

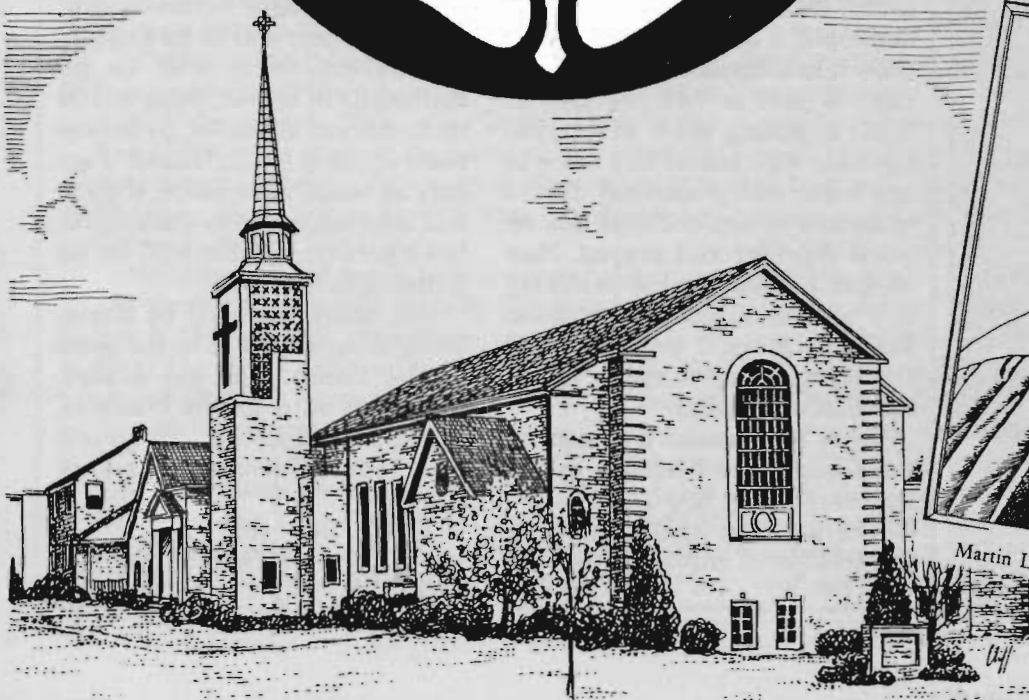


THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

November 1, 1994



What does
it mean
to be a
Lutheran?



Martin Luther (Woodcut by Hans Brosamer, 1523)

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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Light on the Way

Reformation

*Lord, I have heard of your fame;
I stand in awe of your deeds, O
Lord.*

*Renew them in our day,
in our time make them known;
in wrath remember mercy.*

Habakkuk 3:2

A Roman Catholic priest from the U.S. serving in Bolivia, South America, once said to me in words something like this: "Why do you evangelicals still continue to commemorate the Reformation? The past is past." As I recall, his idea was that by commemorating this date we are not helping the church, but rather stirring up enmity. Surely we need to be censured if we gloat and are filled with pride because of our past. Who of us dares to say that during the last 477 years we have always acted with humility and always spoken the truth in love? We know history and ourselves better than to make such an affirmation.

In Bolivia the *Martin Luther* film with Spanish sound track has been shown in hundreds of evangelical churches and to thousands of people. I once was invited to show it in a Roman Catholic seminary. A year or two previous to this, a young man attending Catholic high school had come to our house with a spiritual need. I witnessed to him of Christ and we knelt together and prayed. Now he was enrolled in the seminary and because of him the invitation had been given. I was also given the opportunity to speak to the students and faculty.

Years have passed and memory fades but I hope I humbly gave a testimony about how I had been a Lutheran from birth; had been baptized and confirmed in the

church; I was faithful in attendance; did not "smoke, drink nor dance" and yet I still did not know that my sins were forgiven nor that I was saved and on my way to heaven. I tried to explain that I could identify with Luther in his struggle with sin and that I, too, had found peace with God through simple faith in Christ Jesus. I'm sure I shared with them Revelation 3:20 and I John 1:9 along with other verses from the Bible. I hope I left with the group of students and faculty a clear understanding that simply being a Lutheran does not save. Only Jesus saves! I hope I did not exalt the Lutheran church, but only Jesus. If I did, I missed the mark.

It was the summer of 1944. A group of us young people from East Chain Lutheran Church were on the street corner in Elmore, Minnesota. Many of us had recently come to know Christ as our personal Savior. We were there for a Saturday night street meeting. It was my first. Some of us had given our testimonies. Now Pastor Gjerde of the Elmore and Pilot Grove Churches was speaking. With his Norwegian brogue he loudly proclaimed: "There will be no Baptists in heaven; there will be no Methodists in heaven; there will be no Lutherans in heaven. In heaven there will only be Christians!" I am sure he would have added, if there had been many, or any Catholics in his hearing: "There will be no Catholics in heaven."

Yes, there will only be Christians, sinners washed in the blood of the Lamb. The old priest, Staupitz, said to the troubled monk, Martin Luther: "You must find yourself in the wounds of Christ."

He did. Have you?

— by Odell O. Kittelson

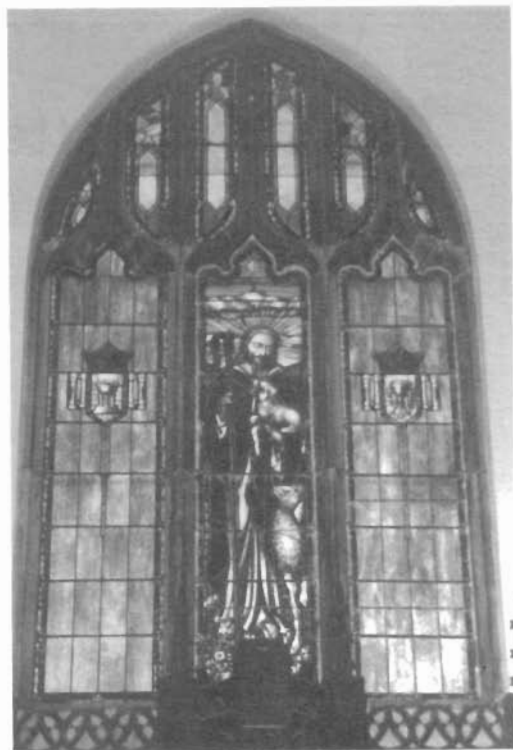
There are many opinions as to what it means to be a Lutheran. The Lutheran church today represents a broad spectrum of views in this regard. What does it mean to be an heir of the Lutheran Reformation of the 16th Century? We can only turn to the statements of faith that our spiritual forebears set forth in their earnest endeavor to "contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). When we do, I believe we discover the following major truths:

First, to be a Lutheran is to be one who believes that the Word alone is the true source and authority for all matters of faith and life. This is held as truth because of one's underlying conviction that the Bible is, in its entirety, God's inspired and inerrant Word. The Bible is opened with the confidence that all is true. Like the Bereans of old in Acts 17:11, all religious opinions one might encounter are tested with the divine Scriptures.

Our Lutheran confessions clearly point to the Word alone. Here is their testimony: "We receive and embrace with our whole heart the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as the pure, clear fountain of Israel, which is the only true standard by which teachers and doctrines are to be judged" (*Formula of Concord*, Triglotta, p. 851).

Secondly, to be a Lutheran is to be a person who believes that salvation is by grace alone. One believes that the law of God reveals the total depravity of man's spiritual condition and one's utter helplessness to save oneself. At the same time, one rejoices in the revelation of the divine plan of salvation: that God has sent His only Son to die on the cross as the perfect sacrifice for one's sin. A Lutheran recognizes the Word and Sacraments as God's gracious means of saving sinners through the work of the Holy Spirit. Luther says in this regard, "For neither you nor I could ever know anything of Christ or believe on Him and have Him for our Lord if salvation were not offered to us and bestowed on our hearts as a gift by the Holy Ghost through the preaching of the gospel," (*Large Catechism*, Triglotta, p. 689).

What it means to be a Lutheran



Thirdly, to be a Lutheran is to confess that salvation is received by faith alone. To be saved is to be justified by grace alone through faith alone. Luther's long struggle was caused by his erroneous idea that faith and good works were together necessary for salvation. He was finally converted as the light of Romans 1:17 dawned on his soul: "The just shall live by faith." He saw that it is the object of faith,

Christ and His atoning work at the cross, that alone justifies a sinner. Our Confessions testify to this reality in the words: "For it is only by faith that Christ is accepted as the mediator. By faith alone, therefore, we obtain the forgiveness of sins when we comfort our hearts with trust in the mercy promised for Christ's sake," (*Apology*, Tappert, p. 118).

Thank God for the great witness to fundamental Bible truths given fresh and courageous testimony at the time of the Reformation. May God empower us all to proclaim and live these crucial biblical teachings in our own time!

— by Dr. Francis Monseth
Dean, Free Lutheran Seminary
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Even if you attend church twice every Sunday

without fail, give most of your income to the poor, read your Bible and pray every day, and live a rigorously moral life, this will not earn you acceptance with God and entrance into heaven.

**That only comes as a
free gift from God
apart from all of your
religious dedication.**

—Martin Luther

Now fully

First of all I am a Christian before I am a Lutheran. Having said that, I must quickly add I am a Lutheran because I believe the Lutheran teachings most nearly reflect the truth of the Scripture. There is a spirit in our land that says it is not spiritual to be committed to any denominational persuasion. There are only a limited number of doctrinal options available from which a person may choose, and I have chosen the Lutheran option.

I was raised in the Baptist tradition, so even before I was saved I was doctrinally a Baptist. I was saved in my early thirties, and though I was then a member of a Lutheran church, I was doctrinally a Baptist.

After I was saved I had an insatiable appetite for theological study. I read a number of non-Lutheran theological works. One day, after having read nearly all that was available in non-Luther-

Remember the Reformation

At the end of October, often overshadowed by the unsavory celebration of Halloween, is the remembrance of a mighty Reformation that took place in the early part of the 16th Century.

The word "reform" means to correct error or remove defect. Therefore, to reform literally means to make something as it once was without a revolutionary change in the original.

The early years of the 16th Century in Germany saw a church that had drifted remarkably from its apostolic, New Testament foundation. Papal taxation and interference from Rome had become almost intolerable. The Dominican Friar John Tetzel was selling forgiveness by certificate, through a papal offer known as indulgences. Clergymen were less than worthy examples to their people. While the monasteries thrived, the average man struggled to maintain even the essentials in life. Conservative

Roman Catholicism found itself at odds with new humanist teachings, resulting in a church that spent more time defending itself than proclaiming the gospel to the common man.

In the midst of these abuses, a voice was raised calling for a mighty reformation of the church back to what it once proclaimed: "The just shall live by faith alone!"

Writing in the early part of this present century, the church historian Williston Walker writes this of Martin Luther: "Not an organizer, or a politician, Luther moved men by the power of a profound religious faith, resulting in unshakable trust in God, and in direct, immediate and personal relations to Him, which brought a confident salvation that left no room for the elaborate hierarchical and sacramental structure of the Middle Ages."

Luther had rediscovered the freeing truth, that righteousness is God's gift of grace and that the true

convinced

an teachings, I found myself in a store that sold mostly Lutheran material. The bookstore I had been patronizing sold no Lutheran material. That day I purchased a Lutheran dogmatics book and was soon ushered into a new world of theological thought.

Reverence for the Word of God

I was very impressed with the reverence expressed toward the Word of God. I had always believed the Bible was the Word of God, but now I found something altogether different. In my Lutheran dogmatics book I learned for the first time that even if the Bible seemed to contradict itself, it could never be so. The fault was not in the Scripture, but in the limited abilities of the student. From this I learned that I did not have to attempt to build a theological system that answered every possible question. Rather, my thinking was to be shaped by those scriptural teachings that were crystal-clear.

On some things I could simply say, "I don't know, but one thing I do know is that God's Word is true in all its parts in spite of my inability to explain it."

Having this new reverence and respect for God's Word prepared me to examine doctrines with a new-found freedom, overcoming my long-held beliefs and prejudices. Ultimately I found that the Bible taught more about baptism than I had thought.

A Biblical basis for Lutheran distinctives

Simply stated, I realized that baptism is a gift from God to man, rather than man doing something in this world for God. I learned that baptism is more than the Christian bearing witness to the world that he or she is now a follower of Christ. Since the Lutheran teaching on baptism is a distinctive doctrine setting it apart from other church bodies, I was from that point on a Lutheran by conviction.

There are other distinctive Lutheran teachings and practices which, to me, are more biblical than those in other denomina-

tions, or non-denominational churches. These tend to make my Lutheran commitment more sure.

I firmly believe in the pietistic Lutheran position of God's order in bringing an unsaved person to conversion; and I believe that the Lutheran teaching on the way a Christian life is to be maintained in true spirituality has no superior. I am persuaded that the law/gospel interpretative method of understanding the Bible is the best. It is better than those methods that either ignore the Law of God completely, or mix the law and the gospel so the Gospel is so burdened with human requirements that its truth is kept from the people, and leaves many a burdened soul with no release.

This former Baptist is now a fully convinced Lutheran. Our system of beliefs does not need to be changed, given up, or apologized for. Rather it needs to be proclaimed, believed and put into practice. If this is done, we may yet see revival.

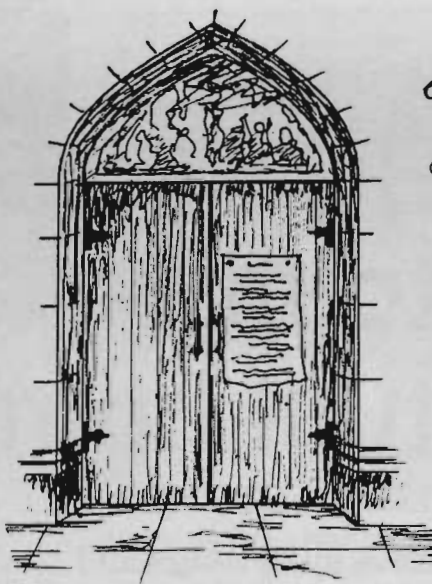
— by Rev. Emerson Anderson
St. Paul's Lutheran
Cloquet, Minnesota

church exists in the lives of people whose hearts are occupied by the Holy Spirit.

Without intending to start a new church and standing on the absolutes of Scripture, Luther boldly called the church back to its biblical roots. This he did with an overwhelming conviction that the power to reform was not in himself but in the gospel of Christ.

As we celebrate the Reformation, may we once again be struck by the simplicity of a faith that stands upon grace alone. May we dedicate ourselves to a new reformation, that based on that same simple message will ignite the church to reclaim with passion the faith, hope and love that God offers by His grace.

— by Rev. Rob Lewis
West Lisbon Lutheran Newsletter
October 1993
Newark, Illinois



Here I
stand.
God
help me.

~ Luther

Artwork by Rosalie Paulson, from Calvary Lutheran
Newsletter, Fosston, Minnesota



My journey to my spiritual home

I am a Lutheran both by heritage and by choice. I choose to be a Lutheran because I have come to know the Lutheran Church as the church of the Word alone, grace alone and faith alone.

The Bible — God's true revelation

I am a Lutheran because, where the church is true to its heritage, the Bible is taught as the fully inspired and infallible Word of God. It is held up as the only source of faith and power for holy living.

The Lutheran emphasis on God's Word and the biblical teachings of the catechism reveal God's power and holiness. They also speak of His loving kindness which reaches down to the helpless, hopeless sinner and worked for his salvation from before the foundation of the world. In other denominations, the focus tends to be on man. Even the preaching of God's law and His expectations for man is often done in a way that produces a legalistic effort to please God. What is necessary is true conviction of sin to drive the sinner to Christ for grace and forgiveness.

My need revealed

From my earliest days I came to know "the sacred writings which are able to give ... the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (II Timothy 3:15). I thank God that He worked through His Word implanted in baptism (James 1:18, 21), so that when I began to hear and learn the written Word of His grace and truth, there was a response from the faith and new life within me by His grace.

I do not remember a time in my life when I did not want to live in fellowship with God. Still, as I grew older, the Law of God showed me what I was; I did not love the Lord with all my heart, soul, strength and mind (Luke 10:27). As did Paul, I learned that as a child of God, I could have a desire to do what was right, but could not carry it out (Romans 7:18). I needed the assurance that in spite of my sin and failings, forgiveness and salvation were mine

in Christ. Lutheran teaching led me to know that faith must be personal and living. I also found that "faith comes from hearing the message and the message is heard through the word of Christ," (Romans 10:17 NIV). God's Word produces the faith necessary even to hear the Word and trust Christ as Savior.

I love the Lutheran Church because it taught me the blessings of Bible study and created a hunger to know God's Word better through study at Bible school.

Jesus Revealed

Lutheran teaching reveals the Lord Jesus Christ as the only begotten Son of God who alone, because He was sinless and because He became true Man, could take my sin and bear the complete punishment on the cross so that I might be justified by faith.

The Lutheran Church is the church of the gospel of the grace of God. "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8). The gospel is the effective call of God and makes its acceptance possible, as Luther said in his explanation to the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed: "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, or come to Him but the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel."

Romans 1:17 (NIV) says: "In the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last." I thank God for the imputed righteousness which is revealed in the gospel, that I stand perfect in Christ by grace through faith. Jesus Christ is revealed to me as the source of forgiveness of sin which is new and sufficient every day to cover all my sin.

This righteousness is by faith until the end as it has been since God first made me His own. By grace I was given "new birth into

a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade," (I Peter 1:3, 4). Because Jesus Christ is risen from the dead and lives to intercede for me, His grace will keep me in the faith. In His church, He feeds me with the Word of God and with His body and blood.

In my church law and gospel are brought to me from God's Word Sunday by Sunday and at other times of Bible study. Lutheran hymns exalt Jesus Christ and impress the way of salvation and grace for Christian living on my heart.

Finding a spiritual home

When I was growing up in one of the large Lutheran synods, God's Word and the true Lutheran teaching led me to personal faith. In the local congregation I found the joy of serving God within a fellowship of believers which exalted Christ. In recent years, with great sorrow I saw my Lutheran synod depart from its reliance on the infallibility of God's Word and consequently lose its clear message of salvation by grace through personal, living faith, and its emphasis on holy living.

Along with many other believers, I discovered the AFLC as an association of living congregations in which the Bible is preached and taught as the infallible Word of God, and the teachings of the Lutheran confessions are accepted. In it I have seen souls come to Christ by faith, and baptized children come to personal repentance and faith through the law and the gospel. For 25 years the AFLC has been my spiritual home.

— by Dr. Mary Lindquist
Trinity Lutheran
Grand Forks, North Dakota

No man should be alone

No man should be alone when he opposes Satan. The church and the ministry of the Word were instituted for this purpose, that hands may be joined together and one may help another. If the prayer of one doesn't help, the prayer of another will.

Temptations, of course, cannot be avoided, but because we cannot prevent the birds from flying over our heads, there is no need that we should let them nest in our hair.

— Martin Luther

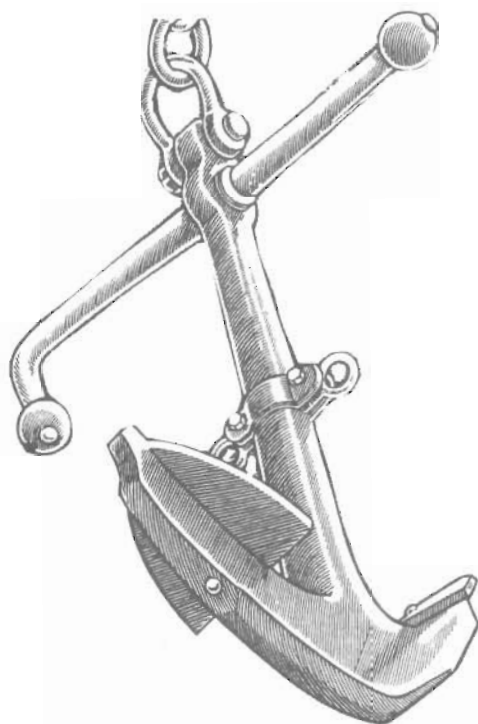
Luther quotes taken from *The Spire*, October 1994, Calvary-Monroe Free Lutheran Parish, Everett, Washington.

Little known "Lutheran" facts from America's early history

- Lutherans were in America seven years before the Pilgrims.
 - The first book translated into any Native American language was Martin Luther's *Small Catechism*.
 - It was a Lutheran boy who called a Lutheran sexton to ring the Liberty Bell.
 - George Washington's army at the Battle of Trenton was composed largely of Lutherans.
 - The Statue of Liberty was made by a French Lutheran M. Frederic Bartholdi.
- from Emmanuel Lutheran Church Newsletter
Lawrenceburg, Indiana

Young man, just how many churches have you been a member of in your short life? As a 29-year-old seminary applicant, this question was put to me by school board member Rev. John Strand. Too many, I had thought to myself as I knew that I had been a bobber on the theological sea. When asked to write this article I thought immediately of how good it is to have an anchor, a home port, and a sound doctrine upon which the Lord Jesus can set my course in this life.

After completion of seminary and over five years in the ministry, I realize these major tenets help keep me anchored: the Word alone, grace alone, and the distinction between justification and sanctification.



Finding an anchor in the theological seas

Word alone

"We believe, teach, and confess that the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments are the only rule and norm according to which all doctrines and teachers alike must be appraised and judged ... Psalm 119:105 ... Galatians 1:8 ..." (*Formula of Concord*, Tappert, p. 464).

Since receiving Christ as my Savior in 1974 and until coming to the Free Lutheran Seminary in 1985, I had considered myself to be a student of the Word. In seminary I began to realize that I valued too highly my interpretation of what Scripture meant and that unknowingly, I was a judge of the Word rather than letting God's Word judge and enlighten me.

To study God's Word in its historical and contextual meaning and to learn how to let the truths

of the Scripture text be brought forth without color or comment from me is a wonderful thing. To be a Lutheran to me means to have a deep reverence for God's Word and to rely on it alone in all matters of faith and doctrine. Where the Scripture speaks, I will speak; where it is silent (here is the hard part), I will be silent.

Grace alone

The strong emphasis on God's saving work through Christ's blood shed for me while yet a sinner (Romans 5:8), and the realization that, in every aspect of my own personal conversion, it is God alone who deserves the praise and credit, taught me the meaning of grace alone. My need to daily continue to walk in this grace does

ARC news

not make me insecure, but keeps me close to the cross and confident in God's provision alone for my salvation.

Separation of justification ...

To understand that I am justified (or declared innocent before God) totally as a gift of grace, and that I can do nothing to add to what Christ has accomplished for me has helped me live my life for Christ, motivated by His great love for me rather than the guilt or works-righteousness that sometimes tries to motivate my spiritual life. That is joy and freedom in Christ!

and sanctification

Then there is sanctification (Philippians 1:6). This is the process by which God through His Spirit and Word enables me to live in victory over sin, to grow more like Christ, and to do good works. This is no longer a result of my fear of hell, but rather by His undeserved love for me.

To be a Lutheran is my personal anchor in the theological seas of Protestantism. It has enabled me to grow closer to Jesus and to continue to mature in Christ. To preach God's Word and to see conviction of sin, souls saved, marriages restored, etc. is a wonderful experience. In an ideal world we would not have to have labels like "Lutheran." Someday God will make it so. But for now — "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain," (Philippians 1:21).

— by Rev. Tim Carlson
Christian Free Lutheran
Wheatland, Iowa



The new director's house at the Association Retreat Center is nearing completion. Remaining inside work includes installation of doors and trim, painting, carpets and cupboards. Outside work will be completed with the brick work and landscaping. Donations and volunteer labor are accepted. Call Bob Dietsche at the ARC for more information (715) 294-2877.

letter to the editor

To the editor:

In the way of things, I have just now received *The Lutheran Ambassador* of August 23, 1994. I am writing to share the joy of those who wrote in that issue about *The Ambassador Hymnal*. It is instructive to compare it with the hymnals of other denominations, particularly the recent publication of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. Whilst that book contains more modern hymns — and "classical" Lutheran chorales in more authentic editions, it has openly eschewed the gospel hymn and therein, in my opinion, lies one of the strengths of the AFLC book.

Many Christians are rediscovering the value of gospel hymns and the like; profound truths simply expressed, a catchy tune, a combination of words and music that comes readily to the mind and the lips particularly at times of trial.

Although I have not exhaus-

tively explored its contents, perhaps the most notable feature of *The Ambassador Hymnal* is that all of the items are eminently singable. The selections have obviously been tried in the fire of congregational singing and have stood the test! No modern tunes with strange rhythms here to trip up all but the most accomplished organist!

Here is a hymnal that truly bespeaks the faith of those who use it: a faith rooted in the communion between the individual believer and the precious Savior, a faith that gives itself in mission and service but never becomes detached from devotion and worship. Its anchor is firmly grounded in the Bible. Would that I had the opportunity to serve in a church that had this resource in their hands and on their lips!

Nicholas J. Page
Organist and Choir Director
Central Methodist Church
York, England

SEMINARY



Pictured is Dr. Steven Lombardo, AFLC Schools' faculty member. Guest seminary faculty this fall include: Rev. Jim Johnson, pastor of Solid Rock Lutheran in nearby Osseo, teaching *General Epistles and Hebrews*; Rev. Laurel Udden, pastor of Victory in Christ Lutheran in St. Paul, teaching *Contextual Education* and Peter Burton, Minneapolis, teaching *Greek II and Hebrews I*.



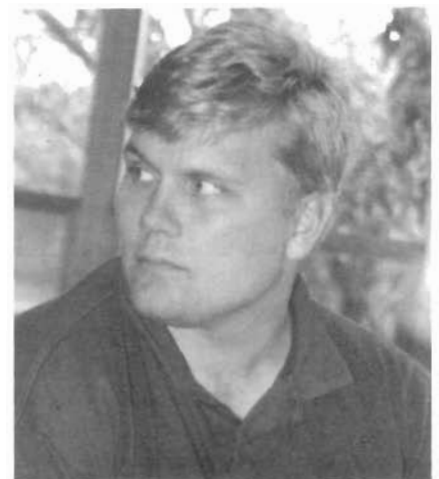
Senior seminarians Randy Nelson and Earl Korhonen share their lunch with Elicha Korhonen in the seminary library.



Jingson Chen, China, is a student at both the seminary and Bible School.



Michael Clarke, Calgary, Alberta, is a one-year colloquy student at AFLTS.



Marshall Nessa, originally from Garden City, Iowa, is the lone junior seminarian. Other seminarians include three seniors, one middler and four part time students.

Bible School



AFLBS junior Julia Makarova, Latvia, is one of twelve international students in the 103-member student body. As are most international students, Julia is employed on the campus.



Pictured is the women's residence and junior classroom building. The new AFLBS staff member this year is Tarisa Cross, dean of women. Tarisa is from Minot, North Dakota, and taught school before coming on staff. Part-time faculty this fall are: Rev. John Skeie, pastor of Medicine Lake Lutheran, teaching General Epistles and Hebrews; Rev. James Asp, a retired area pastor, teaching Luke; and Mrs. Marion Christopherson, adding Christian Education to her music teaching. She is replacing Mrs. Bev Enderlein who is on medical leave.



Rev. Ray Klug, Blackduck, Minnesota, visited recently with Mr. Wayne Floan, Fertile, Minnesota, a member of the Board of Trustees. Pastor Klug is staying with AFLBS staff members Clyde and Pat Hendrickson while receiving medical treatment at a Minneapolis hospital.



It is usually a quick lunch for AFLBS students before they hustle off to work. Classes are held in the morning to leave the afternoons free for part-time jobs.

Remember Parents' Day — December 10
Schools' Annual Christmas Concert — Dec. 11 at 4 p.m.

A big heart and a unique name

Meet a new AFLC congregation



The sanctuary of Ruthfred Evangelical Lutheran Church. The outside of the church is shown on the cover of this issue.

What in the world is “Ruthfred?” Before last summer I had no inkling of where this word Ruthfred came from and that it was the name of a large and truly living congregation in a southern suburb of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. After spending seven wonderful weeks as their temporary assistant pastor, Ruthfred is more than just a new AFLC congregation. It now possess a very special place in my heart.

The Ruthfred Evangelical Lutheran Church began in the late 1940s as a mission church located on land donated by Ruth and Fred Brown. Thus the name Ruthfred began. Under the American Lutheran Church, a chapel was built and dedicated in 1949. A year later, John Dennis, a newly ordained pastor from Capital Seminary, accepted the call to the struggling new mission church.

During the past 44 years Pastor Dennis has continued to serve this congregation and has seen God’s faithfulness as it grew from a handful of members to the present average Sunday attendance of over 700 souls. In 1962 a new sanctuary was dedicated, as well as a new pipe organ. A two-story

educational unit was added in the early 1970s. The attendance this September for the beginning of a new Sunday school year was 435.

Today Ruthfred continues strong in its witness of the gospel as it follows the absolute authority of the inspired and inerrant Word. Every Sunday the call to receive Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior is offered. The Spirit of the Lord is evident in the strong preaching, the warm fellowship and especially in the willingness of the people to give



Rev. John Dennis.

of their time, talents and finances to the work of needed ministry both locally and on the mission field. Over the years the congregation has sent 13 of their sons into the ministry as well as training six interns.

Youth work is one area of ministry that has recently impacted many lives in this church. A couple of years ago Ruthfred called a full-time youth worker. It was a time when few youth were involved and very little growth was taking place on that level. Since that time, the youth group has grown tremendously not only in size, but more importantly in commitment to the Lord. Today about 20-30 young people meet once a week for a couple of hours. They have fun together, sing, socialize and always study the Word and pray for one another.

Ruthfred also has a strong ministry to the sick and shut-in through the work of their parish worker. She works together with Pastor Dennis in reaching into the homes, making evangelism calls and organizing the education program of the church. It was impressive in August to see her organize a VBS program for over 350 children. That was more kids than the population of my hometown! Needless to say, education is one of the strengths of their ministry.

Ruthfred Lutheran took a stand for God’s Word as it voted last June to leave the ELCA and join the AFLC. This was a big step for the largest church in the district and is a significant witness to others in the area.

Unlike many AFLC congregations, the church in Bethel Park, Pennsylvania, has no Norwegian background. In fact, when I let a good “uff da” slip, I only received looks of bewilderment. Their emphasis on personal evangelism is just as strong as any and their unity in God’s Word to reach the

Dr. Howard Franzen — Dr. Franzen has resigned from the pastoral staff at Abiding Word Lutheran in Deshler, Nebraska and Faith Lutheran in Fairbury, Nebraska.

Monroe, Washington — Monroe Free Lutheran has started a 3M group. Monroe's Men's Ministry is held the first Saturday of the month at the local hospital cafeteria from 7-9 a.m.

Eagan, Minnesota — Living Word Lutheran held their Greater Life meetings during October 26-30, with Rev. Michael Brandt, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, as the speaker.

Wadena, Minnesota — Pauline Pope of Zion Free Lutheran went to be with her Lord on September 15, 1994. For years Pauline sent greeting cards to the missionaries together with a note and prayer. Ever since the Bible school and seminary began, she would write a list of new students and add those names to her ever-growing prayer list. Towards her last days she was bothered by her inability to daily go through her prayer list. She will be missed by the AFLC.

Colorado congregation votes to join AFLC

Loveland, Colorado — The Lutheran Church of Hope recently voted to affiliate with the AFLC. The group has been meeting for a year and is presently without a pastor. Those in the area who would like more information can contact Don McDaniel at 303-667-4813 (home) or 303-939-4088 (office).

lost make them a welcome addition to our Association.

Next time you drive through the foothills of the Allegheny's and happen to pass through the south suburb of Bethel Park, make sure to visit a warm, Spirit-filled church with an unusual name at Patterson and South Park Roads.

— by Rev. Timothy Hinrichs
St. Paul, Minnesota



The Board of Publications and Parish Education met at the ARC, Osceola, Wisconsin after the All-Boards meeting on September 26, 1994. The board members are (L. to R.) Rev. James Molstre; Mrs. Barb Stueland; Mrs. Katha Tjelta, director; Mrs. Linda Mohagen; Mrs. Charlotte Qualley and Rev. Wes Langaas, chairman.

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/s/ Craig Johnson, Editor

PEOPLE and PLACES cont.

Congratulations!

Thief River Falls, Minnesota

— Our Savior's Christian Academy has been recognized for exemplary achievement in the quality of student attainment. Each year the School of Tomorrow, International Learning System Corporate Office, verifies outstanding examples of academic performance in local schools. The recognition is for their outstanding example in educational leadership. The students exceeded the required one-year academic achievement while maintaining a minimum school grade point average of 88%.

Golden Valley, Minnesota

— Volunteers of America has selected Aini Myking for a "1994 Volunteer Service Award." This national award, based on the spiritual aspects of volunteering, was presented to only ten recipients throughout the United States. Aini, a member of Medicine Lake Lutheran Church has served as the Sunday Worship Coordinator for the residents at Crystal Care Center in Golden Valley for 18 years. A reception honoring Aini was held at the Care Center on August 25.

Wes Christian, a member of Helmar Lutheran Church in Newark, Illinois, was recently inducted into the Carthage College Athletic Hall of Fame. While student at the college, Wes had lettered four years in varsity baseball and basketball and three years in varsity football. He won the Witt Memorial Award his senior year for his athletic, academic and student involvement. He also served as president of the student body. Wes was accompanied to the induction ceremony by his wife, four children and their spouses and his grandchildren. While he appreciated the athletic honor he said, "Having my family here and knowing Christ is what's most important."

Ishpeming, Michigan

— Hope Free Evangelical Lutheran held their fall meetings on September 25-27, with Rev. John Allstaedt, Eben Junction, Michigan, as the speaker. "The Kingdom of God" was the theme for the meetings.

Rev. Brian Davidson, formerly of Rice Lake, Wisconsin, is serving as the interim pastor at St. John's Lutheran, Milford, Illinois.

Brodhead, Wisconsin

— Bethany Lutheran recently accepted another group of new members. The rural congregation has added 24 new members since last spring.



Rev. Todd Schierkoik, missionary candidate to Mexico, and his daughter Megan found out they could work together during a recent 4-week deputation trip through the Midwest. They are pictured here at a WMF Rally in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.



Eugene, Oregon — Spencer Creek Lutheran won the championship of the Eugene-area Lutheran church co-ed softball league for the second year in a row.



Mr. James Boe, Ottawa, Illinois, and **Mr. Ralph Peterson**, Portland, North Dakota, two members of the AFLC Coordinating Committee, enjoyed a lighter moment at the recent All-Boards meeting.

Keep the mystery

I was asked once what I thought was the chief characteristic of someone who was Lutheran. Is it the kind of churches we build? The music we sing? The way we dress? The books we read? The hot dishes and red jello we bring to potlucks? What is it that makes someone Lutheran?

Many different ideas exist as to the main distinctive of Lutheranism. For this writer, the chief distinguishing mark of being Lutheran is the way we approach the Bible. Martin Luther protested what was going on in the church of his day because of what he had learned from the Bible. He viewed the Bible as the authority that needed to be listened to and the guide that needed to be followed. He correctly saw it as the Word of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit, without error.

Those who today continue to hold to traditional and true Lutheran teaching view the Bible in the same way as Martin Luther did. It is still the Word of God. It is still the authority. It is still without error. That view we have of the Bible leads, then, to the way we interpret and handle it.

We hold up as the authoritative Word of God what the Bible says; no more and no less. We go as far as the Bible does, but we do not go beyond it. We, at times, may not want to go as far as the Bible does. What it says about certain things might not make clear sense to us. It might not sound right. We must not succumb to the temptation to stop before the Bible does and say, "It can't really mean all that." At other times questions are unanswered, details are not given. We want to fill those things in and give our opinions the same authority as the Scriptures. That is incorrect as well. In areas in which the Bible is silent we can have opinions, but we must not say, "Thus saith the Lord."

The Lutheran belief regarding the Lord's Supper is an example of how we are to approach the Word of God. Jesus said, "This is my body ... This is my blood." He made clear at the same time it was still the bread and the cup. So we say it is bread and it is His body. We do not go beyond what the Word says, but we do go as far as it goes.

No, this does not result in everything being clear and perfectly understandable to our finite, human minds. An element of mystery remains. But it is what the Bible says, so we say this is true. We accept that the things of God will not be totally clear to sinful human beings like us.

The Psalmist said in Psalm 131:1, 2, "I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me. But I have stilled and quieted my soul." It is difficult for us to quiet our souls and accept certain things by faith. We proudly think we should be

able to understand and explain everything. The truth is we can't. The good news is we can rest in the care of God who understands everything. He tells us what we need to know. He assures us no problem is too great for Him to handle and His love truly is more wonderful than we can ever comprehend.

Approaching problems

Talk about facing problems in the church! Consider Martin Luther's situation. The ordinary people were not being permitted to read the Word of God. The church leadership was selling what they told people were tickets to heaven. God's main message to people was being ignored and cast aside.

How did Luther approach such a chaotic situation? Did he campaign for office? Did he organize demonstrations? Did he strive to get his friends elected to important committees? Did he raise money and use it to flood the area with slick flyers promoting his cause? No, he did not do any of these things. He was actually accused more often of not being organized enough in his leadership of the Reformation. His approach to the problems he saw in the church was to preach and teach the Word of God.

The Apostle Paul warned the young pastor Timothy that he would face problems in his service of God and His Church. The way to handle the situation he said was to "preach the Word" and "do the work of an evangelist" (II Timothy 4:2-5). Organizing and strategizing must not take the place of the proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ.

Teaching the Word of God may seem like a slow and ineffective way of dealing with problems in our congregations. We may look to the political and business world and see how change is brought about there and think that is the way to go. We are to look to God and His Word for guidance. We follow the example of Luther who demonstrated great patience. He preached the Word of God and allowed the Holy Spirit to work.

We can trust in God to work through His Word. It may not happen according to our time schedule or in the manner we expect. We need not fear. We must not foolishly think we need to rely on ourselves. We need not resort to the methods of the world. Even when the problems are great, we can have confidence that God is still on the throne. He still loves us. He still works through His Word, and preaching and teaching it is still the best way to bring about real and lasting change.

Personal transformation

In the past columns we have discussed how a person becomes a Christian; how you can know beyond all doubt that you will spend eternity in heaven, and how you must abide in Jesus in order to produce good fruit for God's work here on earth. Now let us look at how we can be changed into the people we want to be and God wants us to be.

So many Christians struggle to bring about life change

In the last article we talked about how we are simply to abide or remain in Christ and as we do this, His Holy Spirit will produce good fruit in and through us. We need to ask, however, how we can make this work in a practical way. The primary means for change to occur in our lives is the living Word of God, the Holy Bible. Many people ask what experience they need to have in order to help them change their life and its many frustrations. Dear friend, please listen to me. You do not need some special experience! Rather, you need to be transformed from the inside out. God tells us exactly how we can make that change.

Dedication to Christ

The Word of God tells us that we are to dedicate ourselves completely to the Lord Jesus Christ. If you were working for an employer and were not dedicated to your company it would only be a matter of time before you would be moved. If you were playing on an athletic team as many of us have in the past, you would not try to score points for the other team. You give yourself totally to the team. It's the same in the Christian life. There cannot be divided allegiance! There is a major lack of commitment in our society and it shows in the Christian commu-

nity as well. Nobody wants to be committed to anything. It will never work that way in your walk with Jesus Christ. He wants all of you. He will take no less than all of you. If you are struggling in your efforts to bring about life change it may be because you have not made Him the Lord and Master of your life. Romans 12:1 tells us this and states that this is the essence of worship. It all starts there.

Nonconformity to the world

Once we have made a complete surrender to the Lord's control of our life, we can begin the process of personal transformation. This process has a negative aspect and a positive one. In regard to the former, the Bible says that as Christians we are not to "conform any longer to the pattern of this world."

Dear reader, you must know that the ways of the world are not the ways of God. If you have lived outside of God's ways for many years there needs to be a dramatic change. You can no longer live your life according to the pattern of this world. If you have lived under these ways, then there are probably areas of bondage in your life that you need to be set free from. Perhaps you have developed mind sets or habit patterns that

are contrary to God's ways. If so, you need to be set free. How can you do that?

Renewal of the mind

We all need daily transformation and change in our lives. A good friend of mine keeps saying that we as Christians are either growing closer to the Lord or falling away from Him. The way we do that is through the renewing of our mind. The real battle ground is for our mind. You cannot consistently live in a way that is inconsistent with what you believe. If you continue to believe ways that are contrary to God's ways you will live out what you truly believe. The battle is not to change your actions and behaviors, but rather to change your belief system. Your actions will automatically follow. Only as God's Word begins to saturate the mind and heart will our belief system be affected.

Spend time daily in the Word of God. As you meditate on little morsels of truth from the Bible, you will see how God will change your life from the inside out — from what you believe to how you experience life. Get into God's Word and watch personal transformation begin to take place in your life.

— by Rev. Todd Olson