, left to right, Heather, Natalie and Aaron.

OUR DEBT IS GREAT

Our debt which we owe to God is ten thousand pounds, which means that it is infinite. It is so great we could not pay it, with all our possessions and with all our powers, for we cannot blot out even the smallest sin. And since God in His kingdom forgives us so much out of sheer grace, we ought also to forgive our neighbour a little.

Martin Luther
(*Day By Day We Magnify Thee*)

We can have a shore lunch with Jesus

As spring comes around and mid-May nears, those of us afflicted with the fishing bug begin to examine our tackle, making the necessary deletions, additions and repairs. Licenses are bought, boats and motors are inspected, patched, painted and tuned.

John 21:1-18 tells of seven disciples who were fishermen; in the case of at least four, it had been their vocation. Peter decided to do some fishing and the other six joined him.

They readied the net and boat and proceeded to carry on the business at hand. After a night of combing the lake (a fish locator would have been handy), they caught nothing. Jesus came on the scene in His third post-resurrection appearance. After a short conversation with this dejected group, the unrecognized Savior said, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat and you will find a catch."

John, one of the seven, tells us that 153 large fish were caught. Even the most seasoned tullibee-netter would have a dandy case of "buck fever" at such a haul! It was at this point that Peter recognized that Jesus Christ was directly involved in their activity.

One of the high points of a fishing trip is to prepare a "shore lunch" of the fish caught. This Jesus did for the seven. I have often thought of the

preciousness of that time as I have sat on a rock-bound shore of a northern lake eating fried fish and bread along with a cup of freshly brewed coffee.

As these times have been a joy to me and my companions, so it must have been then. It was at this time that Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love *Me* more than these?" I understand "these" to mean his six companions, the net, the boat, the familiar lake, and even the great catch of fish. Three times Peter's love was questioned and each question demanded an answer.

Many of us will be involved in the activity of fishing this weekend. Perhaps even a "shore lunch." But the question still remains, "Do you love *me* more than these?" and we, too, must answer.

Solomon said, "Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it" (Psalm 127:1). Our Lord Jesus Christ must be allowed entrance into our situations, be they vocation or leisure. He must be allowed even into the very "throne room" of our life.

As Peter thrice affirmed his love for the Lord in that shore lunch situation and was commissioned to carry the Gospel message, so our Lord comes to us in our situation, inquiring, "Do you love *Me* more than these?" Because Jesus is Lord, that question demands an answer.

—Pastor Henry Johansen,
West Central Tribune,
Willmar, Minn.



Why worship?

further comment

(A reader, whose name we have, wrote to point out concern he had for a sentence in Rev. Bruce Dalager's article "Why Do They Leave?" in the March 10 issue. The sentence is in column three, page 6: "Is it not for God's sake the congregation meets?" (to worship). The reader expresses the thought that God doesn't need our worship but rather that man needs to approach God and find fellowship in "the family of the Lord." He cites Acts 17:24f and Psalm 50:10-15.

We have asked Pastor Dalager to respond on this issue and he has graciously done so below. — Editor)

The Christian who seriously considers the motivation for His Christian walk will face the question: "Do I live as a Christian for my sake or for God's sake?" The question relates to all areas of life but we shall consider it here only as it relates to worship: "Do Christians gather to worship God for their own sakes or for God's?"

A believer benefits in many ways by joining others for worship, yet it is not to serve himself that he worships God. The Hebrew word for worship (shachah) means "to bow one's self down." To worship God is to reverently give assent to His holiness in humble repentance and faith. While they may seem self-serving, repentance and faith are ultimately directed to the glory of God. They are a part, crucial and pervasive,

of the Christian's experience of dying to self.

God does not need my worship. He is not made more holy if I worship Him or less holy if I refuse. He is holy in Himself. If His people should cease praising Him He could cause stones to sing out (Lk. 19:40). He is not served by human hands as though He needed anything (Acts 17:25). When the psalmist wrote, "O magnify the Lord with me," he was not implying that he could make God greater than He already was. Yet God desires worship and leads me in it.

David wrote, "He leads me . . . for His Name's sake." Since that is true, then I should follow simply *for His Name's sake*, not because there might be something in it for me. In fact, I should follow even if there was nothing in it for me. He is Lord.

Scripture teaches that the ultimate end of creation is the glory of God. The world was created ultimately for God's own sake (Prov. 16:4) or for His glory (Ps. 104). He has made of the church a people for His possession, that it might "proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called . . . out of darkness into His marvelous light (I Pet. 2:9).

"From Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen" (Rom. 11:36).

— *Pastor Bruce Dalager*
Grand Forks, N. Dak.

Children of Brazil

"Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world. Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in His sight. Jesus loves the little children of the world." A person does not need to be in Brazil long before he sees many little children, each one a child whom Jesus loves. Brazil is a very "young" country; 41.5% of the population are under the age of 14. Another 20% of the population are between the ages of 15 and 25, meaning that over 60% of the people in the country have not yet reached the age of 25.

Children are the church of tomorrow and also a major part of the church today. Thus, it is essential that a chief focus of the church's ministry be helping the children to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. This is possibly even more crucial in Brazil when the make-up of the country is considered. With this in mind the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations does much work with young people and children.

During my months here as a seminary intern I have participated in various activities with children. A week was spent helping at the Bible Camp for young people between the ages of six and 14. They had Bible studies and crafts, memory work, games, swimming and, all in all, a very full week. At this camp as well as the camp for older youth, a sincere interest in knowing Jesus and His Word better could be seen among the youth. Pray

No tradition found

Many nations have traditions of the origin of the universe, some of them, especially those of Babylonia, agreeing in a number of particulars with the Genesis narrative. No nations have yet been found with a tradition that they have descended from the simians. On the other hand, Mrs. Rachel R. Watt, "In the Heart of Savagdom," tells us

that, when her husband told the natives of central Africa that some white people believe that men descended from the monkeys or some other animals, they (the natives) were so amused that they lay down on the ground and went into convulsions of laughter.

Leander S. Keyser,
A Reasonable Faith

that this interest will remain, that they will seek and find good spiritual instruction.

During the months of December, January and February, Bible School students helped conduct Vacation Bible Schools in the various Free Lutheran Churches in Brazil. One afternoon I attended a Vacation Bible School held in a growing area on the outskirts of Campo Mourao. The Free Lutheran church there is in the developing stages but in the afternoon over 40 students packed into the two rooms being used that day. Choruses were sung, activities took place and the precious, needed Word of God was shared. Pray that the Word shared will be taking root in these young lives.

Children also have regular opportunities to hear the Word in weekly Sunday School classes. Pray for those in the important positions of teaching that they will be given wisdom and the necessary ability to communicate clearly the Gospel of Christ.

A special work with children is done at Central Free Lutheran Church in Campo Mourao. A pre-school is held in a building adjacent to the church. This year the school began in March with 38 students between the ages of two and six. Generally, in what are here the winter months of June, July and August, the school's enrollment increases to around 70 children. The majority of the students come from families not connected with the church, with the largest number being from Roman Catholic backgrounds. Pray for this opportunity to present the Gospel to children, many of whom never hear the message at home.

The last four paragraphs have closed with a request for prayer. I do not believe that is too much, for the importance of praying for Brazil needs to be emphasized. As I see the many children, I see much potential for glory to be given to the Lord as souls are brought to Christ and homes are transformed. I also see the potential for countless, serious problems if these children grow up without ever hearing about Jesus. Let us pray much that the first vision is what takes place, that they come to Jesus and are not hindered, "for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matthew 19:14).

— Craig Johnson

world mission news



Sunday School class at Vitoria Free Lutheran Church



Children at play at the Bible Camp.



Children outside the pre-school conducted by Central Church of Campo Mourao.

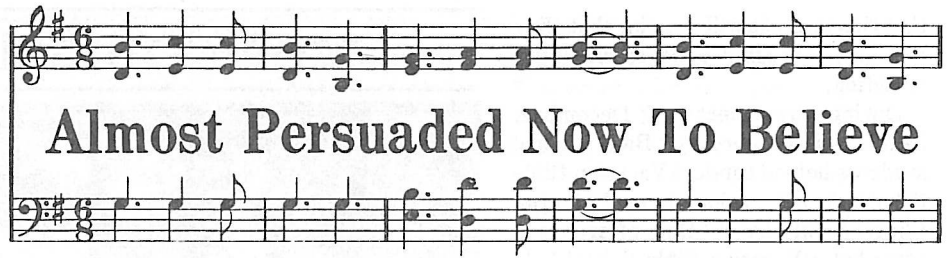
Our hymn study

Concordia, No. 256

Philip P. Bliss

Tune: ALMOST PERSUADED

Philip P. Bliss, 1838-1876



King Agrippa acknowledged he was almost persuaded by Paul to become a Christian. Paul replied to the king that he prayed to God that "all who hear me this day, might become . . ." Christians. (See Acts 26.)

Philip Bliss once heard a sermon on Agrippa's words and it inspired this song. In Daniel Webster Whittle's book *Memoirs of P. P. Bliss*, the preacher, an evangelist named Brundage, relates the following account: "My closing words of the sermon were 'He who is almost persuaded is almost saved, but to be almost saved is to be entirely lost.' Mr. Bliss, being in the audience, was impressed with the thought and immediately set about the composition of what proved one of his most popular songs, deriving his inspiration from my sermon."

"Almost persuaded"

Now to believe;

"Almost persuaded"

Christ to receive;

Seems now some soul to say,

"Go, Spirit, go Thy way,

Some more convenient day

On Thee I'll call."

"Almost persuaded,"

Come, come today;

"Almost persuaded,"

Turn not away;

Jesus invites you here,

Angels are ling'ring near,

Pray'rs rise from hearts so dear:

O wand'rer come.

"Almost persuaded,"

Harvest is past!

"Almost persuaded,"

Doom comes at last!

"Almost" cannot avail;

"Almost" is but to fail!

Sad, sad, that bitter wail—

"Almost — but lost!"

Simplicity could hardly be carried further than in this text and music.

Philip P. Bliss' first name was originally spelled "Philipp." He disliked the unusual spelling, however, and solved the problem by using the extra "p" as his middle initial. Philip was born in a log cabin in Ohio in 1838. At the age of 11 he left home for work on farms and in the lumber camps, wherever he could scratch out bed and board. At 12 he was baptized by a traveling evangelist. Endowed with a gift for music, the poor lad was unable to culture it in the least until at 19 he took some music lessons. In 1860, at the age of 22, he set out on his horse, Fanny, with his lap organ to conduct singing schools (informal gatherings in farmhouses with a few nearby-neighbor children on hand). For several winters this was his livelihood. In the summer he'd attend music clinics to "bone-up" on his skill. These were tough years for him and his wife, Lucy. At 26 he wrote his first song. It was called "Lora Vale" and, because of its popularity, he was able to make an arrangement with a Chicago music publisher to go about promoting the interests of the firm conducting workshops and performing concerts.

Their arrangement dissolved in 1874, so he became associated with Major D. W. Whittle, an evangelist who conducted tent meetings around the Midwest. Gospel songs poured from his heart. Any incident of an impressive nature would suggest a theme and give birth to a song. For example, he heard of a shipwreck in which the captain ordered the crew of the doomed vessel to exert their utmost strength "to pull for the shore." Emotionally impressed by the stark drama, he immediately wrote a Gospel song and used "Pull for the Shore" as the refrain.

As with all Gospel music, the work

was done very quickly. He usually wrote both words and music, the inspiration being simultaneous. As a rule, they are heavy in emotional appeal but light in character; most have fallen into disuse. But a couple have become "classics," like "Let the Lower Lights Be burning," a lovely song inspired by a story told by D. L. Moody about a boat in peril on Lake Erie, and "Hold the Fort." These are heirlooms as priceless as "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" and "Deep River" and "Shall We Gather at the River." It's unlikely, however, that they will continue to serve the church or future generations in a spiritual sense. This type of music usually changes with people and tastes; the current generation has their own "Gospel music" and it will change again soon. However, his music for Spafford's "When Peace Like a River" ("It Is Well with My Soul") is a rare pearl of Gospel music.

Philip and Lucy Bliss died young in a horrible train accident on their way to an engagement in Moody's Tabernacle. Their train plunged from a trellis into an icy river bed where it caught fire. Philip survived the crash but was consumed by the fire while trying to rescue Lucy from the wreckage.

— Don Rodvold

Behold, now
is the accepted
time; behold,
now is the day
of salvation.

II Cor. 6:26

editorials

CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE

As has been mentioned before, any voting member of an Association congregation may speak and vote at an Annual Conference of the AFLC. This is quite an exceptional situation among Lutheran church bodies. The system has worked for us although it isn't out of the way to note its weaknesses so that we can better minimize them.

One weakness is that those who attend conferences often do so on their own. They tend to be among those in the congregation most interested in the common or joint work. They want to attend and they make the necessary arrangements to do so. How can that be a weakness? The congregation doesn't become involved in its representation. Those who want to go and can go, go. In many cases they pay their own way. The congregation has no special responsibility in the matter.

A second weakness, flowing out from the above, is that the congregation, since it has taken no part in choosing or sending delegates, may seek or get little report from the delegates when they return. If this is the case, it is too bad because the Annual Conference is the focus of the congregations or churches working together. Follow-up on Conference decisions will lag if those decisions aren't properly presented back home by laity who have been at the Conference.

A third weakness is that certain people, under our system, tend to go to Conference year after year and a lot of people don't get more involved. Now, to be sure, this happens under a more formal delegate system as well. A few individuals become perennial delegates because they "can get away." But the situation is even more apt to exist in our setup where congregations may not even bring up the matter of Conference representation in business meetings.

A fourth weakness is that, in light of the previous sentence, it is easy for congregations not to be represented at all at Conference, perhaps year after year. The thought may be, we haven't been represented before, why start now? When all voting members have the right to be present at Conference, it ends up that no one actually goes.

A fifth weakness, and there may be more, is the possibility that one or two congregations, or several, could "pack" a Conference in order to influence Conference actions. This is something we don't even want to think could happen, but, theoretically, the possibility is there. A hundred people bent on a course of action could sway a decision one way or another.

Some things to think about. We love our free Conference concept. Its strength lies in its freedom. But we do well to think of ways of strengthening our system. Immediately, let us strive to have lay representation from all our congregations at Thief River Falls, June 17-21. That is a worthy goal for which to aim.

The 1987 Conference is a special one not only because it is our 25th one, but also because this is a year in which there is a presidential election. That adds a special interest to any Annual Conference. More about that next time.

Speaking of Conference delegates, each year death removes one or more Conference-goer from a previous year. We think of that, too, as we carry in this issue the notice of the death of Mr. Waino Rajala. And what a list some of us could draw up over the 25 years of Association history, of both pastors and laity. We miss those people, but we look forward one day to sitting down with them again and "having a cup of coffee" together and enjoying the fellowship that brothers and sisters have in the Lord.

MIXED SIGNALS

That was remarkable, wasn't it, that so many American Lutheran Church congregations voted against the impending merger of the ALC with the Lutheran Church in America and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches?

The American Association of Lutheran Churches (note the name change), an incorporated organization that will become one of the newest U.S. Lutheran church bodies, together with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, reports that 863 congregations voted against the merger and 45 abstained from voting. The 908 congregations represent about 20% of the ALC's total number of churches. The size of the negative vote took everyone by surprise.

Certainly, the large "No" vote is a protest on the merger. While many of the congregations which voted against the merger will enter the union anyway, ALC leadership will know that what they have fashioned did not meet the approval of a sizeable group of people. And those people will watch carefully how the ELCA unfolds her program.

At this writing we have seen a list of less than half of the 908 congregations. From that partial list one notices the strong anti-merger sentiment in Minnesota and North Dakota, which is also the heartland of AFLC strength. The list does not contain very many former Lutheran Free Church congregations. That may indicate that they assimilated well, by and large, into the ALC after the merger of 1963.

It is a curious point that in some communities where there is an AFLC congregation, one or more ALC congregations voted against the merger. But at the same time there has been little or no fellowship between or among these congregations so it appears unlikely that they will come to be in the same church body now. Significant differences apparently exist.

Some of the dissenting ALC congregations are forming the AALC, mentioned above, as a church body. When you read this you may also have read a report on a meeting in St. Paul, Minn., Apr. 30-May 1. Something more definitive may have come from that.

fellowship corner

A LESSON FROM MOWING

Springtime again and time for us to go to our farm and mow.

Last year one time I was mowing and I learned another lesson I'd like to share with you, if I may. For a couple of days I was struggling with a problem I couldn't work out. So I asked the Lord, "Are You trying to teach me something new, Lord?"

This was His answer to me. You see, I seldom can start a lawn mower so I try not to let it get stuck or stop. Well, this day it seemed I kept scraping the ground and I had to lift the mower, etc. I became tired and very unhappy. So I just stopped right there and looked back to the place where I had finished, then compared the unmowed land with the mowed and the latter was so nice, really beautiful.

Then I saw an answer to my prayers. You see, the beautifully-mowed land represented to me the time when the Lord will work all the problems out and there will be real beauty for me. So I said a big, "Thank You, Lord."

And, too, I was thankful to the Lord for a husband who was there to straighten out the stopped mower, etc. And I know the Lord is always there first, then a loving and caring husband who can handle most things. So that's the lesson I learned from mowing grass.

Mrs. Arnold Jodock
Hatton, N. Dak.

GIVING INCREASES IN LCMS, MEMBERSHIP DOWN SLIGHTLY

ST. LOUIS — Contributions to Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) congregations were up by more than \$47 million in 1986 as compared to 1985, even though church membership figures for the second largest Lutheran body in North America declined by about 9,000.

Total giving to LCMS congregations in 1986 was \$715,191,000, more than a 7 percent increase over 1985. The average LCMS member gave \$349.94 in 1986, \$24.43 more than in 1985.

Baptized membership at the end of 1986 is reported at 2,723,756, compared to 2,732,791 for 1985 (a .3 percent loss). Confirmed, or communicant, membership was 2,043,753, a .4 percent loss from 1985's 2,052,723.

At year-end 1986, the Missouri Synod had 620 pastoral vacancies (congregations without pastors), 55 more than a year before.

Though child baptisms (62,557) were up by 4,337, junior confirmations (35,198) were down by 3,098 and adult membership gains (40,862) declined by 737.

The number who left Missouri Synod congregations (49,721) decreased by 298 from 1985.

DR. IVER OLSON DIES

Dr. Iver Olson, 81, passed away on April 18, 1987. Funeral services were held on April 22, at St. Luke's Lutheran, Minneapolis. Dr. and Mrs. Olson have been residing at the Augustana Home and have been in declining health. Dr. Olson was a former dean of AFLTS. The next issue will carry a complete obituary. Blessed be his memory.

ASSOCIATION OF FREE LUTHERAN CONGREGATIONS

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard

Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences Feb. 1 — March 31

FUND	TOTAL BUDGET	REC'D IN MARCH	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL*
GENERAL FUND	\$208,000.00	\$6,597.25	\$16,463.97	8
SCHOOLS - (AFLTS)	99,834.00	3,926.76	8,312.14	8
(AFLBS)	152,060.00	7,509.23	15,913.87	10
HOME MISSIONS	280,000.00	8,106.13	18,571.50	7
WORLD MISSIONS	250,000.00	9,502.22	20,242.45	8
CAPITAL INVESTMENT	25,000.00	403.37	968.57	4
TOTALS	1,014,894.00	36,044.96	80,472.50	8
1986-87 —	1,084,478.00	38,615.92	81,499.03	8
*GOAL 17%				

EDITORIAL . . .

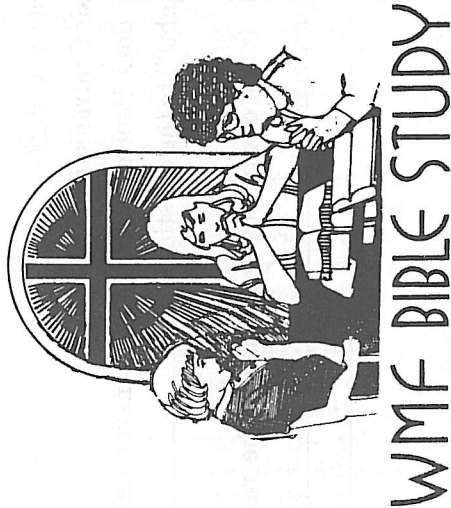
Some congregations will look to the Missouri Synod, the Association or some other existing body. While the AFLC welcomes congregations into her fellowship it will be important that each shares the same commitment to the foundation upon which she was built: the Bible as the unchanging Word of God, in all its parts; a piety calling for separation in the Christian life; simplicity, but not formlessness, in worship; the freedom of the local congregation, subject only to the Word and the Holy Spirit; and a rejection of membership in inter-church organizations which have an inadequate theological (hence, Biblical) base.

To that list may we add two more things. First, this pre-supposes that we are Lutheran in theology and unashamedly so. We want to guard our Lutheranism and safeguard that of fellow Lutherans who join us. Second, as Lutherans, we believe in the efficacy of the Sacraments and

that they are agents of God's grace. At the same time, we believe much more strongly than some in the possibility of falling from baptismal grace and, if that happens, of the need for conversion. Baptism saves, but it is not an eternal security. Our *Guiding Principles* call for the "quickenings preaching" of the Word of God, that is, that people of the congregations, too, must be regularly challenged as to faith in Christ. Agreement on these last two points also is crucial to true fellowship and co-operation.

The AFLC is not equipped to welcome any large influx of new congregations, but where there is strong evidence of unity in belief and thinking love will find a way of welcoming new members to the fellowship.

These are interesting times and who would have envisioned just such a situation as exists today at the time of our 25th anniversary.



Chapter 6

THE RESULTS OF JUSTIFICATION: NEWNESS OF LIFE AND SANCTIFICATION

Hymn No. 154 (*Concordia*): "Jesus, Lover of My Soul"

In chapter five, we considered the first effect of justification (God's righteousness by faith), salvation and life through Christ. In chapter six, Paul speaks of the second effect, newness of life and sanctification.

I. The Question, v. 1

Paul first raises a question that might arise from misunderstanding the principle of grace.

A. What is the principle of grace? 5:15-21 (esp. v. 20) _____

B. How might someone arrive at the deduction which lies behind the question Paul raises in this verse? _____

3. What are "slaves of obedience"? vs. 16-18 _____

Can anyone really be completely free and independent? _____
Explain _____

What is the opposite of obedience from the heart? Ephesians 6:6 _____

From what does heart obedience spring? v. 14 _____

4. To what is the believer to be obedient? v. 17 _____

How is that obedience different from legalism? _____

5. What are the benefits (fruits) of heart-slavery to God? vs. 17, 19, 22 _____

Read v. 23. The sin power pays wages. God's gift to the justified is eternal life, ours of pure grace the moment we believe and are justified. Its end is entry into the fullness of life eternal in heaven.

Hymn No. 156 (*Concordia*): "My Jesus, As Thou Wilt"

— Mary Lindquist

II. Paul's Answer, v. 2-23

A. The Basic Contradiction, v. 2

1. Why does Paul exclaim, "May it never be!" ("Perish the thought!") to the question? _____

2. What is the obvious contradiction in the reasoning behind the question? _____

B. The Realities Which Underlie the Believers' New Life, vs. 3-11

Paul uses mystical language to explain what happens to the believer through his connection or union with Christ. This language emphasizes the fact that what has occurred is all the work of God. (Compare also Ephesians 2:5-6.)

1. How is the believer brought into connection with Christ? vs. 3-4 _____

2. What are the spiritual effects of this connection?

a. vs. 3-4a _____

b. vs. 4b-5, 8 _____

c. vs. 6-7, 9 _____

3. On the basis of these realities, what is the believer to reckon? v. 11 _____

The word *reckon* as used here means "to reckon with certain facts as facts so as to act on them because they are facts" (Lenski). How do we *reckon* these things? _____

C. The Admonition, vs. 12-14

1. On the basis of the facts presented, what can and will the believer do?

a. The negative, vs. 12-13a _____

b. The positive, v. 13b _____

2. Verse 14 is a glorious promise to the believer who reads Paul's admonition. How does grace make possible what the law could not? v. 14 _____

D. Slavery and Freedom, vs. 15-23

Verses 2, 6, 11 and 12 speak of *the sin* (using the definite article) as the sin power, as a king who reigns. Christians who have died to sin can prevent *the sin's* reigning over them. In verse 15, he speaks of sin (without the article) as any sin to which the believer might yield himself. Someone might think that a few sins will make no difference to grace.

1. What is the danger in a believer's yielding himself to sin of any kind? vs. 16, 19 _____

2. What kinds of freedom do the slaves of sin have? v. 20 _____

In what sense are they "free in regard to righteousness"? _____

Do they receive any benefit (fruit) from this "freedom"? Explain _____



Pastor Richard Snipstead with the historic Oftedal lamp.

The Oftedal lamp

A very historic table lamp has come into the possession of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations. It is one that was used by Professor Sven Oftedal, 1844-1911, long-time teacher at Augsburg Seminary in Minneapolis, Minn., and its president from 1907-11. In addition he was editor of the Norwegian language newspaper *Folkebladet* from 1877-82.

Manufactured in Norway out of orange glass, it was originally a kerosene-burning lamp which was later converted into an electric lamp with a dimmer light installed in the base. Many a time Oftedal had evening devotions with his co-worker and dear friend, Prof. Georg Sverdrup, in the light of this lamp.

After Oftedal's death the lamp was passed on to his son, Rev. Asmund Oftedal, and the family used it in the living rooms of the parsonages where

THE SVERDRUP BOOK

A question has been asked: Where can the book *Georg Sverdrup: Educator, Theologian, Churchman* by James S. Hamre, which was reviewed in the April 7 *Ambassador* be purchased? It may be ordered from The Norwegian-American Historical Society, Northfield, Minn. 55057. Send \$15.00 per copy, plus \$2.40 each for postage and handling.

news of the churches

from here and there . . .

DeKalb, Ill. — Rev. Laurel Udden, Minneapolis, Minn., was guest evangelist in a week of meetings at Grace Lutheran, March 15-19.

Members of Grace Lutheran are excited about the possibility of an Illinois district in the AFLC. They are also preparing to extend an invitation for the 1988 Annual Conference to be held in DeKalb.

they resided. After Pastor Oftedal passed away, his widow Clara gave it to the Myhre sisters, Rena, Henrietta and Ruth, who had been long-time associates of the Oftedals, together with their parents, Mr. and Mrs. Thor J. Myhre. Ruth was the last of the Myhre sisters to die and it was her wish that the lamp be given to the Association in honor of Professor Oftedal, who was one of the founders of the Lutheran Free movement, together with Professor Sverdrup.

A nephew of the Myhre sisters, and a son of their brother, the late Rev. A. E. Myhre, Paul Myhre, Veradale, Wash., forwarded the lamp to AFLC Headquarters in Minneapolis, where it presently stands in the President's office.

Minneapolis, Minn. — Four congregations took part in the Lenten service exchange this year under the theme "The Seven Last Words." Congregations and pastors were Faith Lutheran, Walter Johnson; Morgan Avenue, Yeddo Gattel; Faith, Ralph Rokke; and Medicine Lake, Laurel Udden. Assisting in the preaching were Pastors Donald Greven and Philip Haugen of the Association Schools faculty.

Roseau, Minn. — The radio program the Lutheran Ambassador hour is heard each Sunday at 8:30 a.m. over station KRWB, Roseau, 1410 kc. Rev. Herbert Franz is the speaker on the program.

Ishpeming, Mich. — The Luther League of Hope Lutheran, under the leadership of Mike and Linda Jarvinen, gave a spaghetti supper and service on Sunday evening, March 29, to raise funds for their trip to the Luther League convention in July. The Lutheran Brotherhood matching funds program was used. The service involved 12 young people who presented a very interesting skit, "The Prodigal Son."

Roseau, Minn. — Rev. Herbert Franz, Dollar Bay, Mich., spoke at evangelistic services in Spruce and Rose Lutheran Churches, April 12-15.

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 held membership.

MINNESOTA

Shevlin

Mr. Elias "Millie" Bode, 80, Apr. 10, Landstad. (Mr. Bode was the son of pioneer Pastor and Mrs. H. E. Bode.)

MICHIGAN

Eben Jct.

Mr. Wilho Salo, 75, Oct. 23, 1986, Calvary.

Chatham

Mr. Harry Whitmarsh, 80, Dec. 27, 1986, Calvary, Eben Jct.

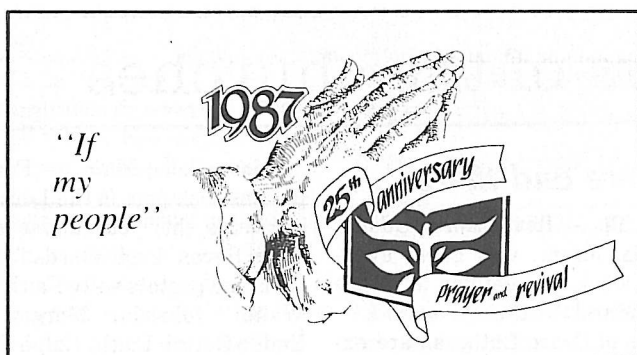
Personalities

Lay Pastor Lyle Twite has accepted the call to the Bagley, Minn., parish (Grace and Rice) and has begun his work there. He previously served St. John's Lutheran Church, Finlayson, Minn., from 1977 and on.

Mr. Clifford Johnson, Esko, Minn., has accepted the call to serve Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Virginia, Minn., as a lay pastor. He has been conducting the Sunday services at Good Shepherd for some time.

Skandia

Mr. Waino Rajala, 72, Mar. 15, Calvary, Eben Jct.



Information for meals when you arrive for Conference:
Dinner and supper served Thursday - Sunday (7 meals)

Adults	\$30.00
Children	15.00
Individual meals:	
Adult Dinner	5.00
Child's Dinner	2.50
Adult Supper	4.00
Child's Supper	2.00
Pastor's Banquet	5.95

Our Saviour's Lutheran welcomes you

On behalf of Our Saviour's Lutheran Church of Thief River Falls, Minn., we welcome you to the 25th AFLC Annual Conference to be held on June 17-21. It is with much prayer that we meet together to praise God for the 25 years of the AFLC. Twenty-five years ago many of you gathered together in Thief River Falls in October of 1962 to bring about the formation of the AFLC. God has blessed the work and we praise Him for it.

Our Conference theme will be "His Kingdom Is Forever" based on Psalm 145:13. The theme song will be "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." Christ's kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and shall not pass away or be destroyed. May each one who comes be a part of Christ's kingdom.

We have recently printed in *The Lutheran Ambassador* the listing of motels, camping facilities and invitations to stay in private homes and are reprinting that today. If you arrive in Thief River Falls on Tuesday evening, June 16th, come to Our Saviour's Lutheran, 401 St. Paul Avenue South, for information on housing. Call me at (218) 681-1910 or 681-4643. You can

also call Dave Rodahl at (218) 681-2302.

The WMF Convention will be held at Our Saviour's Lutheran on Wednesday, June 17th. All committees will meet at Our Saviour's Lutheran on Wednesday. The opening session of the Conference will be held at Lincoln High School, Corner of First Street and Knight Avenue, on Wednesday, June 17th, at 8:00 p.m. Meals on Thursday through Sunday will be served at Lincoln High School.

There will be special sessions Thursday through Saturday at Our Saviour's Christian Academy for all children and teens. A bus will transport them from Lincoln High School to the Academy.

If you need a ride from the airports in Thief River Falls or Grand Forks, N. Dak., or from the train depot in Grand Forks, please call.

We are looking forward to meeting each one of you in northwestern Minnesota.

May God richly bless you as you come and may it be a wonderful time of fellowship together.

— Pastor Leslie Galland
Our Saviour's Lutheran Church

Pre-Conference choir rehearsal and prayer rally at Thief River Falls

Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, 401 St. Paul Avenue South in Thief River Falls, Minn., will be the scene of a choir rehearsal and prayer rally in preparation for the 1987 Annual Conference of the AFLC on Sat., May 30, at 7:00 p.m.

Especially invited are people from northern Minnesota and eastern North

Thief River Falls, Minnesota

Welcome to all of you who will be attending the AFLC Annual Conference. We are honored to be able to host the 25th anniversary of the AFLC. Thief River Falls has a number of fine motels and a beautiful tourist park and campsite for your lodging accommodations during your stay in our city June 17-21. Our Saviour's Christian Academy will also be providing a large area for camping as well.

Following is a list of motels and camping facilities with accommodations and rates. If you are planning to stay in one of the motels, please call them direct as soon as possible to make your reservations. The city tourist park and campground *does not* accept reservations. They are on a first come, first served basis. Camping at our Saviour's Christian Academy does not require reservations. If you would prefer to stay as a guest in private housing, please call us and we'll try to fill your needs.

To make reservations as a guest in private housing, or if you have any questions or concerns regarding your lodging accommodations, please call: David or Barb Rodahl (218) 681-2302; or Our Saviour's Lutheran Church (218) 681-4643. We pray that your stay in Thief River Falls will be fulfilling, pleasant and enjoyable.

Dakota who are planning to sing in the Annual Conference Choral Union on Sunday afternoon, June 21. The Annual Conference will also be held in Thief River Falls (June 17-21). The rehearsal will take place from 7 to 8 o'clock under the direction of Mr. Tom Olson, who has been on seminary internship in Our Saviour's this past year. In 1985-86 he directed the Choral Club of Association Free Lutheran Bible School in Minneapolis, Minn.

Meditation and prayer will occur from 8 to 8:30 that evening under the leadership of the church's pastor, Rev. Leslie Galland. Chief objective of the prayer session will be prayer support for the Conference, the 25th in the

**Our goal for the
25th Annual Conference**
June 17-21, 1987
Thief River Falls, Minnesota
Every congregation represented by a lay delegate!

history of the AFLC. Lunch and fellowship will close out the evening.

It is hoped that several hundred singers will take part in the anniversary service on June 21, to the glory of God. Three songs will be prepared: "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus" and "The Lord

Bless You and Keep You." Free music is available to all participants through the AFLC Headquarters in Minneapolis. There will be 100 copies available at the Thief River Falls rehearsal, too. Singers are asked to work on the music in advance, if possible, whether or not they can attend this rehearsal.

Conference theme: "His Kingdom Is Forever"

**song: "A Mighty
Fortress Is Our God"**

Travel Host Motel, Highway 59 South, Thief River Falls, Minnesota 56701. Telephone (218) 681-6205.

One bed, one person — \$24.00 to 26.00; One bed, two people — \$26.00 to 31.00; Two beds, two people — \$29.00 to 31.00; Two beds, three people — \$32.00 to 35.00; Two beds, four people — \$35.00 to 38.00. Rollaway beds — \$4.00; Cribs free. No pets, please. No charge for children under 16 in same room as parents.

T-59 Motel, Highway 59 S.E., Thief River Falls, Minnesota 56701. Telephone (218) 681-2720.

One full bed, one person — \$20.00, two persons — \$22.00. One full bed, one person — \$20.00, two persons — \$22.00, adjoining. One queen bed, one person — \$26.00, two persons — \$26.00. One twin and one full bed, two persons — \$25.00, three persons — \$26.00. Two full beds, two persons — \$28.00, each extra person \$2.00. Two queen beds, two persons — \$32.00, three persons — \$34.00, four persons — \$36.00. Three full beds, three persons — \$36.00. Each additional person — \$2.00. Cribs free. No cats, small dogs only.

Lodging at the Annual Conference

Best Western, Highway 32 South, Thief River Falls, Minnesota 56701. Telephone (218) 681-7555.

One bed, one person — \$36.00. One bed, two persons — \$44.00. Two beds, two people — \$44.00. Two beds, three people — \$47.00. Two beds, four people — \$50.00. Poolside rooms add \$2.00. Children under 18 are free in same room as an adult. Rollaway beds are available at \$8.00 per night. Cribs are available at no extra charge on a first come, first served basis.

Holiday Motel, Highway 59 South, P.O. Box 75, Thief River Falls, Minnesota 56701. Telephone (218) 681-4053.

One bed, one person — \$18.00. One bed, two people — \$22.00. Two beds, two people — \$24.00. Two beds, three people — \$26.00. Two beds, four people — \$28.00. Cribs free. Rollaways are \$4.00 each.

Hartwood Motel, 1010 Main Ave. North (Highway 32 No.), Thief River Falls, Minnesota 56701. Telephone (218) 681-2640.

One bed, one person — \$19.00 and up. One bed, two people — \$22.00 and up. Two beds, two people — \$24.00 and up. \$2.00 for each additional person. Cribs \$1.00. Rollaway \$3.00.

CAMPING

Thief River Falls Tourist Park and Campground. Oakland Park Road. Rates: Full hookup (water, electric, sewer) — \$6.50 per day. Electric hookup only — \$4.00 per day. Self-contained — \$2.00 per day. Coin-operated shower facilities. No charge for camper sewage dumping.

Our Saviour's Christian Academy. There will be a few electrical hookups available — \$4.00 per day. Large area for self-contained campers — \$2.00 per day. Shower and restroom facilities available in the school at no charge.

Family Camp for children

One of the blessings of Family Camp is the ministry to children during the week. There are classes for children from age three through sixth grade in this children's part of the camp, to be held at the ARC near Osceola, Wis., June 29-July 5 and August 10-16.

These classes for the children mean that mothers with children in this age group are free to attend the adult sessions during the mornings. The children are receiving Christian instruction and mothers can also receive blessings in the morning sessions of Bible study, missions and discussion.

The members of the Barnabas team of the Home Missions Department of the AFLC have been the primary teachers for these classes, headed by Mrs. Eugene Murphy of Minneapolis. There are classes and some times of recess and recreation during the morning. A program is usually given at the end of the week at the evening service on Friday with the children from these classes taking part.

These children's classes are a vital part of the total program of Family Camp as it makes it possible for all members of the family, whatever their age, to be involved in the inspiration and teaching of the week. A nursery is also provided for children under three.

Registrations for either week, June 29-July 5 or August 10-16 may be sent to ARC, Rt. 1, Box 92, Osceola, Wis. 54020. Send a registration fee of \$2 per person or \$5 per family. — *Committee*

DR. BURGESS RETIRES FROM CHINA POST

Dr. Andrew S. Burgess retired recently from his position as editor of the Lutheran Literature Society for the Chinese *Bulletin*, a work he had carried on for several decades.

Now 89, Dr. Burgess was a missionary to Madagascar from 1926-35 and a professor at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minn., from 1948 until his retirement there. He is known for such books as *Unkulunkulu in Zululand*, *Peng Fu*, and *In the Lands of Pagodas, Temples and Mosques*.

He has been called the "missionary scribe" of the church for his literary efforts.

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

Second-class postage
paid at Wanamingo, Minn.

Builder of China press sets date

NEW YORK, NY, March 5 (ABS) — A completion date of May 31 has been set for constructing the building to house the Amity Printing Press outside Nanjing, People's Republic of China, the American Bible Society reports.

When the press begins operations — scheduled for late summer 1987 — the Amity Press will give priority to the printing of Bibles, New Testaments, hymnals and other Christian literature.

A slogan posted at the Jiangning Industrial Corporation site exhorts the project's workers, in Chinese, "Time is money. Quality is life. Wage a strenuous fight to finish the main building of the Amity Press within 150 days."

ABS also reports that training of the staff who will run the presses and other equipment is already underway.

The state-of-the-art-machinery, together with its installation and supervision, is being paid for by donations to the United Bible Societies, the world fellowship, through its members, including the American Bible Society.

Equipment includes a giant Timson web offset press together with associated bindery and other equipment needed to produce a complete book, starting with computerized typesetting equipment programmed in Mandarin Chinese script.

The commitment by UBS for the \$6.7 million installation was made at the

request of Chinese Christians, who have themselves produced and distributed 1.8 million Bibles since 1980, but who are no longer able to meet the rapidly growing demand because of logjams at the commercial printers.

In providing the Amity Printing Press facility, the Bible Societies are fulfilling their historic mandate of helping the people of any country by providing the Word of God to everyone who requests it, to each person in his or her own language.

WANTED:

Slides or 8 mm film of previous AFLC Annual Conferences, WMF or Luther League Conventions, Bible Camps or any other AFLC activity. The Anniversary Committee needs your help immediately! Please mail your "historical" film to the Committee at 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Mpls., Minn. 55441.

Healthy workers for the 4th Annual Memorial Day Work Retreat at the ARC on May 22-25. Enjoy fellowship, food, fun, fruitful labor, all free. Plus a special Bible study and Memorial Day Service.

"So we rebuilt the wall . . . for the people worked with all their heart."

Neh. 4:6
— ARC staff