

THE LUTHERAN
AMBASSADOR

November 26, 1991



*"Give,
and it will
be given to you ;
good measure,
pressed down,
shaken together,
running over,
they will pour into your lap.
For by your standard
of measure
it will be measured to you
in return."*

Luke 6:38

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Stewardship and the Church

What is it? What is it intended to do? The Christian Church has a history of nearly 2000 years since the first Pentecost (Acts 2) and the out pouring of the Holy Spirit to give it birth.

The visible or external church is an organization: broken into denominations with synods and associations within the denominations, districts, congregations, and membership rolls of saved and unsaved. It has constitutions and officers: popes, bishops, pastors. Some congregations may be mere social agencies, some politically orientated, some culturally concerned with emphasis on symbolic art, ritual splendor and magnificent structures. Others are centered on personal salvation and spiritual piety. So what is the church's purpose? When is the church really the Church?

As a people in fellowship with God, the church becomes spiritual and "invisible." It is not a mere organization, but an organism: "Christ the head of the church, His body, and is Himself its Savior" (Ephesians 5:2-3). The membership roll is kept in Heaven and is known as The Lamb's Book of Life (Revelation 21:27), invisible to man. If, as in the Creed, we confess to be "one holy catholic church" (catholic meaning universal) it is universal, not in breadth, but in nature, united wherever true believers are found, (Ephesians 4:4-6). "For by one Spirit you were all baptized into one body" (1 Corinthians 12:13). There is a priesthood of all believers with equal access to the Head without further meditation.

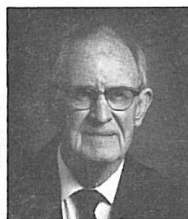
Luther tells us in the Small Catechism, in explaining the Third Article, how this body is formed: "The Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel (as an individual) enlightened me with His gifts, and sanctified and preserved me in the true faith. ... even as He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and preserves it in union with Jesus Christ in the one true faith." These members live in a living fellow-

Light on the Way

ship with Jesus, the Head. The Holy Spirit communicates the will of the Head to the members by means of the Word of God. To break that connection by attack on the Word or neglect of the Word, is to bring distortion or paralysis into the life of the church, as damage to the nervous system in a body may cripple for life.

What, then, is the role of the church? Jesus spoke of it just before His ascension (Acts 1:8). The church's role is to multiply and fill the earth with those who have received Him, believed in His Name, so they are given power to become the children of God, who were born ... of God (John 1:12-13).

Our stewardship is not only in the finances of the church as it operates in this world, but in caring for the precious blood-bought souls committed to our care. In Paul's farewell words to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:28), we too are charged: "Take heed to yourselves and all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you guardians, to feed the church of the Lord which he obtained with His own blood." There are still churches like that in Sardis, to whom the Lord had to say, no doubt with sorrow, "I know your works; you have the name of being alive, and you are dead" (Revelation 3:1b). Is the measure of a pastor's success in lovely church buildings built, or his ability to raise the budget for the synod or his personal popularity? Or will the Great Shepherd of the sheep ask him and the congregation he served, "Where are the lambs I gave into your care?" as He gathers the Great Church Triumphant? The ultimate stewardship in the church is the stewardship of souls.



— by Rev.
Kermitt C. Grundahl

A Stewardship Model

One of the fondest memories I have of my father is of him sitting in his favorite chair early in the morning having his devotions before heading off to work. Dad never failed to have a time alone every day with God and His Word. The Word of God was very precious to him.

My father came to this country from Norway in the late twenties and, though he was brought up in a Christian home, he had not as yet accepted Christ as his personal Savior. It was while attending a service in Brooklyn, New York, one evening that he was set free in the gospel while simply listening to the message. The sermon that evening so clearly presented the Gospel that Dad accepted Christ as Savior right there in his pew. From that day forward, Dad made it his business to study God's Word and to be faithful in attending all services at the church. He especially made it a point to be at the Wednesday night Bible study and prayer meeting. He had a great hunger and love for God's Word which stayed with him throughout his whole life.

Now, my dad's commitment to the study of God's Word had a profound affect upon his whole life. He was not only a hearer of the Word, he also sought to incorporate its teachings into his daily living. Every aspect of his life

was influenced by what the Bible taught.

Now it was by my dad's example that, as a young Christian, I learned some valuable lessons on Stewardship. First, I learned that in order to live good with God I had to trust Him and seek to be obedient to His Word when it came to this matter of finances. Every week I saw my father faithfully give his tithe in the offering plate at church. He never missed a single Sunday. Even if he was sick, or for some other reason was not able to get to church, he always made sure the tithe was given. Not only did Dad give the tithe (10%) to the church, but he also faithfully supported a brother who was a missionary to Argentina.

I also learned from Dad that Christian stewardship meant more than giving of money to God's work. It meant that time and talents are to be used in God's service. Even though he had only an eighth grade education, Dad did not hesitate to preach when asked to do so. He loved to share the simple Gospel message that had set him free in Christ. Dad also taught Sunday School for years and served on the Deacon Board all of his life. As a deacon he would visit the church members in their homes, and those who were shut in or in hospitals.

As I look back now at the wonderful example my Dad was to me, I am truly

grateful for his influence in my life. In following Dad's example, I have learned how blessed it is to give, and have learned that you simply cannot out give God. Dad was a carpenter and, therefore, we never had a lot of money when we were growing up, but we always had enough. We truly were blessed in many ways. I have learned over the years that giving generously in faithful obedience to the Lord's command always results in God giving back "... good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over ..."

In my years in the ministry I have observed both those who have given generously to the Lord's work as well as those who have given miserly. I have seen those who have sought to be obedient to God's commands in the area of stewardship and those who have not been obedient. Let me tell you from these observations and from my own experience that "... whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously." How thankful I am for the good model I had in this area of stewardship during my early formative years as a Christian. It has brought to me and my family untold blessings.

Faithful stewardship is what the church needs today more than anything else and it is what God expects of all of us who claim to be His children. Let me encourage you, if you are not already giving as you know God has commanded you, to do so now and get in on the blessings God has in store for you.



— Rev. Roy Johnson
Ortonville, Minnesota

*Pastor Johnson is a member of the
AFLC Stewardship Board.*

**"Every aspect of his life was
influenced by what the Bible taught."**

Stewardship Reflections on Our Hymns

Our great old hymns of the faith reflect a stewardship theme. These hymns seem to be born out of an overflow of gratitude and praise to God and from a life lived with God in trust and commitment. One such hymn is Frances R. Havergal's, "Take My Life and Let It Be." Frances, the daughter of the Reverend William H. Havergal, who set the words to music, had completely dedicated her life to the Lord by the time she was 15. The Lord had provided for her salvation so full and free that she would lay her life, her all before her Lord in complete dedication. She had been purchased by the precious blood of Christ and acknowledged His ownership of her, both in body and soul. The pursuit of her life was to serve her Lord.

The completeness of her dedication is reflected in the words of the hymn. She wrote: "Take my life, hands, feet, voice, lips, wealth, mind, will, heart and love and let them be consecrated to Thee." She begins and ends the hymn with surrender and dedication to the Lord. The concluding stanza says, "Take myself, and I will be, ever, only all for Thee." What a life of intimate relationship with her Savior she exemplifies!

Elisha A. Hoffman penned these words: "Is your all on the altar of sacri-

Is Your All On the Altar?

fice laid." In his hymn by the same name, the question is asked, does the Spirit control your heart? This is followed by the great truth of Scripture: "You can only be blest and have peace and sweet rest, as you yield Him your body and soul." Hoffman echoes the Apostle Paul who makes this emphasis in his letter to the Romans in chapter 12 and verse one: "Therefore, I urge you brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — which is your spiritual worship."

William H. How expressed the true spirit of stewardship in the hymn, "We Give Thee But Thine Own." The well-known first stanza is: "We give but Thine own, whatever the gift may be: All that we have is Thine alone, A trust, O Lord, from Thee." Read again the not so familiar stanzas which follow: (2) "May we Thy bounties thus as stewards true receive, and gladly, as Thou blessed us, **to Thee our first fruits give.**" (3) O hearts are bruised and dead, and homes are bare and cold, and lambs for whom the Shepherd bled are straying from the fold. (4) And we believe Thy Word, though dim our faith may be, what'er for Thine we do, O Lord, **we do it unto Thee.**" He speaks of actions inspired by true love.

Love that is an action taken towards others is the same as love in action toward the Lord Himself.

In another of the many hymns of Frances Havergal, the concluding stanza is: "O fill me with Thy fullness, the

"... a prayer
beseeching God
that He would
lead, teach, feed
and supply us
that we in turn
might be a
blessing to those
around us."

Living a Life of Stewardship

Stewardship! What comes to mind when we hear the word? Most often we think, "Now the church is asking for money again." But stewardship has a much broader meaning than just money. I Corinthians 4:2

says: "Moreover it is required in a steward that a man be found faithful." All that he has or may control is not his; it all belongs to God. The steward has been given the use of these things; but the Bible says assuredly that there will be a day of reckoning.

In I Chronicles 29, David prayed before his people at the time he relinquished his kingship to his son, Solomon. In verse 11 he says, "for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is thine."

God created man in His own image and likeness. He has the right to expect us to use our entire being in His service. I Corinthians 6:1-20, "Do you

know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own, you were bought with a price. Glorify God in your body."

Jesus' entire life was lived to glorify His Father, His life was a stewardship. How can we emulate Jesus in the stewardship of our lives? These passages may help — Titus 3:5; Psalm 139:24; Psalm 51 and Ephesians 5:6. Jesus asked for total dedication from His disciples. He asks the Christian today to be totally dedicated.

As wise stewards of the use of our time, it is necessary to know what the will of our Master is concerning the

Lord, until my very heart o'erflow in kindling thought and flowing word, Thy love to tell, Thy praise to show." This is a prayer beseeching God that He would lead, teach, feed and supply us that we in turn might be a blessing to those around us. Is this not the very reason that God has for the Christian and for the Church?

As this issue of *The Lutheran Ambassador* focuses on stewardship. I trust that we may gain a sense of true and Biblical stewardship. Every person who calls himself a child of God and is one by the merits of the shed blood of Jesus Christ is a steward. According to Scripture, a steward must be found faithful. The body of Christ, the church, is experiencing many needs today. Local congregations, home and world missions, schools, and all the other outreaches of the AFLC have a great opportunity to touch people's lives with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Faithful stewardship of finances, time and service is what God asks of us. Is our all on the altar?



—Rev. Marlyn Kruse
Burnsville, Minnesota

duties of stewardship. The Holy Spirit will guide the faithful steward into all the truth (John 16:13 and Acts 1:8). In Galatians 5:22-23, we find nine characteristics that the Holy Spirit desires to see as fruits in our lives. They are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. As these character traits develop in our lives we will be drawn closer to our Lord and stewardship will become an integral part of our lives.

In the Old Testament, God's people were commanded to tithe and bring offerings. As believers in Christ today, we have received the unmerited grace and mercy of God. Therefore, we have

a higher standard of stewardship of our time, talents and material gifts than those of the Old Testament who were under the law (Galatians 3:21-25).

As we seek, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to become better stewards of our time, talents and material goods, we will learn to give to God with a loving heart in proportion to what God has entrusted to us. We can then be assured that we are not robbing God as Malachi 3:8-10, warns us.

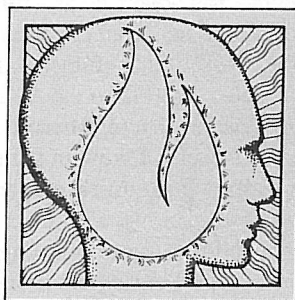
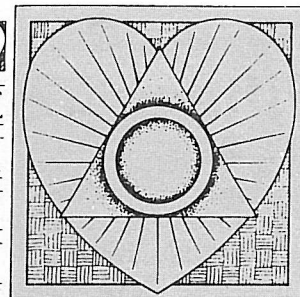
Perhaps you, too, have experienced times of being overwhelmed with a sense of urgency and need for a situation. Yet our resources limit us. It is then that we can draw near to the Savior through prayer.

The average Christian gives, asking: "How much will I give to the Lord?"

However, we cannot give God anything. We do not have anything to give. It is all God's. The true Christian way would be to ask: "How much of the Lord's gifts will I keep for myself?"



YOU SHALL LOVE
THE LORD YOUR
GOD WITH ALL
YOUR HEART,

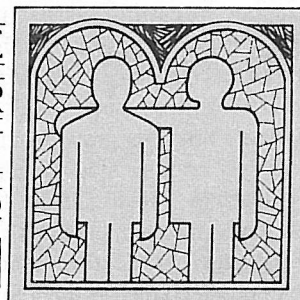


AND WITH ALL
YOUR SOUL,
AND WITH ALL
YOUR MIND. ...



YOU SHALL LOVE
YOUR NEIGHBOR
AS YOURSELF.

MATTHEW 22:37, 39



The words of the hymn "Take My Life and Let It Be" by Francis R. Havergal, expresses a beautiful example of true Christian stewardship.

*Take my Life and let it be
Consecrated, Lord to Thee;
Take my hands and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love.*

*Take my feet, and let them be
Swift and beautiful for Thee;
Take my voice, and let me sing
Always only, for my King.*

*Take my lips, and let them be
Filled with messages for Thee;
Take my silver and my gold,
Not a mite would I withhold.*

*Take my love, my God, I pour
At thy feet its treasure store;
Take myself and I will be
Ever, only all for thee.*

—Mrs. Carol Boyd
Calvary Free Lutheran Church
Arlington, South Dakota

The Stewardship Testimony of One Congregation

Fifteen Years of Blessing

Bring the full tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house; and thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing. (Malachi 3:10).

An open letter to church councils and lay people of the AFLC: About fifteen years ago Amery Free Lutheran Church was organized as a mission church. A pastor was called and God graciously answered the prayers of this small group of Christians (about seven families). In thankfulness, and as a step of faith, we decided to give 15% of all monies received to the AFLC.

From the beginning, the church has had a Christian school, Mustard Seed Faith Academy. As God blessed the church and the school grew in numbers, the need for more room became readily apparent. With much prayer and planning, another step of faith was taken. After consulting with the Home Missions Board and securing monies, a large multi-purpose building was erected. This building serves as a church sanctuary on Sunday and as a gymnasium during the week for school and church activities.

Our congregation has been blessed by various singing groups from AFLBS and by seminarians from AFLTS. Numerous pastors have held special meetings here over the years. We have seen the hand of God working in our midst. We have seen many souls saved, many lives re-dedicated to the Lord, and Christians growing in the Lord. In light of these many blessings, we took yet another step of faith. In 1985, the congregation increased our benevolence to the AFLC from 15% to 20%.

We feel God also blessed us as we purchased our former pastor's home for our parsonage. Our debt was paid off in two years.

Our church council is thankful for the number of our youth who have gone on to AFLBS and for our first seminarian who will graduate in 1992. We are thankful for all the people God has led us to minister to and for those who have ministered to us. We feel blessed to be only 20 miles from the ARC and 80 miles from the AFLC headquarters, as this allows us to participate in various AFLC ministries.

At the present time, we are at a crossroads where we feel God is challenging us to another step of faith. We have the delightful situation of not having enough space for our Sunday School and Academy. We are praying for, and planning for, God's will to be done concerning future expansion.

We read in II Corinthians 9:6-8:

"The point is this: He who sows sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do as he had made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work."

The council members of Amery Free Lutheran Church stand in awe at what we have seen God do in the last 15 years. We can honestly say it is by His grace and not by any of our merit that we have been so richly blessed. To God be **all** the honor and glory.

Fellow church councils and lay people, we urge you to take a step of faith and have your church tithe on a regular basis as we do and anticipate the overflowing blessing.

— Amery Free Lutheran Church Council
Gary Bottolfson, president

A Report of the AFLC Stewardship Seminar

On September 20, 1991, more than 90 pastors and laymen gathered at the ARC, Osceola, Wisconsin, for a stewardship seminar conducted by Dr. Waldo Werning. The title of Dr. Werning's seminar was "Building Functional Christians and a Functional Church in a Dysfunctional World." The seminar pointed out that due to an improper mind set traditional church stewardship practices to one degree or another have hurt, hampered, or prevented the gospel mission of Christ's church. Tending to be directed by law and legalistic perversions more than by grace, the church's stewardship drives have not been successful in meeting the minimum financial needs for its programs and have failed to reach their full potential based upon God's provision for his people.

Dr. Werning began by laying the foundation for Biblical stewardship. The direction of our lives is determined by whether our mind is set on the world or the Word of God. The Biblical concept of stewardship is a "Grace-Based Life and Stewardship." A proper view regarding stewardship sees the individual rooted in the Word, growing out of the Word, centered in grace, and called, motivated and sent



Dr. Waldo Werning.

Grounded In Grace

to be active in God's mission in response to Christ and the Word. The church is seen as Bible-centered, grounded in grace, energized by the Gospel, strengthened by the Holy Spirit, and mission-minded.

The challenge today is to bring the church which, is out of focus, through communicating the Word of God. A major battle of the church today is in the area of sanctification — living the Christian life. Does God's Word direct, empower and rule in the church? Is Christ the head? The church today needs to hear the message of Revelation 2-3, and Titus 1:5, which is, "Correct what needs change."

Stewardship involves the whole of life — time, talents, possessions, mind and even the body. Often what needs changing is our pursuits of life. Our actions even in the area of stewardship, are determined by who or what is in the center of our lives — spiritual or material priorities.

According to Dr. Werning, churches must adopt a Biblical education process of spiritual growth, which results from tapping God's total supply and trusting His promises. The church should not get into a maintenance mode and a deadly drift from program



Mr. Orville Jensen, Escanaba, Michigan and Dr. Werning.

to program and meeting to meeting, without real Biblical direction.

Dr. Werning outlined five steps of Biblical giving: 1. Put God first, (Matthew 6:13); 2. Give a percentage, (1 Corinthians 16:2); 3. Give a generous percentage, (tithe); 4. Faith sets the

percentage, (1 Corinthians 4:2); 5. Grace is the power and reason for giving, (2 Corinthians 8:12).

The stewardship seminar was spiritually uplifting and offered a complete system for promoting true Biblical stewardship. We trust that at least some of the information and practical helps may be implemented by the congregations. Being a truly Biblical approach to the subject of stewardship, Dr. Werning's presentation is worthy of thoughtful consideration and implementation.

Video tapes of Dr. Werning's seminar are available for use in local congregations. Contact AFLC Headquarters for more information.

— Rev. Marilyn Kruse
Chairman, Stewardship Board

**"Grace is the
power and
reason for
giving."**



Laymen and pastors at the seminar.

Aid Association for Lutherans (AAL) awarded a \$10,000 grant to the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations (AFLC), based in Minneapolis.

The money was used to send pastors and congregation lay-leaders to a stewardship seminar on September 20-21, 1991, at the ARC Retreat Center in Osceola, Wisconsin. The seminar showed those participating how to offer stewardship programs which can increase church resources and provide for expansion of current ministries.

A Special Stewardship Opportunity

Perhaps you noticed the large ad for "STEER, Inc." in the October 15 issue of *The Lutheran Ambassador*. However, you may be yet unaware of the workings and great value of this ministry for AFLC World Missions.

First of all, STEER is for everyone, not just for people living in the rural areas. It is a true partnership between individual Sunday schools, WMS congregations, or other groups making a one-time gift of \$700 (a "unit") or \$350 (one-half unit), and farmers or ranchers who use that money year after year to raise a crops or livestock. Most of the net gain from such a project is then given to our World Mission work.

Using STEER is good stewardship, for it simply makes "good common sense" to give in such a way that one's gift will continue to bring support for years to come. Only 25 units (\$17,500 invested) would typically yield between \$63,000 and \$110,000 to missions after only ten years — several times the benefit of direct gifts in the same amount to our missionaries.

For farmers and ranchers, STEER provides a unique, low-cost opportunity to help support a missionary of their choice by simply doing what they do best — raising crops and livestock. These projects also offer a "hands-on," day-to-day way to leave a clear witness to family and neighbors of one's concern for the souls of others.

It can be very enjoyable to discover creative ways to raise unit funds or to include one's agriculture operation in the kingdom's work. Our own family has sold litters of registered puppies and in so doing have been able to raise unit monies for placement by STEER. It has been a rich experience getting to know our ranching partners in this labor of love for the Gospel and exciting to see each year's report on the progress of our units.

Our World Missions department, as other areas of ministry in the AFLC, is facing regular shortfalls which could be helped by greater participation in STEER. If you would like more information about this rewarding ministry, contact STEER, Inc., Box 1236, Bismarck, ND 58502. If you would like to hear a presentation by STEER's director, Mr. LaRue Goetz, as he tours AFLC churches in central Minnesota (December 7-15), contact AFLC World Missions, 3110 East Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55441, for exact times, dates and places of meetings.



— Rev. Lyle Adahl
Upsala, Minnesota

New Administration Building Grant Received



Barb Hendricks, AAL Representative presented Rev. Richard Snipstead the \$10,000 grant.

Appleton, Wisconsin (October 16, 1991) — Aid Association for Lutherans (AAL) has awarded a \$10,000 grant to the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations (AFLC), headquartered in Minneapolis.

The money will be used to help furnish the board room of the AFLC's new administration building, currently being constructed on Medicine Lake Blvd. The building will be completed in late January.

"The new facility will consolidate all of our administrative offices," said the Rev. Les Galland, business administrator for the AFLC. "Then we will be challenged with furnishing those offices and this grant will enable us to do that."

The new building will house the AFLC's Home Missions and World Missions offices, the Coordinating Committee office, which is the main administrative committee of the AFLC, the Parish Education Department, the president's office and the bookkeeping offices.

The AFLC school and seminary will move into the current headquarters building once the new facility is completed.

The AAL support is a special grant awarded in conjunction with the construction of the new administration facility. According to Douglas Olson, AAL's grant program manager for church leadership benefits, "AAL is pleased to provide this special grant to the AFLC because it will have lasting benefits for the church body."

Something Was Missing

What makes a person decide to join a particular church? Is it family tradition? Is it a particular pastor? Perhaps the size of the church or its music ministry is attractive. Some are drawn to a friendly congregation or its parish education program. Of utmost importance is knowledge of God's will.

Several years ago we were members of a now merged Lutheran church. We taught Sunday school, served on the church council and sang in the choir. But were not in complete agreement with several liturgical changes that were adopted by the national church organization, and also felt we were not growing spiritually.

The decision was made. We began searching for a new church home. After several visits, we began attending a Baptist church regularly. The congregation was friendly. The pastor preached the Word of God and was a good teacher. The music ministry was fantastic, and there was a dynamic Christian Education program. Howev-

er, the thing we noticed most about this church was the emphasis on salvation. To be born again in Christ was a new concept for us to experience in a church. For the first time we felt a spiritual growth and a new meaning in being a Christian.

We attended this church for four years but did not join. Perhaps we missed our Lutheran background. Nevertheless, those four years prepared us for what happened next.

One of our best friends from our former Lutheran church invited us to attend a worship service with a new group. She only told us that it was a Lutheran church, meeting in a store front. They also sang the good old hymns and had a pastor who preached good sermons from the Bible that left you with something to think about.

We accepted her invitation and truly believe it was God's will for us to come to Trinity Free Lutheran Church in Janesville, Wisconsin. We worshiped at Trinity for two Sundays, and then we talked to Pastor Thoreson

about the AFLC. Two Sundays later we joined the new Home Mission congregation.

Last summer, we got involved at the AFLC's annual conference at the ARC and attended the summer short course at the seminary. We thank God for the new friends and wonderful Christian fellowship that we have already experienced. The support of the AFLC for Trinity Free Lutheran Church has been a blessing, too.

Why do we choose a particular church? We believe that God places us in a church where we can serve Him best. God placed us at Trinity Free Lutheran Church. We praise Him that He brought this congregation into existence in the Janesville area.

—Sam Mylin

The Dedication Service for the new Trinity Free Lutheran Church, Janesville, will be December 1, at 3 p.m. The theme will be from Exodus 25:8: "And My people shall construct a sanctuary that I may dwell among them."

LETTERS

Our Lutheran Music

It is with great concern that I see how the trend in some Lutheran churches is to forsake the Lutheran hymns and use the Reformed song books. What will happen?

In another generation, the beautiful theologically sound worshipful old Lutheran hymns will be forgotten. That will be a tragedy.

Nothing can replace the old black-bound Lutheran Hymnary. It contained a hymn for every occasion, worshipful, reverent and always lifting up Jesus.

I would suggest that Lutherans get back to Lutheran hymns, teaching them to our children. Let us not trade the great heritage we have — our beautiful hymns — for fluff.

—Mrs. Edith Halmrast
Moorhead, Minnesota

Join Us In Prayer

Petitions:

— Prayer for congregations calling:

- Arlington, Washington
- Spokane, Washington
- Wichita Falls, Texas
- St. Cloud, Minnesota
- Rugby, North Dakota

— Prayer for pastors considering Home Mission calls.

— Prayer for interim help at Wichita Falls, Texas, while the congregation calls.

— Prayer for informational meeting at Mondovi, Wisconsin, on December 9 — God's will to be known and done.

— Prayer for continuing financial needs.

Praise:

— safe move for Pastor Roy Warwick to Massapequa, New York.

— Increased giving during October.

— For seminary instructors and students who serve Home Mission congregations each weekend.

Death is a very personal thing. Each of us place a value on the people we know and love. The loss of someone close to us is an experience that is not easy to face. Even when the person who dies is saved, we will not find it easy. Paul said, "For me to live is Christ, to die is gain," (Philippians 1:21).

Even when people are known to be in Heaven, we have feelings maybe which we have not had before. In fact, there may very well be a mixture of feelings. Feelings can range from joy and sadness to anger.

Just think of what it is like for those who are unsaved. The Lord Jesus Christ gives us much to be thankful about. It is good to be assured of the eternal resting place of those we love. The bottom line is always "Where is the person now?" The unsaved have a terrible fate to face!

We must learn to minister to those who are hurting because of a death. We must recognize the hurt. It is not enough to say, "That's the way life is."

Suppose you lost one of your parents in death. Maybe they passed away in a car accident. At first, as with all death, people gather around you. They send cards, stop over to your home, call you on the phone and write kind notes.

After the funeral, a few will say something to you. However, there comes a day when people no longer say as much. Then is when the reality of someone's death comes to you. Others may think that time will heal but in truth time cannot heal completely. The memories or hurts may be with you for a lifetime.

We do believe, however, that the Lord Jesus Christ can heal memories and give you what is needed.

Loss can be manifested in various ways: It may depend a lot on you as a person. Feelings are real, however, Depression, anger, feeling guilty, becoming irritable or restless are just some feelings one may have.

It is important that we all realize that these feelings are natural. We



DEATH AND YOU

think of the widow of Nain, or Lazarus' two sisters. Their personal reactions to death were perfectly normal. Jesus did not scold them for having these feelings. He did point to

Himself as the "Resurrection and the Life." We all need to remember the Savior in times of loss due to death.

We need to be in prayer. We need to talk it over with the Lord. We will need a friend to visit with. Your pastor will have a listening ear. He is someone you can pray with. He has been in a number of situations where death has taken place. He may also have had a loss of a mother or father or some other member of the family.

We who are saved need to be reminded that loss takes a lifetime to face. Let us not expect people to be over it so fast. It may be hard to begin again. It is time we begin to learn how to minister to people who have suffered loss through death.

What do you think?

— Rev. Dennis Gray
Youth Resources Director

*Though He giveth
or He taketh,
God His children
ne'er forsaketh,
His the loving
purpose solely
To preserve them
pure and holy.*

— from "Children of the Heavenly
Father", Concordia No. 368

HARK!

A THRILLING VOICE IS SOUNDING

Hark! a thrilling voice is sounding:
"Christ is high!" it seems to say;
"Cast away the dreams of darkness,
O ye children of the day!"

Wakened by the solemn warning,
Let the earth-bound soul arise;
All the powers of darkness vanish:
Christ, our Day-star, mounts the skies.

Lo, the Lamb, so long expected,
Comes with pardon down from heaven,
Let us haste, with tears of sorrow,
One and all, to be forgiven.

So, when next He shines with glory,
Wrapping all the earth in fear,
Not for chastening, but salvation
Unto us He shall appear.

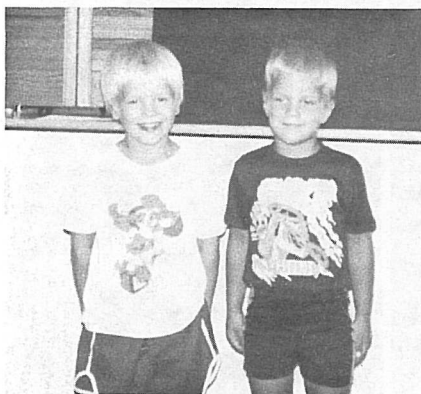
Honor, glory, might, dominion,
To the Father and the Son,
With the everlasting Spirit,
While eternal ages run.

Anonymous, Latin, 5th Century
(from **The Lutheran Hymnary**)



1991 FALL RALLY REVIEW

Binford, North Dakota



Bethany Free Lutheran Church cradle roll graduated Brent Adrian and Samuel Twedt at their 1991 cradle roll party.

Salol, Minnesota



Norland Free Lutheran Church gave honorary membership pins to: (L. to R.) Beverly Lindgren, Marie Jean Pederson and Evelyn Peterson (not pictured).

The North Central Minnesota District WMF met October 6, at the Maple Bay Free Lutheran Church, Fertile. The theme was "Praise" from Deuteronomy 10:17a. Missionary Dan Giles led the Bible study and shared on their mission work in Mexico.

The Southwest Central Minnesota District WMF met on October 1 at Green Lake Lutheran Church, Spicer. "Be Ye Steadfast" was the theme for the day. I Corinthians 15:58 and "Stand Up For Jesus" were the theme verse and song. Special music was brought by Rev. and Mrs. Wendell Johnson, Spicer, and a ladies trio from Green Lake. Missionaries Dan and Debbie Giles spoke and showed slides of the ministry in Mexico. Total registration was 128.

The Minneapolis District WMF gathered at Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran Church, Lakeville, on October 19. The theme was "Go Ye — Send Me." Missionaries Dan and Debbie Giles were the day's speakers. Their enthusiasm and zeal for the Gospel was a challenge to everyone present to be missionaries to all around us as well as going to other nations.

The South Dakota-Nebraska District WMF met at Calvary Free Lutheran Church, Arlington, on Saturday, September 21. The Ortleby WMF prepared the program, which included Bible study led by Rev. Brian Pearson, Arlington, and Mrs. Jane Emerson, Shakopee, Minnesota, sang and spoke

in the afternoon. Officers for the coming year are from Arlington. Pictured (l. to r.): Linda Buck, president; Beverly Nelson, vice president; Dawn Jensen, treasurer; and Frieda Gaard, secretary. Pukwana, South Dakota, will host the next rally in 1992.

The Western North Dakota-Eastern Montana District WMF met October 5 at Our Saviour's Free Lutheran Church, Dickinson. Mrs. Solveig Hjermstad, Faith, South Dakota, led the morning Bible study. The afternoon session featured four elective groups focusing on the New Age Movement, understanding the WMF packet, FLY Team slides from Brazil and a round table discussion on *The Lutheran Ambassador*. The 1991-92 District officers are pictured (l. to r.): Connie Kinnoin, president; Leota Elkins, vice president; Jeanie Sheldon, secretary; and Ardis Zunich, treasurer.

The Eastern North Dakota District WMF held their Fall Rally at Living Faith Free Lutheran Church in Larimore, September 28. "Serve the Lord" was the theme with Deuteronomy 13:4 as the theme verse.

Becky Berge was song leader and Carolyn Berge pianist. Mary Storstad and Amy Haugen led devotions.

Speaker was Missionary Connely Dyrud. His messages were based on Deuteronomy 13:4, talking about the requirements in being a faithful servant.



South Dakota-Nebraska district officers.



Western North Dakota-Eastern Montana officers.

The 1991 AFLC Schools Christmas Concert on December 8th.

CAMPUS

Come, Enjoy It Once Again



THE WOMEN'S MISSIONARY FEDERATION OF THE AFLC 1991 STATISTICS

District	Number of Active WMF's	Members
Arizona	9	132
Canada	5	71
Eastern U.S.	2	20
Eastern North Dakota	26	949
Illinois	13	427
Lake Superior	7	330
Minneapolis	35	989
North Central Minnesota	17	420
Northern Michigan	6	86
Northwestern Minnesota	20	635
South Dakota-Nebraska	20	420
Southwest Central Minnesota	20	631
West Coast	11	283
Western ND-Eastern MT	12	457
Totals	203	5,850

Is there a neighbor or friend whom you can invite to join your WMF? Let us pray and work for a vital, growing women's organization in our AFLC.

— Statistics compiled by Mrs. Karen Knudsvig,
Executive Secretary

Winter Quarter Schedule at AFLBS

Winter Quarter.....November 25-February 19

Parents' Day (Please pre-register)December 7-8

Christmas Concert.....December 8, 4 p.m.

Men's and Women's Basketball Season begins

Christmas BreakDecember 20 — January 6

Annual AFLC Missions ConferenceFebruary 2-5

1992 Annual Conference Dates

The 1992 Annual Conference of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations will be held June 17-21 at the ARC, Osceola, Wisconsin. It is not too early to make housing reservations by contacting the office of the ARC director at Route 1, Box 92, Osceola, WI 54020, or call (715) 294-2877 or 294-2398.

The WMF Annual Convention will be June 17 at the ARC.

PEOPLE and PLACES

Prayers have been answered for **Rev. Milton Flores**, Celaya, Gto., Mexico, who is recovering from recent surgery. Friends may write to him in care of Gethsemane Church, Apdo. Postal #146, Celaya, Gto., Mexico.

Plymouth, Minnesota — The installation service for Rev. John Skeie as pastor of Medicine Lake Lutheran Church was held on November 17, in the headquarters chapel where the congregation continues to worship. The temporary offices for the church are located at 3409A Kilmer Lane North, Plymouth. The new address for Pastor and Mrs. Skeie is 6000 Sumter Avenue North, New Hope, MN 55427; phone (612) 535-0270.

Kenyon, Minnesota — Hauge Lutheran Church scheduled their fall special meetings on November 3-7, with Pastor Ken Thoreson, Beloit, Wisconsin, as the speaker.

Larimore, North Dakota — Rev. Brian Pearson, Arlington, South Dakota, spoke for the fall evangelistic meetings at Living Faith Free Lutheran Church, November 21-24.

Ishpeming, Michigan — Hope Free Lutheran Church conducted a fall evangelism conference on September 29 through October 2, with the theme, "New Life in Christ." Rev. Yeddo Gottel, Golden Valley, Minnesota, led the morning Bible studies and spoke during the evening services. The church also hosted the Northern Michigan District youth for a weekend retreat on November 8-9, with Mr. Erling Langness, a member of the congregation, as the speaker.

Park River, North Dakota — Rev. Robert Lee, Newark, Illinois, was the Bible teacher for a fall conference at Victory Free Lutheran Church, October 20-23, with the messages based on the Book of Philipians.

Hatton, North Dakota — The installation service for Rev. Frank Cherney as the pastor of Zoar Lutheran Church was conducted on Sunday, October 20, by AFLC President Richard Snipstead.

THE 1991 ANNUAL REPORT: A STEWARDSHIP REVIEW

All who registered at the last annual conference have already received copies of the annual report, and others may order one from the headquarters. A real education is waiting for those who read it, not only regarding the discussions and decisions, but also concerning the life and growth of our church body.

It can be a productive study to review the report from a stewardship perspective.

Our fellowship continues to grow, although most of this growth has come from the addition of new congregations. A comparison with the last annual report reveals the fact is that most of our congregations are either declining in membership or only holding their own. This is due, no doubt in some instances, to the "house cleaning" of church records inflated with the names of members that should have been removed long ago. Demographics is another explanation, pointing to the difficulties of outreach and ministry in areas where the population is decreasing.

Membership statistics are not the whole story, of course

**The 1991
Special
Christmas
issue of
THE LUTHERAN
AMBASSADOR
is coming
December 10.
Watch
for it!**

Grafton, North Dakota — Rev. Wayne Juntunen was installed as the pastor of Bethel and Aspelund Lutheran Churches on Sunday afternoon, October 20, by AFLC President Richard Snipstead. Special meetings were scheduled the following week at Bethel, October 27-30, with Rev. Harold Mastad, Morris, Illinois, as the speaker.

Rev. Robert Koepp, Fosston, Minnesota, has resigned as the pastor of Calvary Church in order to accept a call from Faith Lutheran Church of

Running Valley, Colfax, Wisconsin. He will begin his new ministry at Colfax on January 1, 1992.

Rev. Douglas Reitsch, Spokane, Washington, has resigned as the pastor of Bethany Church, and is available for call.

Mrs. Marlin (Oyren) Benrud, Goodhue, Minnesota, was elected to the ARC Corporation at their September meeting to fill the unexpired term of Harry Johnson, Chatham, Michigan, who resigned.

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences - February 1 - October 31

FUND	TOTAL BUDGET	REC'D IN OCTOBER	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$ 276,830.00	\$17,849.84	\$135,966.72	49
Schools - (AFLTS) . .	151,900.00	7,595.92	61,929.75	41
(AFLBS) . .	193,950.00	17,178.46	92,303.37	48
Home Missions.	433,616.00	33,339.60	203,925.73	47
World Missions.	373,715.00	33,694.52	191,059.12	51
Capital Investment . .	25,000.00	1,525.46	16,505.38	66
Parish Education . . .	62,670.00	2,465.55	23,132.98	37
ARC	20,000.00	356.26	5,879.86	29
TOTALS	\$1,537,681.00	\$114,005.61	\$730,702.91	48
1990 - 1991	\$1,441,565.00	\$92,816.96	\$660,388.43	46

*Goal 75%

a fact that the financial statements strongly support. It is nothing short of extraordinary to see the extent of commitment to the AFLC that is evidenced in the contributions to our common endeavors by scores of small congregations. The totals from 12 churches exceeded twenty thousand dollars, and nine of the twelve have a baptized membership of less than three hundred. Seventy-one churches of less than 100 baptized members contributed a total of over \$1,000 each, with over 40% of these passing the \$4,000 mark. It must not be forgotten, either, that these figures indicate gifts given in addition to local expenses, such as salaries, church construction and maintenance, as well as donations to mission organizations, etc., outside the AFLC.

It is well for us to be reminded, however, that a certain wariness is required when considering any research of statistical facts and figures. A British diplomat once declared that nothing was so fallacious as facts, except figures ... or, as the same sentiments have been expressed in modern speech, figures can lie because liars can figure. Presuppositions can shape perceptions, even for some editors, and sometimes we see what we want to see.

A careful review and analysis of the stewardship insights in the 1991 annual report will be left for the boards and committees concerned. Perhaps a few computer "hackers" might enjoy compiling a comparison with previous reports and giving us a glimpse of the results, a project that could profit the church as a whole.

God has been good to the AFLC. We find ourselves on a plateau at present, as Rev. Elden Nelson reported to the annual conference, and plateaus are an opportunity to review and reflect as we prepare to continue our journey. May His Word enlighten us as His goodness encourages us to press on with confidence in His plan for us as a church family.

AS OFTEN AS YOU EAT THIS BREAD AND DRINK THIS CUP

How often should a congregation celebrate Holy Communion? The custom of Lutherans to collect communion statistics and include them in their annual reports may be a puzzling one, but the results do provide us with a picture of the variety of practices represented among us. A survey of the 1991 annual report shows that 118 AFLC congregations serve the Lord's Supper once a month or more; 55 congregations do so less frequently. The report of one church seems to indicate that the Sacrament of the Altar is included in their weekly worship; seven churches celebrated communion three times a year or less. The largest number listed 12 or 13 times, with six times a distant third.

This information can be interpreted in different ways. The frequency of communion in some congregations may be explained by the fact it is served at more than one service per Sunday. The infrequency, on the other hand, can appear more pronounced in multiple parishes where, in reality, joint services are often conducted. Once again statistics are not always what they seem to be.

There are at least two distinct and dominant traditions within the AFLC. The first, strongest among those with Free

Church and Haugean roots, focuses on the danger of receiving the sacrament unworthily (I Corinthians 11:27). At its best, this concern emphasizes the seriousness of coming to the Lord's table, and seeks not to trivialize it by regular and repetitious observance. At its worst, faint-hearted believers may be discouraged from communing by an unbalanced stress on their own unworthiness, rather than being directed to Christ's worthiness. (The older members of a rural North Dakota church once told me of a communion service where no one dared to commune after hearing the Gospel-less exhortation.) Pastors and congregations who share this tradition may also decide to schedule communion services in the evenings, in order to accentuate the awesome privilege of partaking the Body and Blood of Christ.

The second tradition, which seems to have become dominant, emphasizes the Lord's Supper as a regular and important part of church life, often serving communion on the first Sunday of every month as a part of the worship services. At its best, this practice can provide Christians with frequent and meaningful opportunities to meet the Lord at His Table, and the faint-hearted are encouraged to come and be strengthened in their faith. At its worst, even believers can begin to take the routine for granted, and unbelievers will eat and drink to their own condemnation with no warning given at all. We have all witnessed worship service where it was assumed that everyone was some sort of Christian, and where it would have been conspicuous, indeed, to avoid coming to communion. (I can even recall an encounter with an usher who inquired about my health when I declined to commune as a guest in a church of another denomination.)

The purpose of this editorial is to call all of us to consider our traditions, seeking to strengthen the best in them and to cleanse them from the worst, as well as learning from one another. Those who serve communion according to a regular monthly schedule are urged to rediscover the seriousness of the sacrament, rightly dividing Law and Gospel so that both warning and encouragement are properly balanced. Consider, also, the possibility of planning an entire service around the Lord's Supper, in order to avoid the distortion that can come when it is seen only as a lengthy addition to be tacked on to the end of an already full worship hour.

Those who schedule infrequent communion services are admonished to consider those who are weak in the faith and may be most in need of the sacrament, so that the sternness of the Law might not overshadow the sweetness of the Gospel. Do not make it too difficult for God's children to come to His Table, thereby cultivating a dangerous self-righteousness, and remember that a longing for more frequent communion could well be a sign of spiritual life.

"For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" (I Corinthians 11:26).

The Sin That Makes God Sick

I know thy works, that you are neither cold nor hot: I would that you were cold or hot. So then because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue you out of my mouth. Because you say, I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that you are wretched, and miserable and poor and blind, and naked ... (Revelation 3:15-17).

Friend, from this text and many others, it is clear that God looks at our hearts. Jesus said: "I know thy works." We are often tempted to think, if not to say openly like the Laodicean Christians, "I am rich and have many possessions, and really am in need of nothing." However, God's assessment of their real situation was far different: "you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked." Friend, pause for a minute and take an honest, objective look at your own walk with Christ. Do you think that God sees any of these defects in you?

The above text was written to Christians, to the church in Laodicea. God is not speaking here to the heathen world, the atheistic world, the humanistic or agnostic world, the materialistic world, He's speaking to those who professed to be followers of Jesus Christ, who belonged to the church. Note how these Christians affected God. To put it mildly, they left Him cold. Why? Because they themselves were almost cold; the Bible calls them "lukewarm" (V.16).

It's true that once they had been "grafted into Christ" (John 15:5), but this text (v. 6) also says that we can be cut off: "If anyone does not continue abiding in me, he is cast forth (cut off) and withers."

Let me ask this question: Why is it that lukewarm Christianity doesn't please God, or, to put it in the language of the Bible, why does it make Him vomit (Portuguese translation)? There are two simple reasons:

1. Because the hope of the world is

seen or not seen in the Christian. In verse 19, God says to the Zealous, "Only as we live dedicated, enthusiastic, pietistic lives will the sin-sick world sit up and start asking questions."

2. Because only as the Christian is "hot" for Christ will he be able to be light and salt in society, the type of person who will create an appetite (spiritual hunger) in the lost, with a desire to read the Bible, to get to know the church, and ultimately to surrender to Christ.

Jesus said: "I would that you were cold or hot" (v. 15). Lukewarm doesn't work. It's worthless, for it amounts to a life with little or no difference from the world. Lips that never speak of Jesus, though those lips may tell jokes and speak foolishness, are lukewarm and make God sick.

The solution to this problem is

The word "Immanuel" is one of the most colorful name of our Savior. Signifying "God is with us," it brings to us the stimulating thought of the nearness of God. It connotes also God's great interest in the human race and His concern for its welfare. He would not leave us alone, but came to us in visible form to assure us of His saving love.

— Martin Hegland

found in our text: "I recommend that you receive from Me (by of Me) ..." (v. 18). yes, we are invited to come to Christ and in repentance and faith, and then we will find forgiveness, true riches and renewed vision. An old song says: "All that I want is in Jesus," and our text says, "Those I love, I rebuke ... be zealous and repent.

Have you come? Will you receive?



— Rev. John H. Abel
Missionary-Evangelist