

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

November 27, 1990

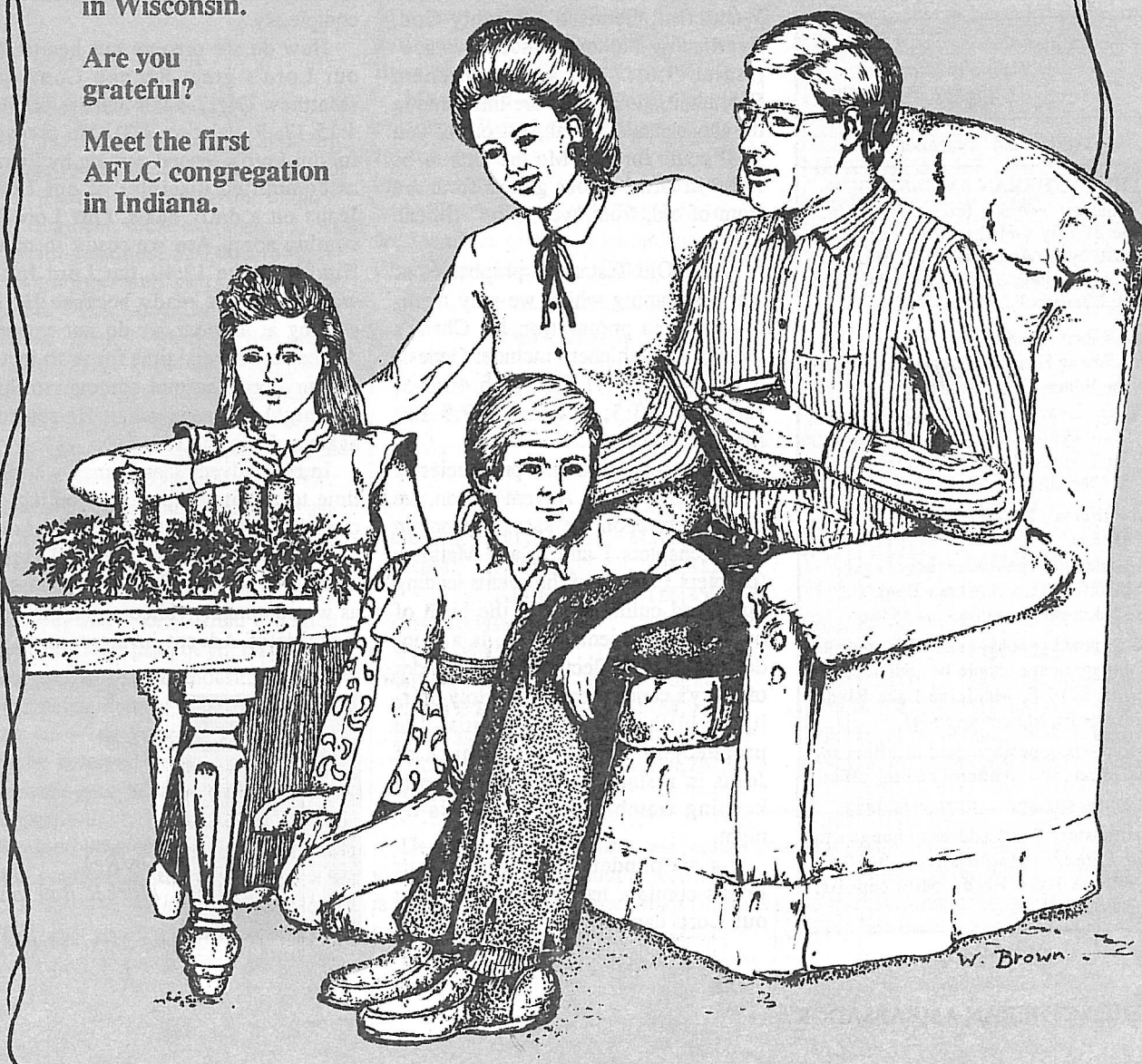
The One who came is coming again!

**Advent helps for
family worship.**

**Home Missions
in Wisconsin.**

**Are you
grateful?**

**Meet the first
AFLC congregation
in Indiana.**



LIGHT on the WAY

meditations on God's Word

COVER ART

by Wayne Brown
Fridley, Minnesota

Volume 28 Number 22

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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As the Advent season approaches, we will be blessed by reflecting on the meaning of Advent in the church year. Advent is the season when we prepare ourselves for Christ's threefold coming. Our Lord came as the Christ Child at Bethlehem; He comes to His believing children each day as Savior, Lord and friend and He will come again as King and Judge at the end of this present age.

How do we prepare our hearts for the celebration of our Lord's first coming in Bethlehem almost 2,000 years ago? We prepare our hearts for the event of Christ's first coming by meditating upon the wonderful prophecies of His first advent. Isaiah 9:6 and Micah 5:2 are special verses for the Advent and Christmas season. "For unto us a Child is born; unto us a Son is given and His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). "But you Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2).

Other Old Testament prophecies of Christ's coming which we may meditate upon in preparation for Christ's coming in Bethlehem include: Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 11:1-2; Isaiah 40:3-5; Jeremiah 23:5; Zechariah 9:9 and Malachi 3:1.

As we focus upon the prophecies of Christ's birth in the Advent season, we also reflect upon the sacred record in Luke (chapters 1 and 2) and Matthew (chapters 1 and 2) of the events leading up to and culminating in the birth of our Savior. Advent, indeed, is a wonderful time to reflect upon the wonder of Mary's conception by the Holy Spirit, the birth of John the Baptist, the prophecy of Zacharias, the birth of Jesus in a stable, and the shepherds keeping watch over their flocks by night.

As we ponder the marvel of our Lord's coming, let us remember why our Lord came to earth as a human

Celebrating Advent

being. Jesus came as the God-Man in order to die on the cross for our sins, and to purchase for us the gift of eternal life. The manger in Bethlehem points ahead to the rugged cross upon which our Lord died for us and for our salvation.

How do we prepare ourselves for Christ's coming to our hearts today? Our Lord came; and He comes to us now on a personal basis. We prepare by practicing daily repentance. Just as John the Baptist prepared the way for Christ's ministry by calling the people of Judah to repentance so we prepare by practicing daily repentance. Advent is a special time for reflection and repentance. Biblical repentance involves a complete change of mind worked by the Holy Spirit in which we hate sin, feel contrition or sorrow for it, confess it to God, and turn from it completely.

How do we prepare our hearts for our Lord's great Second Coming? (Matthew 24:27-44; I Thessalonians 4:15-17; Revelation 1:7). We prepare for our Lord's second coming by living as committed disciples of our Lord Jesus on a daily basis. Our Lord is coming soon. Are we ready to meet Him? In Luke 12:40, our Lord Jesus warns us to be ready because He is coming at an hour we do not expect. Advent is a special time for us to focus on our Lord's second coming, so that we might be ready when He returns again as King and Judge.

In this Advent season may we take time to meditate upon the coming of our Lord in all of its fullness. Our Lord came; He comes; and He will come again. We will be abundantly blessed as we continually reflect upon the rich meaning of Advent in the coming of our Lord.



—by Rev.
Mark R. Bateson

When Jesus came

For four hundred years God remained silent. but now the Son of God stood in the synagogue and opened the Book.

The faithful people had waited so long for the fulfilled promise of the Messiah. The days and years prior to His coming had been spiritually dark. The last recorded Word from God in Malachi describes the condition of the people as grave and deplorable. Worship was feigned and empty. The offerings were not of the heart. There was no honor and reverence directed Godward. God's Word was questioned. Pulpits were defiled with lawless and faithless men whose desire was for their own honor and glory. The home was in total disarray with divorce and the raising of godless children. Truly darkness was the light of the day. In summary, the people exclaimed, "So now we call the proud blessed, for those who do wickedness are raised up, yes, those who tempt God go free" (Malachi 3:15).

The faithful in Malachi's day gathered together to speak and pray. God heard and promised to send His Messenger.

The first Advent took place — Jesus Christ came, born in a stable in Bethlehem. The shepherds, wise men, Simeon, Anna, and others eagerly searched the Scriptures and were ready to receive God's Gift of His Son with joyous hearts.

Now the Son of God stood in the synagogue and opened the Book. By the Spirit of God, He told His hearers the purpose for His coming:

one "He came to preach the gospel to the poor and to heal the brokenhearted." The first words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount were, "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3). To hearts brought low by sin and despair, Jesus brings new life and hope. To hearts broken because of sinfulness and inborn wickedness, Jesus comes with the good news of a loving Father who waits to forgive and cleanse.

two "He came to preach deliverance to the captives." Many a sinner feels captive because of the deep corruption of the human heart that is "desperately wicked and deceitful above all things". Jesus came to give us freedom. "If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed." "where the Spirit of God is, there is liberty." "Thanks be to God who

gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

three "He came to give recovery of sight to the blind." Spiritual darkness is the worst. Many are blind to their own sin and depravity and cannot see the need of a Savior. Many are aware of death and the graves but blind to salvation and eternal life in Christ. Many see themselves and their own righteousness but are blind to Christ and His righteousness. Jesus came to give sight to the blind so that they can see what Jesus sees.

four "He came to set at liberty those who are oppressed." The oppression of sin weighs heavily on the shoulders of men. In Psalm 32 David experiences heaviness of soul because of unconfessed sin. Life itself had become a burden for him until he turned to the Lord to find rest and release through forgiveness. Jesus says, "Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

five "He came to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." In Old Testament times, the year of Jubilee was celebrated every fifty years. At that time all debts were cancelled and forgiven. All slaves were set free. Today our Heavenly Father is merciful to repentant sinners, our sin-debts are cancelled and we are set free. The Cross of Christ is the place. The Resurrection is the proof.

Jesus closed the Book and said. "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." The Messiah had come.

The first Advent brought Jesus with the Gospel. Some heard and believed. Some heard and rejected Him as the Messiah. Some just did not hear. It is no different today.

The second Advent will bring Jesus with the news of God's judgment. Have you joyously received the Savior of the first Advent? Are you ready for His Second Coming? During the Advent season, may God "establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints" (1 Thessalonians 3:13).

—by Rev. Terry L. Olson, Valley City, North Dakota

"Let's see," said Mother. "I'd better be thinking about our Advent wreath. Ruth, do you remember what we did with the Advent wreath last year?"

"We left it at the church."

"Oh, yes," said Mother, "it is nice to share our Advent wreath with others; it sure makes me get organized each year." *I wonder if Daddy would make a wooden cross with five candle holes in it again this year,* she thought as she washed another dish and rinsed it.

"I think it would be nice to keep our wreath this year. What do you think, Ruth?"

"Yes," said Ruth as she showed her approval by the gleam in her eyes and her wide smile.

It's the first of November tomorrow. We'd better start gathering things so we aren't rushing at the last minute. We must be prepared for Advent, Mother thought.

"I want to pick the greenery," said Ruth. "I'm the greatest at that." Mother smiled, "Do you think the greenery should be real, or should we go to Ben Franklin and buy greenery?"

"No, Mom," Ruth replied, "let's make it real!"

The mother thought about her little daughter's words. . . let's make it real. Why not make Advent real?

Advent helps for family worship

To make an Advent wreath, use a round styrofoam ring thick enough to put five candles in it. (Or make a wooden cross and place a candle at each end and one in the middle.) Wrap greenery around the ring or wooden cross. Then wrap purple ribbon in and out around the greenery. One of your candles should be white; the other four can be purple or pink.

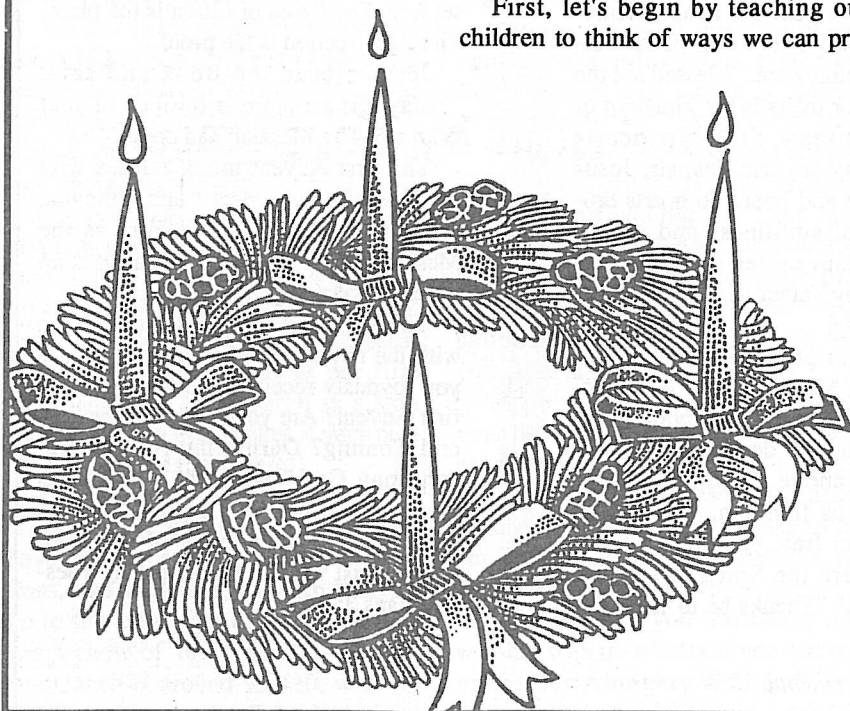
First, let's begin by teaching our children to think of ways we can pre-

pare for Advent. The word "advent" means "coming," so we are reminded to get ready for the coming of the King, Jesus our Heavenly King. One way to do this is to teach the children ways that we can clear our minds of busy things and not to push Him out like they did in Bethlehem. Sometimes we crowd Him out with our busy shopping, baking, and special events. Children see this as they watch us.

The week before the first Advent Sunday is a time to explain that the round ring (or the round shape of the greenery) signifies that God has no beginning or ending. Teach how the greenery reminds us that Jesus is always the same. Even though our friends may change, He never does. As you wrap the purple ribbon around the greenery, explain to the children that this, too, is a reminder of His love. His love doesn't change from day to day. Remember, too, to explain how the five candles represent Jesus the light of the world. There is no other way but by believing in Him. Also, help the children to think this week how excited they feel when they are waiting for someone to come over.

On the first Advent Sunday, light the **Prophecy candle**, and ask the children to memorize a verse from Romans 13:11-14. Also, talk about

LET'S MAKE IT REAL



make room for Jesus next week and looking for ways to be doing things for Him.

On the second Advent Sunday, light the **Bethlehem candle** and memorize a verse from Luke 12:35-40. Encourage the children to share Jesus with at least one person. Also, have each child pray for all of our missionary families each night before bed.

On the third Advent Sunday, light the **Shepherd's candle** and talk about what you did the week before in preparation for this Sunday. Memorize a verse from Matthew 28:16-20. In preparation for next Sunday have the children think about Jesus's love for us in that He died for our sins. Have them think about the nails going through His hands and feet and how a thorn or sliver hurts when it is stuck in their skin.

On the fourth Sunday in Advent, have them light the **Angel's candle** and talk about what they thought of the previous week. Memorize a verse from Isaiah 40:9-11. Have each one try to think of the color white and how pure it is. Have each child think of one thing that they could do for each family member that doesn't involve money. Help them to think that what we have or don't have is not important, but the eternal things. Have them bring the notes the next time as we light the center candle on either Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. Help the little ones write them down during the week.

The fifth candle is white and is called the **Christ candle**. Memorize John 1:4-5. Together read your special notes to each other, and talk about how Christ is the light of the world and how He came to bring understanding and deliverance to man and to cast the light of God upon things of eternal importance.

Let's look forward to REAL joy on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, by waiting for our Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace to come into our hearts and lives.

—Mary Pollestad
Minneapolis, Minnesota

(Mary, an AFLBS graduate and the wife of senior seminarian Tonnes Pollestad, is the mother of two daughters.)

Jesus, Your Church with longing
eyes

For Your expected coming
waits:

When will the promised Light
arise,

And glory beam from Zion's
gate?

Teach us in watchfulness and
prayer

To wait for the appointed hour;
And fit us by Your grace to
share

The triumph of Your conquering
power.

—William H. Bathurst, 1831

Our mission congregation in Janesville, Wisconsin

It was at Bethany Lutheran Church of rural Brodhead, Wisconsin, where a number of people from Janesville came to observe Memorial Day and attend the special worship service in remembrance of those who died for their country. They were also there to inquire about the AFLC and to talk to Lay Pastor Ken Thoreson about being their interim pastor should they decide to start a home mission church in Janesville.

In July of 1988 about 30 people met with Pastor Elden Nelson and Pastor Thoreson.

Trinity Free Lutheran Church held their first worship service in the community room of Bank One the third Sunday of August 1988. Pastor Thoreson, who was working full time as a maintenance supervisor at a General Motors Assembly Plant and part time as the pastor of Bethany Lutheran, agreed to serve Trinity's needs until they found a pastor.

In October of 1988 the congregation issued a letter of call to Pastor Thoreson to be their full time pastor. Upon the advice of the Home Missions Director it was recommended that, if he decided to accept the call, he serve both churches located 23 miles apart. Accepting the call would mean surrendering thirty-five years of retirement and fringe benefits should he leave General Motors.

A week after receiving the official letter of call to be a full time pastor, General Motors offered Pastor Thoreson an early retirement package with full fringe benefits and a 20% reduction in retirement benefits. God opened the door of opportunity and he left General Motors to serve both churches full time January 1, 1989.

Trinity Free Lutheran is indebted to God working in mysterious ways and to Pastor Elden Nelson and the Home Missions Committee for their endless hours of cooperation and assistance.

Because of the Church Extension Fund and a friendly local bank, Trinity will be breaking ground this fall to build a church that will seat well over 200 souls.

Whenever there has been a particular need within this two year old church, that has moved four times due to growth in the numbers and is now located in a shopping plaza, God has provided the right people with the right talent or ability. Trinity's members come from the ELCA, Wisconsin and Missouri Synods as well as the AALC and now has 89 baptized members. It is one of 50 churches in Janesville, 14 of them Lutheran, a city of 52,000 people. God has truly blessed us in many ways and we thank you the readers of the *Ambassador* for your continued prayers.

First service held for new California church

The newest AFLC congregation in "the Golden State" conducted her first worship service on Sunday, November 4, with over seventy people present.

Oceanside, a growing community along the coast between Los Angeles and San Diego, is the location of this new work, which leases a temporary home in a local middle school.

Rev. Orville Hiepler is the AFLC pastor/developer in Oceanside, assisted by two AFLBS graduates, Lisa Carr and Adam Lee, who are both attending Christ College Irvine.

Thousands of invitations were mailed by Pastor Hiepler in preparation for this first service, and local newspaper coverage has been excellent.

Readers of *The Lutheran Ambassador* are reminded to pray for this new congregation, and to contact Pastor Hiepler with the names of any relatives or friends in the area who might be interested in this new church.

AFLBS receives grants

Aid Association for Lutherans (AAL) has awarded \$7,900 in grants to Association Free Lutheran Bible School in Minneapolis.

A \$3,000 grant will fund a Campus Days weekend for high school students. The purpose of the weekend, scheduled for April 5-7, 1991, is to give prospective students a sample of campus life. Part of the grant also will allow the school's two choirs to present concerts in various congregations. A total of 28 concerts are planned for March 15-29, 1991.

A \$2,000 grant will fund 14 scholarships for students attending the school. Scholarship selection will be based on academic records and financial need. An additional \$2,900 will be awarded to students who have policies with AAL.



A sign painted by Pastor Thoreson is being put up by Sam Mylen and Marilyn Thoreson at the future building site.

from a pastor's study

GRATEFULNESS

How did you express your gratefulness to God on Thanksgiving Day? Did you offer a well-thought-out prayer of praise to God for His blessings for you and yours? Were you involved in a special service with your family at the church house or in your own home? Did you help out another who was in dire need? The ancient Hebrews observed their ritual of thanksgiving in the temple of the Lord. Perhaps the unknown psalmist had this in mind when he wrote, "Let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare His works with rejoicing" (Psalm 107:22). In our day of grace, God still has His temple. It is each and every truly regenerated believer. To give thanks to the Lord for all things that come our way is to glorify God in our bodies.

God does take note of our ungratefulness as well as our grateful response to Him. Jesus marveled at the lack of gratefulness on the part of nine Israeli men whom He had healed of leprosy. The tenth cleansed leper was a Samaritan man who came back to glorify God in thanksgiving to Jesus Christ. Paul teaches that the kindness of God is designed to lead us to repentance. Stubbornness and unrepentance (ungratefulness) stores up the wrath of God against us for the day of judgment. (Romans 2:4.)

Some time ago as we were discussing the subject of expressing gratefulness to others, one woman related how she was prompted to thank an elderly pastor for his part in her spiritual nurture through his confirmation teaching during her teen years. Needless to day, she made his day! Recently

another person told me how she had written a note of thanks to the man who had helped her to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. His lengthy reply to her indicated that letters such as hers were not commonplace in his experience. Another couple had the misfortune of blowing a rear tire on their pickup camper on a desolate section of road in northern Minnesota. To compound their troubles, their jack literally fell apart under the weight of the vehicle. Among the motorists who stopped to help, one family did have a hydraulic jack with them. The tire was changed, introductions were made and each went their way. The couple could not remember the full name of their benefactors, though they did remember the area of their residence. After a considerable amount of effort, contact was established and gratefulness was expressed.

"To give thanks to the Lord for all things that come our way is to glorify God in our bodies."

About a year ago a parishoner gave me a copy of a paper entitled "Why I Am Thankful," by Alvin E. Pagel. He relates a story that should help us to avoid being wrapped up in unthankful attitudes.

A certain man had three sons. His job paid hardly enough to make ends meet and one day he discovered that the shoes of the children were badly worn. He grumbled about having to buy three pairs of shoes at one time. About that time the family washing machine also broke down. A new one was beyond their means. Finding a used one in the newspaper ads, he went at once to the address listed. It was a beautiful home with all the latest kitchen appliances. The transaction was made and he arranged to come

back the next evening to pick up his purchase. During their conversation he remarked, "I've had the toughest breaks! Why just recently I had to buy three pairs of shoes for my kids." He wondered why the woman hurriedly left the room. After a short while her husband replied. "My, how fortunate you are. We have only one child and he has been paralyzed since birth. He has never walked a step. I have never had to buy him shoes."

The next evening a much chastened father brought the washer home and installed it. Seeing his sons' old shoes by the basement steps, he went over and picked up Tom's shoes. The toes were worn because he had used them as a brake for his wagon. Picking up Jim's shoes he poked his finger through soles worn out from skipping rope. Finally he picked up little Joe's shoes, muddy, soggy, and terribly out of shape. He smiled at the thought of the little lad walking through every mud puddle on his way home from school. He paused for a moment, then weeping he knelt in a prayer of thanksgiving to God that his sons were the owners of three badly worn pairs of shoes.

The psalmist wrote, "Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul. I will praise the Lord while I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being" (Psalm 146: 1-2). David observed an important truth for us to remember in the light of a preceding psalm. "For in death there is no remembrance of thee; in the grave who shall give thee thanks?" His encouragement to us is, "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits" (Psalm 103:1-2).

We must pray the words of David, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23-24). The way everlasting is only through faith in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. We can raise our voices in grateful praise for our common salvation in Him!

—by Rev. Henry Johansen
Willmar, Minnesota

OUR PRESIDENT WRITES

OUR CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP

And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of the stewardship; for thou mayest be no steward" (Luke 16:2).

One of the great Biblical doctrines of the Christian faith concerns the stewardship of the resources of the earth. We find this taught in the Old Testament. It is supported and given an even greater importance in the New Testament.

An acknowledgement of the gifts that God has given is basic to a proper attitude in stewardship. The psalmist reminds us that, "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (Psalm 24:1). In addition to the fact that everything belongs to God, every gift that He gives to you and to me is an opportunity to use that gift for the blessing of others.

For us as Christians, the Kingdom work is to come first. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33).

We need to take a look at our stewardship within our AFLC at this time of the year. The October financial summary has just come to my desk. It is not encouraging. We are three-quarters of the way through the current fiscal

year, and we have only reached 46% of the total budget goal for the ministries of our church.

It is true that the last three months of the year are always our best. But as the AFLC grows, our budget also grows. The income percentage-wise may be about the same as at this time in past years, but the shortage in dollars is much greater. We must begin to turn the pattern of giving around in our AFLC.

We are writing this article at the beginning of November. Bulletin inserts have been mailed to all of our congregations encouraging the participation of each congregation in a special "love-gift" to the AFLC during this month. We are optimistic that the response during November will be most encouraging. If your congregation has not participated in this special offering during November, we would urge that this might be done if at all possible.

The challenge before us is great. I believe the resources are there within our church body to reach our budget goal before January 31. We need your special prayer support and gifts to make it possible.

"Man's authority to say of anything, 'That is mine,' rests, finally, on his power to say, 'I am God's.'"

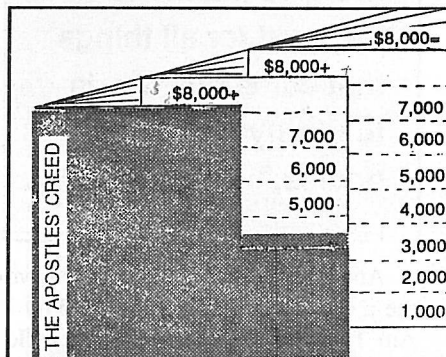
—Richard Snipstead

PARISH EDUCATION NEWS

Book available

The AFLC's Declaration of Faith states that "We accept the ancient ecumenical symbols, namely, the Apostles, Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds; Luther's Small Catechism and the Unaltered Augsburg Confession as the true expression of the Christian faith and life." As AFLC members we all pay "lip service" to these confessions writings, confessing that we believe they are true expressions of the Bible's teachings. Yet how many of us have even read the Augsburg Confession or the Athanasian Creed?

Good News! One of the AFLC's best-kept secrets is the availability of a handy, inexpensive, easy-to-read book that contains *all* of the confessional writings listed above! The Office of Parish Education has many copies available of *The Augsburg Confession—Its Meaning for our Day*. This little book, which costs only 50 cents, was first published in 1980. It contains the complete text of the Augsburg Confession, accompanied by many interesting, enriching articles. It also contains



\$24,000

by

April, 1991

New 4th Grade Books

The Board of Parish Education has established a book fund for the purpose of printing the new, revised 4th grade student books and teacher's manuals; \$24,000 is needed by April 1, 1991, in order to have the books ready for use in the 1991-1992 school year.

Thank you to every Sunday School, congregation, and individual who has already joined us in "the partnership of the Gospel" with a gift to the 4th Grade Book Fund. As our Book Graph shows, we are at the half-way mark of reaching our goal! Thank you for your encouragement.

the Small Catechism, with an accompanying article, and the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds, with an accompanying article (the Apostles' Creed is contained within the Small Catechism).

The book would be great for study groups, gifts, and to help explain to your non-Lutheran friends what being Lutheran is really all about.

—Michael Peterson
Minnewaukan, North Dakota

EDITORIALS

THERE'S A WELCOME HERE

There's a welcome here, there's a Christian welcome here." Some of our readers surely remember repeating these words in song when new students or visitors were introduced in Sunday School.

Is there a welcome here?

The old chorus came to mind recently after hearing two men relate their experiences as church visitors.

The first was a new resident in a community who was delighted to find a church of his own denomination. The preaching was warm and Word-centered, but the reception from others was so cool that he felt unwelcome and rejected.

"I still feel like a stranger after several months of worshipping here," he said. No one reached out to him in any way, and only his determined spirit prevented him from seeking a different church home.

The second was the father of a young family on a vacation trip. They were traveling over a weekend, and arranged their daily driving carefully in order to attend church on Sunday.

"We knew about this congregation, and were looking forward to our visit there," he confided. "But it was a big disappointment. The only one who even spoke to us was the pastor."

Is there a welcome here? Could this occur in your church?

Both of the churches mentioned above have more than their share of friendly people. Both are concerned about outreach and growth. Yet sometimes the friendliness is confined to a limited circle, and it takes too much effort to clothe our concerns with a word of welcome, a smile and a handshake.

Do strangers see us as the frozen chosen? The rigid frigid?

It is important to pass from diagnosing the problem to determining the solution. A good beginning could be the appointment of a "welcome committee" or church greeters. But a beginning is no place to stop. Appoint yourself a committee of one, and look outside of your comfortable circle. There are new faces to see and new people to meet. There is no better time than now to get acquainted, and there is no substitute for a personal welcome.

"There's a Christian welcome here . . . yes, with the help of God, let it be so in all of our congregations!

THIN SKIN

Two months worth of experience lends little weight and less authority to any comments on the life of an editor that might appear in this column. Yet perhaps the newness of it all might highlight some insight to report and remember.

Thin skin is part and parcel of an editor's life.

Certain insurance studies suggest that the life of an editor can be a short one. Journalists and writers are listed among the lowest professions for life expectancy . . . and pastors among the highest. Maybe there is merit in trying to combine the two. Thin skin can be fragile.

The term "thin skin", however, is usually connected with a sensitivity to criticism.

We have not been swamped with angry letters yet. One pastor passed on a comment from one of his people that the first issue of October seemed "less spiritual" due to the presence of the H.I.S. promotion on page three instead of a sermon. Yet a letter was received from a North Dakota reader, in response to the Spirit of God through the same promotional article, with a generous personal gift to the fund.

Also, a quick survey of four summer issues at hand led to a surprising discovery that only one of them had a sermon on page three. Some critics lack historical perspective, and thin skin makes us eager to point it out.

But thin skin can be penetrated, too, by the criticism that comes from within. Mrs. Hjermstad and I, after hours of careful proof-reading, passed the material for our first issue on to the printer. Two errors escaped our attention, and both of them were in our personal biographical articles!

Thin skin is not only negative. Thankfully, it can also include a sensitivity to God and a sense of gratitude to Him. We are already discovering that *The Lutheran Ambassador* is a real ministry, and that thousands of people are touched by what is written in its pages. The life of an editor is a humbling experience.

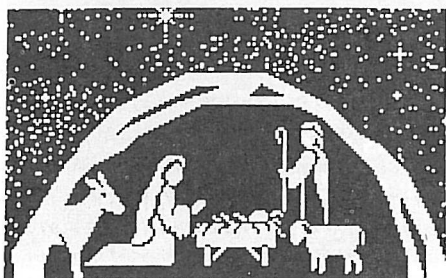
Please pray with us that God would help these thin skinned editors to always respond to criticism graciously, and to always sense His presence in this ministry gratefully.

P.S. How do you spell "Ezekiel"?

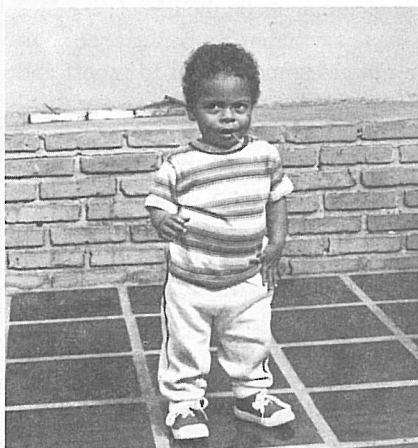
FOCAL POINT

The young people were placing the figures of the nativity scene outside the church. One of the girls had rearranged the manger several times. When someone asked her why she was spending so much time on it, she replied, "We want to be sure that Jesus shows,"

This should be the attitude of every Christian—at Christmas and throughout the year—that by every deed and word Jesus Christ shall be seen in and through his life. Let's be sure that Jesus shows.



From the Miriam Infant Home



An invitation to Brazil

There is much to "show and tell" about your AFLC mission in Brazil; the best is to see it with your own eyes! This is why we say: Come and join us for the 25th anniversary in Brazil.

Our World Missions Director, Pastor Eugene Enderlein, is promoting a tour group to be in Brazil the last two weeks of January, 1991. The cost is approximately \$1,850.

It can certainly be the trip of a lifetime as you join us for the annual conference of our Brazil AFLC and our anniversary celebration during those days. Campo Mourao today is a busy metropolis with skyscrapers, the largest grain cooperative in Brazil, beautiful schools and a college. There is much to tell, much to see!

Will you bring encouragement to your sister AFLC in Brazil and joy to her people and your missionaries here? It would be an inspiration to have a good group come for the 25th anniversary. Together we can sing: "To God be the glory, great things He has done. . ."

—Rev. John H. and Ruby Abel

Campo Mourao, Parana, Brazil

(Ed. Note: An anniversary historical survey of our Brazil mission by the Abels will be included in a forthcoming issue.)

Hi! My name is Renato

I was born into a very bad world on February 1, 1989. My Daddy is a drunkard and some even say a murderer. My Mommy was always sick in bed. I have four brothers and sisters and we all lived in a two-room shack. My Grandma Gabreila would take us to the Free Lutheran Church in Campo Mourao. She loved Jesus and also loved us. Then when I was about a year old an awful thing happened; Mommy died of a heart problem and Daddy left us all. Grandma came to help us and called the missionary and his wife to help us, too. That was the day they buried my Mommy (in Brazil people are buried within 24 hours of death). The missionary and his wife were good to us but yet they couldn't stop us from crying as we looked into the wooden box where our Mommy laid very still. I tried to touch her but she was very cold and wouldn't even move. Then they took Mommy away from us and put her down into the ground and threw dirt on her. I really cried because I didn't know what was happening. The missionary and his wife met with Grandma and some of my aunts to talk about us five kids. Grandma said she was too old (83 years) and too poor (\$20/month) to take care of us. All my aunts were poor and had many kids of their own so they didn't want us either. Jesus touched the hearts of the missionaries to start an orphanage.

I'm little and don't understand too much, but Jesus is good to me and my little adopted brothers and sisters to have a home like this for us. We are well taken care of and have food every day. We also hear a lot about Jesus. I'm very happy. Pray for me and my brothers and sisters. The big "black book" talks about you and me: "If a brother or sister (little boy or girl) is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled: and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself." James 2:15-17 (NASV).

Happily in the Infant Home,

Renato

Mission Opportunities for Free Lutheran Youth

1992 marks the year when the FLY teams will leave for our AFLC Mission fields. FLY Teams will go both to Mexico and to Brazil.

Pastor George Knapp and Jane Nelson will be traveling with the team to Brazil and Pastor Ted Kennedy will be going with the Mexico team.

Pastor Ted Kennedy, Nogales, Arizona, will also lead a group next summer leaving from the Luther League Convention in Estes Park, Colorado. If you are interested in this trip, contact Pastor Kennedy directly. This summer's trip will be just across the border only.

Application blanks for the 1992 trips can be secured from Pastor Enderlein and he will answer all questions concerning all FLY team trips.

Application blanks will be sent to your pastor in the AFLC Youth Resources mailing. These must be returned during October-December, 1991. Teams will be selected in March or April 1992.

Hark! a thrilling voice is sounding:

Christ is near! it seems to say;

Cast away the dreams of darkness,

O ye children of the day!

—Latin, 5th century

The Sower, the Seed and the Soils

Jesus often taught spiritual truths by using parables (comparisons or illustrations). He used familiar scenes, drawing upon nature or human life. This made His teachings particularly effective and easy to remember. Yet many today, as in Jesus' day, harden their hearts and will not believe Jesus' simple teachings. Let us pray that we might approach our study of Jesus' parables with open and receptive hearts, that we might learn new spiritual truths from these old familiar stories.

In the parable for our study this month and next, Jesus draws His illustrative story from the farmer, the seed, and the soil. It deals with the planting and growth of the Word in the heart of the individual. Read Matthew. 13:1-9, 18-23; Mark 4:1-9, 13-20 and Luke 8:4-8, 11-15.

THE FARMER PLANTS THE SEED

1. The farmer represents whom? Matthew. 13:37
2. What is the seed? Luke 8:11
3. Seed in storage does not produce a crop. What must the farmer do?
4. How must the Word of God be used if it is to be effective? Deuteronomy 6:6-9; II Timothy 4:2
5. What result does God desire from the hearing and reading of His Word? I Timothy 2:4; Psalm. 119:11; Luke 8:15
6. Jesus ascended to heaven, but His Words were left as "SEED". How does God sow His Seed today? Matthew. 28:19-20

Do we as women have any responsibility here?

THE PARABLES OF JESUS

If Satan can't prevent us from hearing the Word, he will certainly try to prevent us from meditating on it. A person possesses the capacity for only a certain amount of thought and energy; if the world gets it, then Christ cannot have it. **Maturing in Christ involves making choices.**

*Blessed is the man
who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked
or stand in the way of sinners
or sit in the seat of mockers,
But his delight is in the law of the Lord,
and on His law he meditates day and night.
He is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season
And whose leaf does not wither.
What ever he does prospers.*

Psalms 1:1-3 NIV

Next month we will study "THE GOOD SOIL."

HYMN SUGGESTION: "OPEN MY EYES, THAT I MAY SEE"

THE SEED FALLS ON VARIED SOILS

7. What does Hebrews 4:12 tell us concerning the power of the Word (the Seed)?

8. What does the soil represent? Matthew 13:9, Luke 8:15

This parable was a commentary by Jesus on the variable success of His preaching and teaching. The Seed was good, but its success was hindered by the soil on which it fell.

Things are no different today. Notice the various ways in which the Word is received:

HARD SOIL: HARD-HEARTED INDIFFERENCE

9. What is said concerning the response of this group of people?

10. How much thought was given to the Word they had heard?

11. How involved is Satan when the Word is being sown?

12. These people simply lock the Word out of their lives. They reject, avoid, and neglect it. What Words of warning did Jesus speak in John 12:48 and Hebrews 2:3a?

13. Note that in this instance the seed doesn't even take root. Is the farmer or the seed at fault?

ROCKY SOIL: LACK OF SPIRITUAL DEPTH

In Palestine, many fields have only a thin layer of earth over solid rock. This is what is meant by rocky soil.

14. What is the initial response of these people to the Word?

15. Does this response result in a permanent relationship?

What essential part of the life is deficient?

16. "He has no root". In a spiritual sense, what does this mean?

17. Note the phrase, "When trouble or persecution comes because of the Word". What demands does the Word present? John 8:31; Mark 8:34,35

18. What is expected of us in the hour of trial? Acts 5:29

19. Perhaps the spiritual life of these converts was shallow and superficial because they experienced a superficial conversion. What is necessary for true conversion? Psalm 51

20. What was Jesus pointing out to His disciples in Matthew 10?

These people want only pleasure in their Christian life. They are emotional and enthusiastic but they have no principles on which to stand when "hard times" come. They cannot persevere. Striking examples of this group are those who shouted "Hosanna" on Palm Sunday, and "Crucify Him" on Good Friday.

THORNY SOIL: PREOCCUPATION WITH THINGS OF THE WORLD

21. Did the seed take root in this soil?

22. What was the problem? Why were the plants unproductive?

23. In Jesus' Words, what do thorns in the parable signify?

a. c.

b. d.

24. Weeds are natural to the soil. What is the natural condition of the human heart? Jeremiah 17:9

25. Can faith survive among thorns? I John 2:15-16

26. Can a Christian be fruitful under these conditions?

27. What can the sincere Christian do about these thorns? I Peter 5:7, Psalm 32:6; 51:10

WOMEN'S PAGE

Bagley, Minnesota



Rice Free Lutheran WMF, Bagley, Minnesota, recently honored two women. Pictured are: Doreen Ronning with Grace Nelson pinning and Mearle Monteith with Margaret Liljedahl pinning.

Ray, North Dakota



Beaver Creek Lutheran WMF, Ray, North Dakota, honored three ladies for fifty years of service. Pictured are: Mrs. Wayne Vance, Mrs. Virgil Hartsoch and Mrs. Oford Boe. Marie Vance accepted the honor for her mother-in-law, Doris Vance, who was unable to attend.

Fall Rally review

—The Southwestern Central Minnesota District WMF held its rally on October 2 at Bethany Free Lutheran, Abercrombie, North Dakota. The theme was, "Lead me in thy truth and teach me" (Psalm 25:5a). Mrs. Lois Oscarson gave the morning Bible study. The afternoon speaker was Mrs. Gerald Knudsvig, WMF Executive Secretary.

—The West Coast District WMF Rally was held September 22 at Bethany Lutheran, Spokane, Washington. Bonnie West, Kalispell, Montana, led the singspiration. Devotions were given by Ann Glimsdahl, Ferndale, Washington. The Lake Stevens WMF provided the special music. Mrs. Richard Gunderson, also of Lake Stevens, led the morning Bible study. Mrs. Ken Moland, Kirkland, led the prayer service. The host pastor, Douglas Reitsch, led the afternoon session.

The Spring Rally will be March 1, 1991, at Everett, as a part of the Mid-winter Bible Conference.

—The South Dakota-Nebraska District WMF Rally was held in Ortley, South Dakota, at the Ortley Free Lutheran Church on September 22. The meeting was conducted by the officers from Slim Buttes Free Lutheran at Reva. Pastor Jim Johnson, Reva, led the Bible study. Mrs. Faith Nelson was our afternoon speaker. The new officers are from Ortley WMF. The 1991 rally will be held next fall at Arlington, South Dakota.



Since 1972 the ladies of Grace Lutheran Church, Bruce, South Dakota, have gathered together to make quilts. They meet one day on three different months for "Ripping Days", and for three days for five months to sew the quilts. Their faithful work has paid off. In the last eighteen years, they have completed 1,810 quilts which have been sent to Lutheran World Relief, to Gospel missions in Minneapolis, Chicago, and Sioux Falls, to Brazil with Pastor John Abel, and some to a children's home in Mexico.

—The Eastern North Dakota District WMF held their rally at Victory Free Lutheran in Park River, on October 6. The theme was "Thou Art Worth" (Revelation 4:11). Linda Mohagen and Pearl Aanstad were the devotional leaders. Special music was provided by ladies from Grafton and Portland. The speaker for the day was Pastor Mark Molstre, Larimore. The elections were as follows: Linda Mohagen, president; Karen Dalager, vice president; and Margaret Johnson, treasurer.

—The Minneapolis District WMF held its rally at Salem Lutheran Church, Radcliffe, Iowa, on October 20. The theme for the day focused on music. Pastor Tom Olson, Cumberland, Wisconsin, spoke on music in the Psalms. He also shared on the progress of the Hymnal Committee. Mrs. Elaine

WMF Memorials

Mrs. Glen Peterson, Morris, Illinois
 Mrs. Ethel Hunstad, Argyle, Minnesota
 Mrs. Marian L. Larson, Clarissa, Minnesota
 Jane Brumwell, Erskine, Minnesota
 Caroline Haagenson, McIntosh, Minnesota
 William J. Kangas, Minneapolis, Minnesota
 Wayne Elliott, Tioga, North Dakota
 Mervill "Bud" Eide, Tioga, North Dakota
 Mrs. Earl Nelson, Lake Preston, South Dakota
 Mollie M. Kjoren, Sisseton, South Dakota
 Herman Gulbaa, Wallace, South Dakota
 Minnie Nelson, Ortley, South Dakota
 Naomi Rudebusch, Ortley, South Dakota
 Selma Grinda, Ortley, South Dakota
 Gertrude Turgeon, Chamberlain, South Dakota

Mundfrom was the song leader for the day. Mrs. Audrey Gilmore, LaCrosse, Wisconsin, challenged the ladies in the afternoon on living a life which reflects our Lord Jesus Christ.

Introducing new AFLC churches

Church dedicated and first pastor installed at Glyndon, Minnesota

Maranatha Free Lutheran Church, Glyndon, Minnesota, held dedication and installation services on September 23. Rev. Richard Snipstead, AFLC President, performed the dedication service, as well as installed Lay Pastor Dale Finstrom.

The theme verse for the day was Psalm 127:1, "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. Except the Lord keep the city, the watchmen waketh but in vain."

Truly we know the Lord has been our constant help and provider from the very beginning. Praise God! Blessings were showered upon us when we least expected it during our building project. The former Faith Lutheran Church, Granite Falls, Minnesota, provided our new sanctuary with altar and railings, lectern, pulpit, two pastor's chairs, flags, organ, and piano. Mrs. Reuben Wee furnished the brass cross and Bible holder in memory of her husband, who was the pastor in Granite Falls for several years. Thank you all for your help and provision!

We had so many willing hands who donated time and tools to complete our house of worship. The building was purchased in October, 1987. Our task was to change a truck garage into a church sanctuary with a convertible dining area which can be filled with chairs for worship attendance. In the other half of the building we included a new kitchen, six Sunday School rooms, pastor's office, and an all-occasion room which served as our first worship area. The church is all on ground level, which makes it very nice for the disabled to worship.

Our confirmed membership is 123, including 32 charter members. We have had 25 baptisms, eight confirmations, two weddings, and two funerals up to this time. Our congregation also has a choir of 10-15 people, and our attendance is around 95-110, with 33 children in the Sunday School.



Indiana church celebrates 100 years and AFLC affiliation

The beginning of the 100th year of ministry. The beginning of the first year of a new affiliation.

Both of these milestones are being celebrated by the St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church of Indianapolis, the AFLC's first congregation in Indiana.

The first event of this dual observance was the installation of Rev. Roger Tappert as pastor of St. Mark's

on August 28. The service was followed by an anniversary Homecoming Picnic, commemorating the official organization of the congregation in 1891. Rev. Richard Snipstead, AFLC President, officiated at the installation and welcomed them to their new family of churches.

A second anniversary event was an October 21, Reformation Festival, featuring a community choir and a message by AFLC Vice President Robert Lee.

Next on the centennial calendar is a service scheduled for November 11, in honor of former pastors and sons of the congregation who are serving as pastors. The anniversary year will be concluded with a service in the spring of 1991.

St. Mark's Church has been a member of several Lutheran synods during the past century. Organized by a small Indiana association called the Olive Branch Synod, part of the General Synod, U.S.A., the congregation joined the United Lutheran Church of America (ULCA) after the merger of 1918. This affiliation continued until 1963, when a new merger produced the

A parsonage was purchased in June, 1990, which originally was the home of one of our families, Mr. and Mrs. Dan Johnson. It is now the home of our first installed pastor, Dale Finstrom, his wife, Chris, and their three children, who came to Glyndon this year from Hatton, North Dakota.

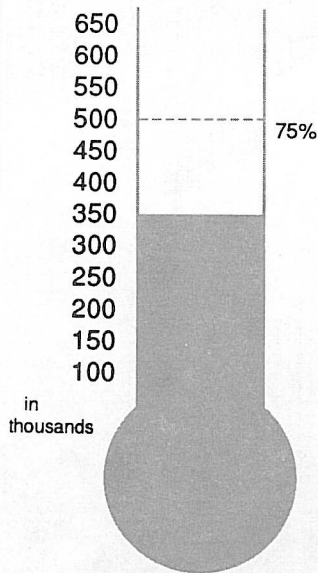
Again we thank each one for all of your help. Praise the Lord for his generous help and for leading, guiding, and directing a great Association board to meet our needs. Also, thanks to the church at Underwood, Minnesota, for the generous gift of pews.

How we love you all! Come and worship with us whenever you can and praise our Almighty God and Lord Jesus Christ!

—Corr.

continued on page 16

ADMINISTRATION BUILDING FUND



Rise Up and Build

We are so glad to report that the response to our special "Rise Up and Build" issue of *The Lutheran Ambassador* has been most encouraging. At this writing, almost \$20,000 in additional pledges and gifts have been received. Thank you so much!

Those of us involved in this work are often asked, "How is the campaign going?" Many times, this question is followed with a remark to the effect that, "I just haven't gotten around to giving my own pledge/gift as yet." Our response is varied, but usually we say that "so far we've received \$220,000 and have a long way to go yet."

May we humbly ask for your prayers for this effort? Could it be that you are one who has not yet responded to this appeal — and should? Perhaps your Sunday School should consider doing so — or your Luther League could be involved in a special way — or perhaps your WMF could be active in support.

We need your response now. Please mail in your commitment today!

—Clifford E. Johnson
Director

Personalities

Rev. William Goodman, Bemidji, Minnesota, has accepted a call to serve the three congregations in the Shevlin, Minnesota parish (Landstad, Trinity, Sell Lake) and has already begun his ministry there. At a recent Coordinating Committee meeting, he was accepted on the AFLC Fellowship Roster.

Rev. Albert Hautamaki, Minneapolis, has suffered a mild stroke after recent surgery. He is staying at Colonial Acres, 5800 St. Croix Ave. N., Golden Valley, Minnesota, while undergoing therapy.

Rev. Christian Oswood, Bloomington, Minnesota, is in the process of applying for disability due to a heart condition. His doctor has recommended a heart transplant. Pastor Oswood's address is 8023 Stevens Ave. S., Bloomington, 55420, (612) 884-9769.

Mark and Janine Johnson, and children, Rebekah, Zachariah, and Joshua, Minooka, Illinois, are preparing for missionary service in Paraguay with SIM International. The Johnsons are members of West Lisbon Lutheran Church, rural Newark, Illinois.

from here and there

Fargo, North Dakota — St. Paul's Lutheran Church had special meetings during October 28-31, with Rev. Rodger Olson, Fergus Falls, Minnesota as the speaker.

Badger, Minnesota — Evangelist Olaf Friggstad was the speaker at Oiland Lutheran Church during October 7-10. The meetings were a blessing to the congregation with many people attending and responding in a visible way. Youth night was especially encouraging. Dean Hedland provided the special music. —Corr.

Fergus Falls, Minnesota — Calvary Lutheran Church hosted special meetings on November 4-8. Evangelist Willmore Gundersen, Fergus Falls, was the guest speaker.

Eben Junction, Michigan — Calvary Free Lutheran hosted the November Family Night on the eleventh with Pastor Dennis Gray, Greenbush, Minnesota, as the guest speaker.

Rev. Walter Johnson, Shakopee, Minnesota, has undergone cancer surgery on his neck. Pastor and Mrs. Johnson are thanking the Lord for apparent miraculous healing.

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 SEPTEMBER	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$ 223,110.00	\$21,022.73	\$131,980.24	59
Schools - (AFLTS) . .	136,822.00	9,526.51	47,726.47	35
(AFLBS) . .	186,850.00	8,497.74	76,420.30	41
Home Missions. . . .	433,616.00	23,253.46	198,893.23	46
World Missions. . . .	366,197.00	28,808.56	157,548.19	43
Capital Investment . .	30,000.00	1,099.82	16,575.18	55
Parish Education . . .	64,970.00	608.14	31,244.82	48
TOTALS	\$1,441,565.00	\$92,816.96	\$660,388.43	46
1989 - 1990	\$1,308,281.00	\$85,070.70	\$621,022.94	47
*Goal 75%				

Despite our best efforts, we realize that some congregations have not as yet viewed the slide presentation regarding the new administration building. If yours is one, please let us know! We'll do all we can to make that presentation as soon as we can!

Needed at the ARC

Volunteers to operate air powered jack-hammer full or part-time or day-at-a-time. Free room and board. Inside work. Our LeRoy will supply air. Do not need to stay in same room with LeRoy.

INDIANA

Lutheran Church in America (LCA).

The most recent national church home for St. Mark's was the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA), organized in 1988. Concern over synodical policies, especially on the local level, led the congregation to vote for withdrawal and for AFLC affiliation, which was finalized by a vote on May 6, 1990.

The church building is situated in the heart of the Fountain Square section of the city, a declining neighborhood now experiencing extensive revitalization in both the business and residential sectors. A historical district called "Fletcher Place" has been created, and the congregation works together with other churches in the area to help the needy and to help one another in ministry.

This new AFLC congregation, on the threshold of new century, decided to get out of her "sick bed" and start exercising again, beginning with the question, "What can we do here?"

One of the answers for St. Mark's at present was the calling of Pastor Tappert, a local university professor, to serve in a part-time "tentmaker" status, releasing more of the congregation's limited means for building improvements and other ministries.

The first century witnessed the birth, growth, and decline of a large urban congregation, as well as the construction of a spacious and impressive sanctuary. Seven sons of the congregation became Lutheran pastors; five new churches were "mothered" in the metropolitan area.

What will the second century see?

St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church faces the future with confidence in God, "our help in ages past," and welcomes the prayers and fellowship in the Gospel of new brothers and sisters within the AFLC.

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

Second-Class



Fosston, Minnesota, church marks 25 years

"Looking unto Jesus" (Hebrews 12:2) was the theme for the 25th anniversary celebration of Calvary Free Lutheran Church, Fosston, Minnesota, on September 9th.

Rev. Hubert DeBoer, first pastor of the congregation after its organization in 1965, spoke during the morning service on the anniversary text.

Former pastors present for the afternoon service included Rev. Orville Olson, Rev. Ralph Rokke, Rev. Jay Eberth, and Rev. Jay Erickson. A letter of greeting was read from Rev. Walter Beaman, another pastor who previously served the parish.

Calvary Church is one of several AFLC congregations organized in the early 1960's by members of former LFC congregations in opposition to the LFC/ALC merger. These concerned Lutherans in Fosston met together as a "fellowship" for two years, prayerfully hoping that the merger would be overturned, before making the difficult decision to form a free and living congregation.

Several men served for short terms during the early transition years, including Rev. Joel Pederson, Rev. John DeBoer, DeWayne Thorson and Bob Lee. Two laymen from Bagley, Edwin Mathison and Bob Bilden, have also assisted the congregation on many occasions over the years.

Worship services were first held in the homes and later in the Fosston Elementary School. Property was purchased in 1966 and a basement auditorium was constructed, serving as the young congregation's home for several years. Building of the upper structure began in 1973, and the present church was dedicated the following year.

Calvary Church shared a pastor with Bagley and McIntosh churches during the various parish arrangements, but a new surge of growth led to the decision in 1981 to call a full-time resident pastor to serve the congregation.

The present pastor is Rev. Robert Koepp, who has served since 1987.