

The Lord
is good,



THE LUTHERAN
AMBASSADOR

November 15, 1994



his mercy
is everlasting;
and his truth
endureth to all
generations.

Psalms 100:5

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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Light on the Way

Thankfulness

O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good: for His mercy endureth for ever (Psalm 136:1).

He was in a hospital bed in Minneapolis dying of cancer but he still called me long distance on the telephone. We were living in Seattle where I taught at the Lutheran Bible Institute during our furlough year. He had been my pastor at East Chain Lutheran Church when God sent a revival to that southern Minnesota community. Many of us from that small, 200-member rural congregation had come to the Lord confessing our sins and finding peace with God.

During that time of revival, prayer was made to God that He would send out from that congregation forty (if memory does not fail me) missionaries! Pastor Gustafson joined in praying that prayer. A remarkable number did become missionaries, evangelists and pastors! Even Pastor Gustafson himself, when he was 46 years old, together with his wife and six children, went to Bolivia to serve the Lord. We had the joy of serving together on that mission field for many years. His last trip to Bolivia was to fill in for us at the Christian radio station while we were on furlough.

He had cancer, but was hoping and praying that it had been arrested. He was a tough soldier of Jesus Christ, but cancer continued to eat away at his body, and so he returned to the States.

Now as he was on his deathbed, he made this tele-

phone call to me. I am sure we did not talk long, but I can still remember his last words to me, "The Lord is good and His mercy endureth for ever." As a Paul to a Timothy, he had always sought to encourage me, and even now those words and his example continue to do that. In spite of his suffering, he was thankful.

Yes, let us "give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good: for His mercy endureth for ever." God merits our praise! How damnable it is to be unthankful! In Romans we read about mankind's downhill slide away from God into the depths of depravity, "For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened" (Romans 1:21).

If God's revelation of Himself in His creation demands that we glorify and thank Him, how much more should this be so when we experience God's love in redemption!

"You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ... While we were still sinners, Christ died for us ... when we were enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son. ... He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all—how shall He not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" (from Romans 5 and 8).

Such mercy! Such love of God! It requires thanksgiving and thanks-living!

—by Odell O. Kittelson

Living Thanksgiving

One of the marks of a true believer is an attitude of gratitude. As one walks through life, the heart of the believer is filled with appreciation for all that God has done and continues to do. God tells us in His Word that we should be "giving thanks always to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 5:20).

Our most concrete expression of gratitude and thanksgiving to God is to actively live a life of gratitude. As we thank God for His multiple blessings, our lives must live the words we speak.

We thank God for the gift of life by living it victoriously, knowing that Jesus Christ paid the penalty for our sins. As blood-bought children, we now belong to Him. A "down in the mouth" spirit does not reflect a joyous life worthy of a child of God.

We thank God for talents and abilities by investing them in the lives of others, knowing that God has made each of us unique. We are each special and worthwhile in His sight. Allow God to use you. Make yourself available to your family, your neighbors and your church.

We thank God for all that others have done for us by selflessly focusing our actions on doing good things for others. "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me'" (Matthew 25:40).

We thank God for open doors of opportunity by accepting and facing them as challenges to be achieved. As with the Apostle Paul, we "press on" (Philippians 3:14).

We thank God for His grace, by being a willing grace-bearer to all we meet. We can't comprehend how grace works. Instead of wasting valuable time trying to identify and finely define it, we should, rather, lovingly pass it on. It is truly amazing grace.

We thank God for His peace by having peace with God, knowing that our sins are washed in the blood of Jesus Christ. The peace He gives creates a desire to live in peace with others. Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the sons of God" (Matthew 5:19).

We thank God for the gift of laughter by beginning each day with pleasant words and a smile and continuing the same throughout the day.

We thank God for freedom by not imprisoning others behind legalistic bars of our own opinions, traditions or personal preferences, but allowing and encouraging them to be free to grow into mature, responsible Christians as they are set free by Jesus. "And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free. ... If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:32,36).

We thank God for time by living each day to the fullest, not wasting time or taking it for granted; but "as wise, making the most of every opportunity" (Ephesians 5:15,16).

We thank God for His love by unconditionally loving Him, our family, friends and neighbors.

We thank God for His faithfulness by being faithful to Him as we communicate with Him in prayer, worship Him each Sunday, study His Word and live a life of obedience to Him.

As we daily reflect upon the goodness of God, we begin to realize that thankfulness must begin in our heart as the result

— by Rev.
David Keippela
Sunnyside Lutheran
Stacy, Minnesota

Setting a thankful example

Teaching our children
to have an
attitude of
thanksgiving

Our children learn best from example. We have found the more we talk about God and His moving in our lives, the more our children desire to see that same moving of God in their lives; in turn, they have "God" stories to tell us.

Facing difficulties in the present

Recently we experienced this in our own family. God has moved us out of the military and into the congregation again. Moves are difficult and I was sad to leave the military. God reminded me of a sermon I had heard recently on how we should be "excited" about the ministry God gives us. I was convicted. "Forgive me, Lord." Then my attitude began changing when I prayed the words, "I trust You" over and over again. That was the beginning of a thankful heart.

Our children heard me recall this story to friends. Friends prayed for us and attitudes changed from sad to excited. God was changing my heart as I allowed Him to change it! It is exciting to speak the words of Paul in Philippians 4:11, "For I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am in," and have it be



LIVING THANKSGIVING

of faith. We thank God for what we know He will do and because we know His way is best.

There is no room for ingratitude in the life of a believer. Every good gift is a grace gift from our heavenly Father. Take a few moments right now to thank God for all things, praying that your life would genuinely reflect a thankful heart.

"In everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

Note: The author is the son of Oscar and the late Svea Keippela. Born and raised in Elo, Michigan, he was baptized and con-

firmed in the Tapiola Apostolic Lutheran Church. He attended Suomi College in Hancock, Michigan, and graduated from Northern Michigan University in Marquette. He taught school in Bemidji and Wrenshall, Minnesota, and earned a Master's Degree in Special Education from the University of Minnesota-Duluth. After 16 years in education, the Lord called David into the ministry. He received his Master of Divinity degree from the Inter-Lutheran Theological Seminary, Plymouth, Minnesota. Before joining the AFLC in 1991, he served congregations in Mesa, Arizona and Hancock, Michigan. In 1969 he married Barb Sunnarborg, Esko, Minnesota. They have two sons, Jason and Jeremy, both of whom are in college.

real life to you! That is peace that surpasses all comprehension (Philippians 4:7). My desire was for what God wanted for us and the church we would soon serve.

Thankful for the future

God has blessed me with rich teaching these past three years in our Protestant Women of the Chapel. One dear Bible teacher, military wife and friend, said once, "I have always looked ahead with excitement to a move because I knew that God was going to make this move, not only the best possible experience for my husband, but also for myself and my children as well." That remark stuck! Already I have been thanking God for our future because He knows what is best for all of us! He is good!

My heart is bursting with thankfulness as we are seeing God work in our move. Our family seems closer than ever before. We are all thankful for His leading and His faithfulness as we know He will provide. It all comes down to trusting God. When we see His mercy and grace to us how can we sit around and not be thankful?

Teaching thankfulness to our children

Our lives are an example to our children. Isaiah 59:21 gives us God's promise that He will preserve His Word

from generation to generation. How many lives can we affect if we are but willing to teach our children? Deuteronomy 6:4-9 speaks of our teaching responsibilities to our children. Be creative. Thankfulness can be a prayer list. Maybe God is calling you to be so bold as to write thanksgiving verses "on your doorposts" as it says in Deuteronomy. Who knows what creative way God will call you to take. Pray about it as a family. See what God wants for you.

Share with children in such a way so that they might grow in:

1) Knowledge - what does God say about thankfulness?

2) Understanding - take verses and explain the words or phrases they do not understand.

3) Wisdom - teach them how to actually apply those verses. It is not just talk, but walk.

Pray Scripture prayers over your children. For example from I Thessalonians 5:17,18: "Lord I am truly thankful that You are teaching (name)_____ what it means to pray without ceasing and that You are showing _____ that in everything _____ is to give You thanks. Lord, I know that this is Your will for _____ in Christ Jesus. In Jesus Name, Amen."

Let's show our children and the world, that our thankful hearts to God do make a difference in our lives!

— by Mrs. Lori Crowell
Fort Hood, Texas

Who can estimate the value of God's gift, when He gave to the world His only begotten Son?

It is something unspeakable and incomprehensible.

It passes man's understanding. Two things there are which man has no line to measure. One of these things is the extent of that man's loss who loses his own soul. The other is the extent of God's gift when he gave Christ to sinners ...

Sin must indeed be exceeding sinful, when the Father must needs give His only Son to be the sinner's Friend!

— J. C. Ryle in *Foundations of Faith*

*Enter into his gates
with thanksgiving,
and into his courts
with praise;
be thankful unto him,
and bless his name.*

Psalm 100:4

Being *thanks-givers*

The Thanksgiving season is a time to celebrate and reflect upon the goodness of God. Psalm 100:5 reminds us that "The Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations." His goodness and mercy cause our hearts to be filled with praise and thanksgiving. Yet, my heart is burdened for some people in our society who are often neglected and not included by churches in their ministry.

Imagine living in a home with others who are weak and infirm, unable to care for themselves. Nearly every person around you is elderly. Think how it is to not do what you want to do; being restricted to a small room often shared with others who are not of like mind. Perhaps you have to wait for sometimes hours to receive personal attention in doing even the simplest task like taking a nap on your bed. You face the reality of deteriorating health with no hope for improvement. The only way you will be able to leave the place is by death.

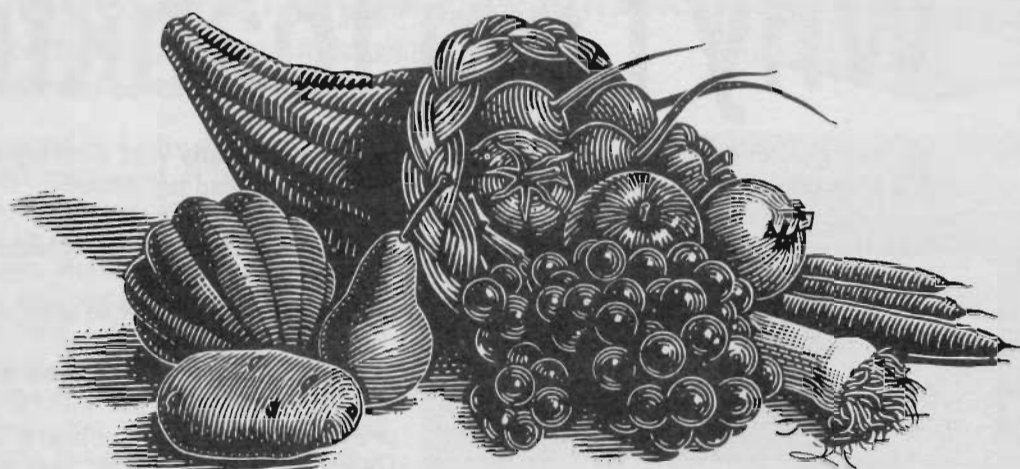
This is not imaginary for many of our elderly citizens. This is reality for many in our nursing homes or, as they are now called, Health Care Centers.

A prime opportunity for ministry

Pastors in our community have a rotating schedule for weekly services at our Health Care Centers. This is a prime opportunity for ministry. These people enjoy being treated with respect and love. They delight in singing the favorite old hymns, though sight and voice may be failing. Recently one blind lady sat in the front row. She sang every verse of every hymn with her face aglow in worship to the Lord. They want the Word of God to be preached and to be challenged by the message.

A 100-year-old lady comes to one of our services. She reclines in a lounge-type wheelchair. She is hard of hearing, yet her love for the Lord radiates on her face. After a service one time she said, "Thanks, I needed that challenge today!" Though some may appear to not be listening, the Holy Spirit has an opportunity to





Thanksgiving Blessings

For all the blessings through the
years

For Your precious Word that comes to
my ears;

For food and raiment, a roof o'er my
head—

A place to slumber in a clean, soft bed.

Lord, You have been so good to me

Even though I know I'm so unworthy.

For memories of old and Christian
friends—

The list goes on; it never ends.

I love You, Lord, and praise Your
Name,

Yesterday, today, always the same.

For all these gifts I thank You, Lord.

But above all, for Your precious Word.

— Mrs. Bu' Haugen, Snohomish, Washington

stir their hearts. For many of them, their
time on earth is nearly over.

Precious prayer supporters

Every one of these residents is a precious soul whom Jesus died for on the cross of calvary. Many need to be evangelized! All need to be encouraged and to feel self-worth. Often they sense they have been set on a shelf and no one cares. Yet the church today desperately needs the prayer support of these saints. They have the time now to spend in intercessory prayer. "They will still yield fruit in old age" (Psalm 92:14). The psalmist is speaking of the righteous person. God intends for each of us to be fruitful in Kingdom work to the end of our lives. He will give strength to fulfill that mission.

Worship services are only one of many opportunities to minister to our elderly neighbors. Most residents are provided with lots of secular entertainment and activity, but little religious activity. Pianos are often quiet when they could sound out blessed melodies of joy and encouragement. Christian men and women are needed to visit individually with the residents. Share a Scripture verse and pray with them.

I can think of no better way to share the spirit of thanksgiving in a year-around ministry. We are to be thank-givers and not thanks-keepers. May we truly be as II Corinthians 2:15a says, "For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ."



— by Pastor Don Norr
Good Shepherd Lutheran
Virginia, Minnesota

Why I am thankful

Among other bits of joy on my refrigerator door, is this thought from Our Daily Bread: "Don't grumble if you don't get what you want. Be thankful you don't get what you deserve."

Admitting what we deserve

It is easy to grumble. We have plenty of examples to follow and we often get plenty of practice. Being thankful requires discipline. If we think about it, what do we deserve?

God's Word says; "There is none righteous, no not one ... For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God ... the wages of sin is death" (Romans 3:10,23; 6:23). This describes me and all people. Obviously we do not deserve what God provides. Romans 5:8 declares the good news, "But God demonstrates His love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." John 1:12 promises, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name."

Rejoicing in what we can receive

I have received Him. He is mine and I am His. I have the right to be called a child of God. I did not earn this right and I certainly do not deserve it, but it is mine as I trust what Jesus said. Praise God! Can you think of any better reason to be thankful?

That is why I am thankful. And that is why "In everything (I should) give thanks, for this is God's will for me in Christ Jesus" (II Thessalonians 5:18). This is not something I do naturally; it is an attitude that requires practice and more practice. It has been said you can really control only one thing in this life and that is your attitude. Two years ago I had cancer and along with it came an "attitude adjustment." Recuperating from surgery provided me with time.

Time to really visit with friends.
Time to read my Bible.
Time to enjoy good books.
Time to listen to inspirational music.
Time to pray.
Time to "learn how to lean" on Him.

God used this time to bless me beyond measure. He used His faithful people to pray and show their concern and love. Galatians 6:2 tells us to "bear one another's burdens." It works! My family and friends did such a good job of it I did not feel any of the burden myself! As I discovered more of what it means to lean on Jesus, I realized it does not really matter what happens here. Now is only temporary. What lies ahead is totally awesome! Thank you God, for that time in my life.

Recognizing God's gifts

Thank you Lord, for helping me learn to "untie the ribbons" of your gifts. Many of us go through life looking right at all of God's blessings and fail to recognize them. We need to be willing to change our attitudes and praise God in all things; to be thankful that thorns have roses instead of complaining that roses have thorns. Look for joy. Thank God when you balance your checkbook for the first time; when the rain that ruined the picnic produced a beautiful rainbow; when you stop at a stop sign and there are no cars coming; when you go to bed early and the phone does not ring God is there in all things, big or small. He loves to bless his children. He is a wonderful God—more than wonderful! That is why I am thankful.

I stand amazed to think the King of Glory,
Should come to live within the heart of man.
I marvel just to know He really loves me,
When I think of who HE is and who I am.
He's more than wonderful!

by Mrs. Bonnie West
Stillwater Lutheran
Kalispell, Montana

A child of a street beggar gives thanks

One of the children from a Brazilian home for abandoned children tells his story

World Missions

Hi! My name is Andre de Jesus. Since I wasn't registered at birth, my last name was invented and my age is estimated to be 6 years. My mother, a street beggar, would have me beg alongside of her and we would search for food in garbage cans. I don't have any siblings that I know of. Once when I was hospitalized, I stayed three months at the hospital because no one would claim me. That is how I was taken to the Casa Lar, a home for abandoned children. I was lucky enough to be placed in a Christian home where there are ten other kids like myself plus our foster parents, Pastor Clovis and Tania and their four children. Pastor Clovis is the pastor of the AFLC Campo Grande church.

It took me a while to get over the urge to pick food out of trash cans or try to "clean-up" the leftovers from the other kids' plates. But God has helped me. I am in good health, except for a little difficulty breathing once in a while, due to having had pneumonia before. I am thankful to God that He has blessed me



so much and given me a chance to have a promising future.

—Andre's story is told by
Tamba Abel, missionary in Vitoria, Brazil and wife
of Jonathan Abel.

Meeting the practical needs in missions



The missionaries in Brazil and Mexico are so grateful for all the boxes of food, sundries, blankets and used clothing sent to them. Often WMF groups use creative ways to participate in this project. St. Paul's WMF in Cloquet, Minnesota, held a "missionary shower" one month and the following month hosted an ice cream social to raise funds for the shipping expenses. Pictured is a Brazilian family looking over the clothes they just purchased from the "Dorcas Room" in Campo Mourao. For more information regarding the needs of the missionaries and how and where to ship boxes, check with your local WMF president or contact Karen Knudsvig, Executive Secretary, RR 2, Box 11, Buxton, ND 58218, (701) 847-2220.

Some call it fate. Others say, "How lucky!" But Mai Persson says, "I know the full meaning of being chosen by God." Born into a Buddhist family in Vietnam nearly thirty years ago, Mai knows the pain that comes from the struggle to escape the slavery of communism as well as the bondage of a Christless religion. She now says, "Not all bad things that happen in life are bad. It is really God working out all things for our good."

Throughout her childhood, Mai accepted the Buddhist teachings of her family, yet wondered if there truly was a real God. The only other religion she knew of was a unique blend of Catholicism and Buddhism. She knew who Jesus was and that He certainly was not God. "I just didn't get it," Mai said. "I figured these people had it made. They could sin, ask for forgiveness and it would all be gone. There was no responsibility." This was a foreign concept to a Buddhist who knows that each wrong done will be paid for and the only hope is for the least amount of punishment in hell. Mai only saw confusion. The Buddhist had an altar of Buddha in his house and worshipped once a month. The Catholic had an altar of Mary in his house and worshipped once a week.

After spending the first few years of her life in the village of Qui-Nhon, in the middle part of Vietnam, Mai and her family moved south as the war spread. She was spared seeing the war first-hand until the last week before Saigon fell in 1975. "We were living in Saigon and now had communist rule. My Dad was an employee of the American Embassy and suddenly he became a high profile target of the new government. He went into hiding and began planning an escape for himself and my four brothers. Three times the plan failed. They were never caught. If they had, they would have been sent out

A journey from Buddhism to Christianity

A testimony
from a
grateful
new
American
citizen.



into mine fields to 'discover' any remaining explosives." Mai smiled as she added, "You see, God was working."

With the three failed attempts behind them, her father planned an escape for the whole family. Two years of black market purchases and tense secrecy went by. On April 28, 1979, Mai, age 15, and thirty relatives and close friends slid onto the Mekong River in an approximately 40-foot-long river boat. Their destination was simply to get out into international waters and freedom!

As the crowded boat headed into the South China Sea, everyone prayed. "I prayed to whoever was out there who could help," Mai admitted. "Four days later,

we saw the first ship. We screamed and waved for help. As the huge Philippine ship approached, we saw that they were intending to run us over rather than rescue us. Dad swerved the boat and ordered us to jump into the water. The Philippine captain had mercy on us and pulled us onto his ship. He seemed strangely kind as he aided Dad with repairs on our little boat, gave us more water and rice and then told us where we would find the nearest land."

After a few hours of tossing like a toy boat on the two-story-high waves, Mai's father realized the ship's captain had simply directed them out into the endless ocean and to an eventual death.

He turned the boat and headed in the opposite direction, hoping to find land. As the sun set that evening, an island was spotted. Natives wearing only grass skirts jumped into canoes to meet them. As Mai's family came closer to the island, they saw a man in western clothes standing on the shore. They called out in Vietnamese and English, but received no response. Then Mai's sister-in-law spoke Chinese and immediately a conversation began. He said he was a missionary and gladly told the refugees where they could find friendly shores.

"We were all very sick. Our water was nearly gone. At the end of the day, we saw land. As we got closer, we saw cars moving and knew we were not back in Vietnam." Mai added, "Dad crashed the boat as we hit shore so that we couldn't be sent back out to sea."

All 31 people had arrived safely in Singapore! Because of her father's connections with the American Embassy, paperwork was quickly completed. On August 13, 1979, Mai and her family landed at the Minneapolis-St. Paul airport in Minnesota. Waiting for them was a delegation from Calvary Lutheran Church in Willmar, Minnesota.

Now a Willmar High School student, Mai plunged herself into the new way of life. Vietnam was a four-letter word in her mind. But one nagging thought would not go away: "Why would a church sponsor my family?"

Feeling they owed it to the church, Mai's family faithfully went to worship services. As Mai recalled, "It was a burden. We couldn't understand anything. But one thing I did enjoy was the singing. I could participate in that!"

One Sunday a man in the congregation heard Mai sing and asked her to try out for a gospel singing group, the Carpenter's Tool. "I couldn't understand why

they would ask a Buddhist to try out for a gospel music group. But I was convinced they truly wanted me to give it a try, so I did. I was accepted and began taking a crash course in evangelism. At the end of each class, I was asked, 'If you were to die tonight, where would you go?' Mai never did answer as she added, "I just told them I prayed to God, whoever He is."

At the end of Mai's senior year in high school, the Carpenter's Tool began making plans to travel and sing in South America. "Immediately I thought this was crazy. I could not raise the funds to go and besides that, I still wasn't a believer. But the church people came through again for me. The funds were there." Then the Lord really began to try to get Mai's attention.

In spite of a series of bizarre events surrounding her immigration papers, Mai, through divine intervention, safely arrived in South America. She admits that "God was only proving to me over and over again that He is the one true God!"

Then one night the light dawned. "I was so blind not to see it before. Jesus loved me.

He died on the cross for my sins!"

But what about Buddha? Mai said what followed was over a year of struggling with a tortured soul. "I couldn't rest. I knew the Truth. I believed, yet I had to accept the one and only true God. This happened gradually. Then I realized that indeed Buddha was out of my life." Peace flooded her soul. "Now I can look back and see how each thing that happened to me did not just happen. God was working with me."

Today Mai and her husband Dean Persson, live in rural Wanamingo, Minnesota, and attend Emmanuel Lutheran Church. Most of her family now lives in California. Only Mai has remained in Minnesota, where she works as a research technician for Mayo Medical Center in Rochester. Though she carries the burden for her lost loved ones, her radiant smile verifies her testimony: "Every day I thank God for my freedom, a mind to understand and think, for love and happiness. ... The Lord makes my life very meaningful. All of my life is one of deep gratitude to Him. All glory to God!"

— by Solveig Hjermstad

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard

Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences – January 1 - September 30, 1994

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN SEPTEMBER	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$256,591.00	\$14,558.36	\$158,032.56	62
Seminary	148,000.00	8,129.00	88,506.76	60
Bible School	231,562.00	9,100.35	111,412.78	48
Home Missions	319,086.00	17,906.19	165,169.52	52
World Missions	342,788.00	21,533.18	218,741.81	64
Capital Investment	37,395.00	1,123.59	19,152.31	51
Parish Education	67,868.00	3,235.71	29,350.08	43
ARC	8,600.00	248.46	5,708.79	66
Church Extension	10,000.00	523.32	3,442.97	84
TOTALS	\$1,422,890.00	\$68,277.07	\$728,159.41	57
1993 Goal 82%	\$1,347,747.00	\$83,177.28	\$684,476.52	62
1994 Goal 75%				

YOUTH

A summer in Brazil

Eu gostel do Brasil muito, muito bem! (I liked Brazil very, very much!) Being the youngest member on last summer's FLY team was interesting. I found myself growing up quickly. I thank God for the other six members, all of whom became good friends during our six-week experience in the beautiful and friendly country of Brazil.

Our days began with devotions, then we headed out to whatever project was assigned to us by the missionaries. We participated in several camps and sang and gave testimonies in a number of churches. Some of the various jobs that the missionaries needed help with were painting rafters in the dorms of the ARCA, putting up fences, clearing brush, and planting cactuses.

I learned a lot about what it was like to be a missionary. I learned that you give up time and possessions to those who are in need. This often happens at some of the most inconvenient times. Missionaries have to have a real servant's heart. I realized how blessed we are in America. We take so much for granted.

Missionaries Paul and Becky Abel were so warm and welcomed us all. They were always so adventuresome. Jonathan and Tamba Abel were equally adventuresome. They took us everywhere imaginable; especially in Rio. We had gotten a real craving for "good old bad-for-you" American food. Missionary Jonathan Abel found a McDonald's! No more rice and beans!

I do not think I could have gone to Brazil at a better time in my life. I came to a real turning point and I am now more on fire for God than I was before I left. I

realize the need for missionaries right here in our own country.

If there is one thing I learned from the Brazilians, it was how not to be afraid to share the gospel, no matter what the circumstances. I took a real look at myself in this area and realized I was afraid of what people might think. I am over that now and am trying to tell as many as I can about my faith in the Lord Jesus Christ!

I thank God for the missionaries who give their time to bring others to Christ. I would enjoy going back someday. If you are thinking about going on the FLY team to Brazil in the summer of 1996, seriously pursue that desire. It is a chance of a lifetime you do not want to miss. I thank my Lord and Savior that He allowed me to go!

— Naomi Pollestad
Blaine, Minnesota

Next summer's FLY (Free Lutheran Youth) Team will be going to Mexico. The team is open to juniors and seniors in high school. For information, contact Rev. Dennis Gray, Youth Ministries Director at P.O. Box M, Greenbush, MN 56726.

Youth groups and congregations interested in a mission trip across the border into Mexico can contact Al Brazier, Rt. 2 Box 338, Greenbush, MN 56726. The phone number is (218) 782-2456. Mr. Brazier is the director of the AFLC Partners in Mission Outreach.

Creation Science Seminar

November 27, 1994

United Free Lutheran,
Greenbush, Minnesota

Rev. Roger Melquist will speak at two sessions beginning at 3:15 P.M. Group leaders should pre-register. Supper will be provided.

This seminar is for youth, parents and teachers. Everyone is welcome!

For more information call (218) 782-2249.

YOUTH NOTES

District Youth Rallies held

October 15 - Northwest Minnesota youth met at Our Savior's Lutheran in Argyle. Speakers were Pastors Todd Schierkolk, Todd Peterson and Dan Klug.

October 28-30 - A Youth Retreat was held at Faith Haven Bible Camp for the Southwest Central Minnesota District. Rev. Tim Hurley was the speaker.

October 29 - The Minneapolis District youth met at Emmaus Lutheran. Eric Westlake was the speaker.

Williston, North Dakota - Emmanuel Lutheran youth met for a special Bible study on November 13, with Pastor Michael Brandt, Sioux Falls, South Dakota. The youth enjoyed a supper following their meeting. Pastor Brandt was the speaker for Emmanuel's Fall Special Meetings held November 13-16.

Dalton, Minnesota - The Kvam, Tordenskjold and Zion-Sarpsborg parish has hired a Youth Minister, David Foss. They call their youth group the "FLYERS".

Canton, South Dakota - Youth from Redeemer Lutheran are planning a rafting trip along with the FLY National Convention in Estes Park, Colorado, next July.

Congregation has new name

A Home Missions congregation with a new name is **New Vision Free Lutheran Church, Spokane, Washington, formerly Bethany Lutheran Church.** Rev. Doug Wagley, pastor of New Vision, reported that the renaming was the result of a new sense of direction and purpose, rather than a relocation which had been

considered earlier.

Volunteers from AFLC churches in Astoria, Oregon, and Kalispell, Montana, assisted in providing a "face lift" for the church building. The congregation requests the prayers of other in our church family as they face the future in the midst of a changing urban community.



Sioux Falls, South Dakota — Pictured is Abiding Savior Lutheran, a Home Mission church since 1989. The church addition was built in 1992. The average attendance for the two Sunday services is 160.

Pastor Kenneth Thoreson, Janesville, Wisconsin, has resigned as pastor of Trinity Lutheran in Janesville. He will continue to serve Bethany Lutheran of nearby Brodhead. Trinity Lutheran is a Home Mission congregation.

Bethel Park, Pennsylvania — Bob Halvorson, Associate Youth Director of the AFLC, led a Leadership Seminar on October 29, 1994, at Ruthfred Lutheran Church.

Pickeral Lake Bible Camp, Waubay, South Dakota, is undergoing a building project. Mr. Jim Keller, Wallace, South Dakota, is traveling throughout the district seeking to raise funds for the new girls' dorm.

Home Missions

Melbourne, Florida — On October 23, 1994, the first AFLC worship service was held in Florida. Retired missionary John Abel along with Rev. David Barnhart have canvassed door-to-door in an attempt to draw a nucleus together.

At the last Home Missions Committee meeting, a request was considered from Pastor Barnhart for \$5,000 to help with the initial effort in visitation and getting the work started. The Committee approved the new work for the Partners in Planting program. This is above and beyond the budget. The Home Missions Committee believes it is worthy of the extra effort and giving of our people in order that a new work might begin in Melbourne. For more information, call the Director of Home Missions, Rev. Elden Nelson at (612) 545-5631.

Parish Education news

"Reach and teach your own for Jesus - reach. And teach the world for Jesus beginning right next door," was put into practical, everyday "how-to" ideas at a recent Sunday school teacher's workshop conducted by Parish Ed Director, Katha Tjelta.

The teachers and Sunday school superintendent of Minnesota Valley Lutheran, Lakeville, Minnesota, were introduced to the effective use of puppets, flannel graphs, catechism posters, music, Opening Chapel Time and the Christian Education Calendar in helping their Sunday school come alive and effective for Christ. By the time the workshop was done several teachers were waking

up the puppets from the suitcase they were in and investigating the possibilities of their flannel graph set!

Are you looking for Sunday school teaching and outreach ideas? Do you know the Ambassador Sunday School Series and all that it has to offer your people? Have you been introduced to the Catechism posters? Call or write your Parish Education director for further information or to plan a Sunday school workshop to fit your needs and help you reach and teach the world for Christ.

—Katha M. Tjelta
Director of AFLC Parish Education,
3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.,
Minneapolis, MN 55441
(612) 545-5631

PEOPLE and PLACES

Rev. Tim Hinrichs, St. Paul, Minnesota, has received an official invitation from the Bishop of the Silesian Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession to serve with them in the eastern city of Ostrava. Pastor Hinrichs is currently raising his own support before his scheduled departure in May of 1995. He is working through the East European Missions Network, 10800 Lyndale Avenue S. #120, Bloomington, MN 55420, (612) 881-3554.

Springfield, Missouri — Immanuel Lutheran hosted the South Central District Pastors' Meeting, October 10-12.

The new Army Deputy Chief of Chaplains is Chaplain **G.T. Gunhus**, a member of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren. He joins other Lutheran chaplains, Byron Holderby, (ELCA) who was recently selected to be the Deputy Chief of Chaplains in the Navy, and the new Navy Chief, Don Muchow, (LCMS).

Pipestone, Minnesota — The eastern South Dakota AFLC congregations along with Christ the King Lutheran of Pipestone, are sponsoring a Couple's Retreat during November 18-19, at the Calumet Inn in Pipestone. The speakers will be Dr. and Mrs. Rey Franco, a Christian family counselor from Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

Rev. Alvin Magnuson, Aberdeen, South Dakota, has accepted the call to Slim Buttes Lutheran of Reva, South Dakota. He begins his new ministry in November.

Rev. Michael Crowell, Ft. Hood, Texas, has accepted the call to serve Elim Lutheran in Lake Stevens, Washington. Pastor Crowell completed his tour of duty as an Army Chaplain the first of November.

Kalispell, Montana — Stillwater Free Lutheran creatively solved the problem of not finding anyone to preach recently. They are currently without a pastor, so the congregation decided to use the Worship Service time to share testimonies and become familiar with all that is in the new Ambassador Hymnal.

Badger, Minnesota — Oiland Lutheran dedicated their new dining hall addition on October 23, along with the commemoration of the congregation's 95th Anniversary. Later in the afternoon, Oiland hosted the Northwestern Minnesota District Annual Meeting which included a prayer time, business session, and supper followed by the evening service with Mr. Ralph Peterson, Portland, North Dakota, as the guest speaker.

Missionary Candidates **David and Sarah Nelson** have moved out of their home near Osceola, Wisconsin, and are temporarily living with their parents in Minnesota, until they receive Brazilian government approval. Due to the expected arrival of their second child, the Nelsons

Greenbush, Minnesota — United Free Lutheran is selling Concordia hymnals. Any congregation or individual wishing to purchase, should contact Rev. Dennis Gray at (218) 782-2249. Cost is \$2 per hymnal.

AFLC 1995 Dates at the ARC

February 3-5 - Senior Snow Daze

February 17-19 - Men's Retreat

March 10-11 - Junior Snow Daze

May 5-7 - Ladies' Retreat

June 14-18 - AFLC Annual Conference

June 19-24 - Junior Bible Camp

July 30 - August 5 - AFLC Family Camp

The Association Retreat Center, 2372 30th Ave, and Kings Way, Osceola, Wisconsin 54020, (715) 294-2877

need to leave the U. S. by December or they will have to wait until March 1995.



Free Lutheran Seminary, Minneapolis, Minnesota recently received grants totaling \$3,500 from Aid Association for Lutherans (AAL) to assist the seminary in its programs of continuing education for parish pastors and faculty. In addition, financial assistance has been made available again this fall by AAL to help seminary students with their financial needs. In the picture above, AAL general agent, Richard Roussell, and the district representative, Barbara Hendricks, present a check for the seminary to Dr. Francis Monseth, dean.

Thankful for the chance to serve

An old man showed up at the back door of a family's house, clutching a basket containing some unappealing vegetables. His eyes were glassy and his face glistened with silver stubble. He said, "Good morning," and offered his produce for sale. With a mixture of pity and fear the couple made a quick purchase and bid the man good day.

The couple did not view it as a cause for celebration when the man was at their door again the next week. He introduced himself as Mr. Roth, the man who lived in the shack down the road. Upon closer inspection they discovered it was cataracts and not alcohol that gave his eyes their glassy appearance. Their fears subsided and Mr. Roth's visits continued.

Wearing two mismatched right shoes, he would shuffle in. He would pull out a harmonica and, with a clear vision of future glory, play old gospel tunes. On one visit he exclaimed, "The Lord is so good! I came out of my shack this morning and found a bag full of shoes and clothing on my porch." His new-found friends expressed how wonderful that was and how happy they were for him. Mr. Roth replied, "You know what's even more wonderful? Just yesterday I met some people that could use them."

Mr. Roth was thankful for the opportunity to serve. The Apostle Paul expressed a similar spirit when writing to Timothy, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service" (I Timothy 1:12). Paul was amazed that he who had persecuted the Church was actually permitted to serve Christ the King.

When we think of reasons for giving thanks we often consider things like the food on the table, the clothes on our back and the people around us. Those are certainly things for which we should give thanks. Let us also be sure to give thanks for the opportunity to be a servant.

Giving thanks for the chance to serve can help us to put what we do in a proper light. Service for God is not a burden we bear as much as a privilege we are given. God can function on His own quite well. He does not have to have us in order to get His work done. Because He knows it is good for us and can bring true joy, He lets us help. We can be used by Him. We can be productive. We can make a true and lasting contribution to His Kingdom work and to the lives of others. What an opportunity for which we should give thanks!

Dr. L. Nelson Bell, the father of Ruth Bell (Mrs. Billy) Graham, spent many days in his later years taking care of his wife after a stroke confined her to a wheelchair. He would get up at four o'clock in the

morning to have his Bible study and time of prayer so that he could devote the rest of his day to his wife. One morning he greeted his daughter on her arrival and told her, "You know, these are the happiest days of our lives. Caring for your mother is the greatest privilege of my life."

It is great to be able to serve. Give thanks!

I'm glad He is in control

I grabbed the side of bunk just in time. I was on my Dad's fishing boat as we were crossing the Columbia River bar, heading out into the Pacific Ocean. The waves were tossing the boat from side to side, making it difficult to stay asleep. They were also making me wonder if it was wise to be in the top bunk. In spite of the waves, at that moment I was very thankful. I was thankful my Dad was at the wheel of the ship. I trusted him completely. I was sure he knew what he was doing and everything was under control.

Often we may feel like a ship at sea. The storm is howling, the waves are beating upon us and it seems we are barely holding on. Fear not, Jesus is still at the wheel. He is still in control. The Psalmist says, "Clap your hands, all you nations; shout to God with cries of joy. How awesome is the Lord Most High, the great King over all the earth! For God is the King of all the earth; sing to him a psalm of praise. God reigns over the nations; God is seated on his holy throne" (Psalm 47:1,2,7,8). Elsewhere, God reminds us that even though the waters may roar and foam and the mountains may quake with their surging, we can be still and know that He is God (Psalm 46:3,10).

The circumstances may cause us to wonder and doubt. The situation around us may look chaotic and cause us to fear. The child of God, however, remains hopeful. Our confidence is not based on the circumstances, but on the promises of God. He remains in control. Jesus was and is and always will be the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

Your home or community or congregation may seem like a ship on a stormy sea without a captain. We may wonder at times if anyone is at the wheel of our country or the world. How thankful we can be for the confidence we can have when our trust is in Christ. In spite of the problems that may be visible, an invisible hand has a firm grip on the controls. He knows the seas in which we are sailing. He can pull us through whatever storm may lie ahead. Let us not give in to despair or fear. Let us rest in our Father's strong hand and gentle care.

Grand Rapids, Mich. —

Rapid advancements in modern communications technology have left media consumers in a disquieting din of bells and whistles, with the "mute" button pushed on the once-lively art of conversation, says Quentin Schultze, a media expert and professor of communication arts and sciences at Calvin College, a Christian liberal arts school in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

"We live in homes with four or five television sets and 10 or 12 radios, and yet there is very little real communication," observes Schultze. "The average parent in the U. S. spends only 30 seconds a day conversing with his or her child and about four-and-a-half minutes a day talking with his or her spouse."

In a new book and video series titled "Winning Your Kids Back From the Media," Schultze says that Christians living in a society he describes as "media-rich and communication-poor" need to become wise consumers of media, and learn to be good partners with family and friends in conversation.

"Too much leisure time is dedicated to selfish media consumption," he says, "and far too little to precious family conversation, storytelling and listening. I don't think the Christian community understands that through communication we come to know each other — and through knowing each other we come to love each other and the God who made us."

Glendale, Calif. — Though pastors often tell their parishioners to change the world for God, a new survey conducted by the Barna Research Group found that about half of all pastors of Protestant churches say the Christian Church is not making a discernible difference in American society.

Overall, 41 percent of the pastors of Protestant churches claimed that Christian churches,

in general, are having limited impact, with three percent saying that churches are "failing miserably." Among the half of the pastors who had more positive views, even their perspectives were mild in tenor. Only two percent said that churches are doing "tremendous, highly effective work," while 41 percent claimed churches are doing a "respectable, if not wholly successful job."

George Barna, president of the firm which conducted these studies, explained that "compared to the people in the pews, many pastors have a very different set of expectations as to what makes a church effective and influential. For millions of individuals who are associated with churches, simply being able to attend or take advantage of church programs is seen as sufficient. Pastor, however, want their churches to be more than just a sponsor of "feel good" events. Many of them expressed their disappointment that people's lives do not seem to be noticeably changed by exposure to what the church has to offer."

Barna's research also found that most of the key measures of personal Christian growth or involvement have declined for the third consecutive year. Bible reading, church attendance, involvement in small groups and even the numbers of people who might be described as born again Christians or as evangelical Christians

have all decreased significantly.

Barna attributed some of these outcomes to the changing perspectives on moral standards in America. "Since the beginning of the '90s, when we first began to see the steady drop in personal spiritual commitment, there has been a consistent increase in the proportion of adults who believe that there are no absolute moral truths," he explained. "Four years ago, we noted that about two-thirds of all adults rejected the notion of absolute truth. That figure has since risen to nearly three-quarters of the population. I don't think it's a coincidence that at the same time people's religious beliefs are becoming less central and less orthodox, and that involvement in faith development has tapered off, that more and more people are also embracing moral relativity."

Atlantic City, New Jersey

— Heather Whitestone, the newly crowned Miss America, danced to Sandi Patty's song "Via Dolorosa" during the talent portion of the contest. Whitestone, who has only five percent of her hearing, explained on "Live with Regis and Kathie Lee" that she worked hard to learn the song because of her love for God and for Patty's ministry.

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