



THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

November 29, 1994



Now
we see
through
a glass
darkly ...

but
some
day ...

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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Light on the Way

His glorious appearing!

Behold, I am coming soon! Behold, I am coming soon! Yes, I am coming soon! Amen, Come, Lord Jesus (Revelation 22).

Jesus is coming again. He made a promise long ago and it is yet to be fulfilled. He will come! But when? Even before Jesus left for heaven, the disciples asked: "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" Jesus answered: "It is not for you to know the times or dates that the Father has set by his own authority" (Acts 1:6,7).

Down through the ages people have kept asking: "When?"

And not only have they asked, but some even have given answers thinking they somehow have discovered the date hidden in the passages of Scripture. Even Johann Bengel (1687-1752), known as "a man of eminent piety and vast and sound learning," and a foremost German theologian of the post-Reformation period, predicted the Lord's return would be in 1836. Of course, we know about the Seventh-day Adventists and the Jehovah Witnesses and their predictions and re-predictions.

More recently, someone sent out thousands of booklets saying Jesus would come again in 1988. Now on September 7, 1994, Jesus was supposed to have returned. A preacher-teacher, Harold Camping, made that prediction. But Christ did not return in September and, if you read this article in late November, He will not have returned even then. Will those who have listened regularly to Camping as he teaches on the radio be disillusioned, cynical or even mockers in regard to the Lord's Second Coming? I hope

they will continue to trust the Lord's promise even though they perhaps lose faith in "their prophet!"

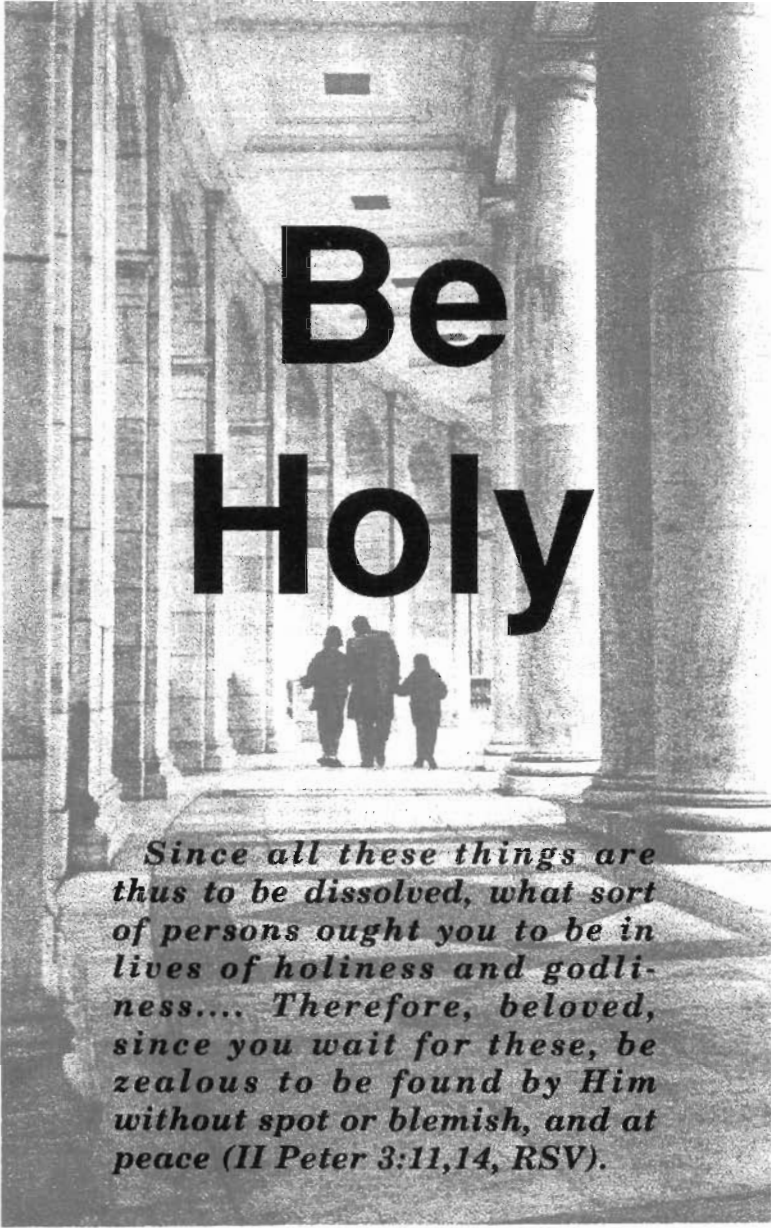
He has lost his credibility. Once again, "Let God be true, and every man a liar" (Romans 3:4).

The promise of Jesus still is true: "Yes I am coming soon!" While we wait for His "glorious appearing" may this wonderful grace of God which has already appeared to us in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ help us "to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age" (Titus 2:12).

Oh yes, I know we can become impatient and curious and keep asking when. The word "soon" can cause us some perplexity. When we were children "soon" meant a few seconds or minutes after we said the word. When we were adolescents, "soon" was the next day or month. "Soon" keeps getting longer as we grow older. At my age, even the years seem to swiftly roll by. The Eternal One has said through Peter, "But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day" (II Peter 3:8).

Using this ratio, not quite two days have gone by since Jesus said, "I am coming soon." In fact, when we begin our second millennium in five years and a month, we might well say: "Lord, it has been two days already! How much longer? How much longer?" He will not give us a date even then, but He will say, "Nearer now than when (you) first believed" (Romans 13:11).

— by Odell O. Kittelson



Be Holy

Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of persons ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness.... Therefore, beloved, since you wait for these, be zealous to be found by Him without spot or blemish, and at peace (II Peter 3:11,14, RSV).

What sort of persons ought you to be? Another version says: "What sort of people ought you to be?" (NAS). That is the question Peter asked as he foretold, by special revelation, the purging of the earth by fire and the emergence of new heavens and a new earth.

Interesting, isn't it, that scientists also believe the day is coming when the planet Earth will be scorched and melted by a superheated and expanded sun. Their timetable for this to happen is so far off that it boggles the mind. People of Christian faith, studying the various "signs of the times" mentioned in Scripture, see so much already fulfilled. Considering the admonitions to be ready, we ought to live in the knowledge that the "day of the Lord" could come at any time.

Then how should we live?

Peter gives us part of the answer right away when he writes of "lives of holiness and godliness" and the need to be "without spot or blemish, and at peace."

The time available is not unlimited. This world is not permanent. We already know that, for Paul said, "The things that are seen are transient" (II Corinthians 5:18). We also know that our individual times on earth are uncertain. Each day has to count. Therefore, it seems to me, we should have some clear objectives before us, if we would walk worthy of the Lord.

Concern for the Ten Commandments

We should have a new appreciation of and concern for the Ten Commandments. I like what the late Gerhard E. Frost wrote in *The Law Perfect*, "Each of the commandments protects a value which is fundamental to life." We don't have time here to enlarge on that, but think about it. There is a carelessness about the Commandments among Christians today. We are not saved by keeping the law, but it is the ideal for living and if we show that we do not take it too seriously, that sends a poor message to the world around us.

Put first things first

We must hold before us more than ever, the challenge of Jesus to seek first the kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33) and that of Paul to seek the things that are above rather than things of earth (Colossians 3:1,2). It is the old goal of putting first things first. Some Christians give evidence of doing this better than others. When it happens it is beautiful to see. Let us search our hearts in the matter of our giving, for instance. Do our contributions show that we believe God's work **must** go forward and be increased significantly?

Oh to be heavenly-minded, but daily committed to God's work in this present world: heavenly-minded, but making the most of this life that has been given us, this treasure in an earthen vessel. We have the right to get the most **out** of life

and the duty to put the most **into** life that we can, under the Lord's direction.

Leave a good testimony

Consider the words holy, godly, without spot or blemish. They are a big challenge, aren't they? Who is sufficient for these things? I thank my God, through Jesus Christ. It is for each believer to look at his life to see how it measures up. Paul called upon Philippian believers to be "blameless and innocent," in other words, without offense, not stumbling blocks. What about our amusements; our places of recreation; our exclamations in everyday speech; our style of dress?

Is anything there that may be leaving a testimony that is blurred or downright dangerous? Can we afford to do that in light of what is coming upon the world?

Live all of life holy unto God

Not long ago I sat in an audience as we sang the old beloved song, "Take Time to be Holy." For the first time, the thought came to me that the expression "take time to be holy" may not be the best way to state the intended meaning. The challenge really is: Live holy! **All of life** should be holy unto God. We should not just "take time." It is not a matter of being holy in church but not in leisure; or holy on Sunday but not on Monday; or holy when among others but not among one's family, or vice versa.

All of life should be holy and godly, without spot or blemish, permeated by peace. We are to live in this manner in light of what is coming upon the earth, and also because life is uncertain and God calls for holiness among His own. Again, we ask, as Paul did in another context: "Who is sufficient for these things?" The answer is plain: No one, except through the power of the Lord Jesus Christ and the sanctifying ministration of the Holy Spirit.

Lord, help us to be the right sort of people in these last days.



— Rev. Raynard Huglen
Editor, *The Lutheran Ambassador*, 1963-90
Newfolden, Minnesota



Having the proper desire and the right object of our hope

In the celebration of Advent, the believers of the Old Testament need to be remembered. They had a strong hope in the coming of the Messiah. Today, Christians should have hope in the return of that Messiah.

What does it mean to have hope? An example is seen very clearly in many states throughout our nation. In Minnesota, one cannot help but be besieged by gambling. Whether it is lottery tickets or the local casino, thousands of people are involved. Why are so many people participating in these activities? The answer is quite clear. They gamble because they hope they will win money.



Two aspects of hope

First, hope is the subjective desire or expectation of something good. Secondly, it is the object of this desire. In the case of gambling, the hope is the desire to win and the money.

In the Christian's life, the subjective aspect of hope is the desire to live for and be with Christ. The objective aspect in Christ Himself. Two reasons why hope in Christ's return is important are given in

Be Hopeful

II Peter 3. Mockers will challenge the fact of His return (vs. 3-4), and Christians are to be on guard (vs. 17). We are to resist errors and stand strong in faith and hope!

To better understand hope in the Christian's life, we need to look at the relationship between faith and hope. Martin Luther explained the relationship this way: "Without hope faith cannot endure. On the other hand, hope without faith is blind rashness and arrogance because it lacks knowledge. Before anything else a Christian must have the insight of faith, so that the intellect may know its directions in the day of trouble and the heart may hope for better things. By faith we begin, by hope we continue."¹

The doctrine of faith is a wonderful thing. It is through faith that the objective work of Christ and His righteousness are imputed to the individual. By God's grace, faith believes and understands God's goodness and mercy. It is hope that looks to His goodness and expects the gracious outcome of His return.



False hopes

A serious error occurs when a Christian's hope ceases to look towards God and His goodness. Many Christians do this when they place their hope in their own obedience and piety. Remember that hope is two-fold. First it is the subjective expectation of something good. Secondly, it is the object itself. If you base your hope on your piety, you are placing your hope in the subjective. This result comes from placing your hope and faith in yourself. You have become the object of your hope and not Christ. This is a terrible

error. A good biblical description is a dog returning to its own vomit (II Peter 2:22). You have ceased to live by the doctrine of faith and have resorted to works. You have fallen from grace (Galatians 5:4), and are not justified (Romans 3:28; Galatians 2:16).

The true hope

The true hope is a living hope in Jesus Christ. This hope is clarified in I Peter 1:3-9. Living hope is given by God. Its object is Jesus Christ and His resurrection. The Christian, who is "protected by the power of God through faith" can now place complete hope in Him. The believer can expect the full inheritance to be given "in the last time." This hope carries the Christian through various trials until that glorious day.

Martin Luther described living the hope-filled Christian life as a "Christian art and true masterpiece" for a believer "to turn his back upon the world, which is made to pass away, and to keep his view persistently on the future life, which remains eternally and into which he properly belongs ... If the heart does not direct and prepare itself for that imperishable life, but cleaves to this temporal, perishable life, it does not understand what Baptism, the Gospel, Christ, and faith really mean....Unto this eternal life we are baptized, unto this Christ has purchased us by His death and blood, and for this purpose we have received the Gospel."²

Today, you and I can have this hope because of His return! Just as believers in the Old Testament placed their hope in the coming Messiah, so too, should believers place their hope in Him and His return.

¹ Martin Luther, *A Commentary of Galatians*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1965), 203.

² John Theodore Mueller, *Christian Dogmatics*, (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1955), 435.



— by Rev. Dan Klug
Christ the King Lutheran
East Grand Forks, Minnesota

Be Servants

It's
late

As I read Christ's predictions of His return, my strongest reaction is one of urgency. Today's world events seem to foretell His imminent arrival, and there seems so little time to prepare. Our Lord did not ask us to be ready with huge parades or sumptuous banquets; but He asked this poignant question in Luke 18:8,

When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?

If we are to be counted among the faithful, our time and energy must be spent telling others of Jesus; of His love for Mankind, and of His great sacrifice that we may be redeemed by His blood. Our overriding goal in the days that remain must be to fulfill His Great Commission to "Go and make disciples" (Matthew 28:19).

He
enables

The way we obey and serve differs from person to person, but the qualities we are to exhibit are the same for all. We are to be patient, kind, faithful, humble and merciful. Above all, we are to exude love, joy and peace. How is it possible for any man or woman to have these qualities? The Holy Spirit fills us, guides us, and teaches us and daily brings us to be more like our Master as we open our hearts to His urging. Praise God! How would we ever do it alone?

The Lord gives us certain gifts to do His will. We must prayerfully and willingly receive and use them: wisdom, knowledge, faith, encouragement, generosity, mercy. God gives us the tools and we must learn to apply them to our lives. We are not all the same. Our lives are not the same, but as we go about our daily tasks, the Lord's Commission and His promised coming must prevail in our lives. If our attitude is one of thankfulness for our own salvation, then we will have this urgent need to share the wonderful news with all we meet.

Some may preach and some may teach. Some may be missionaries and travel to foreign lands. But for most Christians,



Being
faithful
in the
final
days

our lives consist of family, work and the church. Daily we must be Christ to all we meet so that they may learn of Him and come to Him.

As our Lord and Savior is our inspiration and example, we look to His life to see how we may serve Him.

Have you taught your children about Jesus? Have you talked to your spouse, your friend, your co-worker, telling of Christ's promise of salvation? Jesus spoke daily of His heavenly Father and taught on the road, in the synagogue and in the homes of sinners. Can we do less?

Have you humbled yourself to care for an invalid who is not your responsibility and performed the menial tasks of his care? Jesus knelt at the disciples' feet and washed them, humbly doing the work of a servant. Can we do less?

Have you given to the cause of Christ

He
showed
us how
to serve

The teacher learns the most, for in studying to prepare a lesson, the good teacher absorbs the information to be taught. Being a servant is similar to this, because in striving to please the master, the servant tends to absorb the characteristics of the one he serves.

In teaching, I learn; in serving, I better understand the true character of my Master.

and to the needy, not comfortably, but until it hurts? Jesus gave His life for us. Can we do less?

Have you turned your back on a victim of AIDS, fearing for your own health? Jesus walked among the lepers and loved them and healed them. Can we do less?

When we help the mother of a sick child, carry another's workload in an emergency, sit with a dying friend, uphold a troubled Christian, or regularly attend worship services before our doubting neighbor; we are living our lives for the Lord. **And when a heart is opened to hear of our Lord and His love and salvation, we must be prepared to give witness to that love.**

With all of this a sense of urgency remains, for we "do not know the day or the hour" of His return (Matthew 25:13). In *The World's Last Night*, C. S. Lewis wrote of preparing for the final days. "We cannot always be excited. We can, perhaps, train ourselves to ask more and more often how the thing which we are saying or doing (or failing to do) at each moment will look when the irresistible light streams in upon it." John of Climacus wrote three centuries ago, "You cannot pass a day devoutly unless you think of it as your last."

Are we living in the final days? Only time will tell. But for each of us, every day must be viewed as an opportunity to be a servant of the Lord. The time may be shorter than we think. What will I be doing when the Lord comes again?

When the Son of Man comes, will He find me faithful?

— by Mrs. Wilma K. Wissner
Ruthfred Lutheran Church
Bethel Park, Pennsylvania

Lift up your heads,
ye mighty gates,
Behold the King of
glory waits!
The King of kings
is drawing near.
The Savior of the
world is here.

Redeemer, come!
with us abide;
Our hearts to Thee
we open wide,
Let us Thy inner
presence feel,
thy grace and love
in us reveal.

Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates
Georg Weissel, tr. Catherine Winkworth
Ambassador Hymnal No. 1

A
servant
today

The ancient themes associated with the candles of the Advent wreath always spark my devotional digging each Advent. I search the Old Testament for a new slant of the old themes so that my Advent journey will be a blessing in the midst of so much muddle.

Advent One — *The Prophecy Candle*

Announcing the Waiting Period

Read Isaiah 25:6-9. Prophets foretold a feast of happiness—a banquet with no tears and no death for all people. In Isaiah we read, “The LORD All-Powerful will prepare a feast on this mountain for all people” (25:6). The picture of perfection was meant to enliven Israel as it encouraged them to look forward to better days. When better days arrived, they were to say, “Our God is doing this! We have waited for him, and he has come to save us” (25:9a). We live during better days. In spite of hunger, disease and family disintegration, we have Jesus Christ. The people of Israel had merely the hope of a Messiah in the midst of recurrent calamity: we have the living presence of Jesus in the midst of disaster and destruction.

This Advent, in your family circle, ask: “Do we see the fulfillment of this prophecy in our daily lives. Do we see the feast of the Lord?” Ask family members to enumerate the ways in which the fulfillment has touched them.

Conclude by saying together: “This is the LORD. We waited for him, so we will rejoice and be happy when he saves us” (25:9b).

Advent Two — *The Bethlehem Candle*

Preparing to Receive the Child

Read Micah 5:1-5. In Micah 5:2 we read another prophecy, “But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth **for me** one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days.” God declares that a child will be born who is “for me.” Finally God’s people will “live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth” (5:4b). In addition this child “shall be the one of peace” (5:5). God’s security does not equal locks and fences which is only an earthly security. His security is unexpected strength in the midst of life-threatening danger. Peace, too, is not earthly peace, but from God’s hand as internal personal power in the midst of wars and threat of war.

In your family circle, ask: “Are we focusing on Jesus instead of decorations, presents and parties?” And, “Have we understood the power of security and peace?”

Say together: “And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God” (5:4a).

Advent p



eparation



Advent Three — *The Shepherd's Candle*

Sharing Christ with Those in Need

Read Isaiah 40:10-15. We read in Isaiah 40:10a, "Look, the Lord GOD is coming with power to rule all the people." A shepherd cares for his flock. The Lord "takes care of his people like a shepherd. He gathers them like lambs in his arms and carries them close to him" (40:11a). God did not "learn" this nurturing! "Whom did he ask for help? Who taught him the right way? Who taught him knowledge and showed him the way to understanding?" (40:14). Earth-bound creatures attend workshops to discover how to nurture, but God is the great teacher of nurturing because he is the source of nurturing.

In your family circle, ask: "Do we know the Lord's nurturing - his help? Do we know his right way? Do we know his knowledge and understanding?"

Say together: "Look, the Lord GOD is coming with power to rule all the people" (Isaiah 40:10a).

Advent Four — *The Angel's Candle*

Announcing Love to All People

Read Psalm 34:1-9. The psalmist says: "I will praise the LORD at all times; his praise is always on my lips. My whole being praises the LORD. The poor will hear and be glad" (Psalm 34:1-2). In the Christmas event, love comes to all. We only need to call. "This poor man called, and the LORD heard him and saved him from all his troubles" (34:6). Millions throughout the world do not experience the love of God because they do not hear the angels. "The angel of the LORD camps around those who fear God, and he saves them" (34:7). The love of Christ surrounds us; we have nothing to fear. The angels announce the Christmas message daily: "Give glory to God in heaven, and on earth let there be peace among the people who please God" (Luke 2:14).

In your family circle, ask: "Do we accept God's Love—his angel camped around us? Do we give thanks for that gift?"

Say together: "Glorify the LORD with me, and let us praise his name together" (Psalm 34:3).

— by Rev. Roger L. Tappert, STM
St. Mark's Lutheran
Indianapolis, Indiana

*O blest the land, the city blest,
Where Christ the Ruler is confessed!*

*O happy hearts and happy homes
To whom this King in triumph comes!*

— Georg Weissel, tr. Catherine Winkworth
Ambassador Hymnal No. 1

I have set before you an open door, that no man can shut (Revelation 3:8).

Foreign missions has been a cause with which we have identified strongly for many years. We have prayed for missionaries and for mission fields; and yes, we have often prayed to the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers. Now at this point in our lives, with our children grown, we had to answer God's call, "Who will go?" with the words, "Here am I; send me!"

For some the Lord may open the door quickly and widely; for us it began slowly then suddenly it was flung open. As we considered missionary work, we remembered the words of one AFLC missionary who spoke about the "missionary call" at one of our conferences. Someone asked him how a person could be sure he was called to missions. The missionary replied, "What about Matthew 28?" My wife and I considered it. Indeed there was nothing to prevent us from going. Our children were grown and independent. We had some savings that we believed could be better invested in the kingdom of God than in investment schemes and we both had life and work experiences that prepared us for mission work.

We shared our desires with Pastor Gene Sundby, AFLC-Canada President, and Pastor Gene Enderlein, World Missions director, at last summer's Annual Conference in Valley City, North Dakota. It brought us great relief to simply go to that meeting and tell these brothers we were prepared to serve as support workers on a volunteer basis on any one of our mission fields. We had peace the Lord would direct us both as to when and where we ought to go. The World Missions Committee suggested we go to Brazil.

When we left that meeting last June, we realized a new chapter

Here am I; send me!



Rev. Jim and Lorene Winter at their commissioning service.

in our lives had already begun.

Our congregation in Calgary, Alberta, was surprised but very gracious and helpful in making the changes that suddenly faced us. The "good-byes" to family, friends, commitments and (to be honest) some possessions became more painful than we had anticipated. It all went so quickly.

Some things did concern us. Did the Lord have someone to step in and be the pastor of our congregation? How about the sale of our home? How could I tell dear Mrs. Carlson at the nursing home who had asked me to officiate at her funeral when that day came? It was not as though we needed to put out more "fleeces" as we knew we were going to go, but we wondered if this truly was God's timing. We had been saying we planned to leave in October.

The Lord had everything meticulously planned. Our dear friend passed away on September 12 and her funeral was on the 17th. Our house sold the day before. (This was after the first 60-day listing had expired.) Possession date for our house was scheduled for October 1, so we ended up with little

Volunteer support workers head to the mission field in Brazil

more than a week to get everything out of our house and complete the final cleaning and packing. That week of frantic packing was shortened as we were to go to Elbow, Saskatchewan for our pastors' conference. We arrived there on September 26, only to learn that our remaining concern was wonderfully resolved in Pastor Ken Wilsdon's acceptance of the call to serve Bethlehem Lutheran in Calgary!

Those days in Saskatchewan were a most fitting time, studying the book of Ephesians with Rev. Phil Haugen, Culbertson, Montana and the rest of our Canadian pastors. Even Pastor Wilsdon was able to join us! A special commissioning service was held for us at Bethel Lutheran in Elbow. As the pastors laid hands on us and prayed for us, we experienced a confirmation of the call of God already seen through many answered prayers and unexpected blessings!

Our plane tickets were booked for October 21. We were to go through the Edmonton airport on our way to Campo Mourão, Brazil. Little did we know God had arranged to have AFLC President Robert Lee also at Edmonton switching planes at the same time! I do not know which one of us was more surprised, but we were all thrilled. We lifted off Canadian soil with our hearts rejoicing and praising God for all His goodness!

Perhaps the Lord is calling someone to join us this very day! Has He opened the doors for you? The fields are white and the time is short! The workers are few. "Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that He send forth laborers." Who will go?

— by Rev. Jim Winter

Goal exceeded for Estonian academy

An academy for the training of public school religion teachers in the Baltic republic of Estonia has received financial support of over \$13,000 from an informal fellowship called Lutheran Estonian American Friends (LEAF). This exceeds the goal of \$10,000 that was promised to the new institution over two years ago in an effort to make its establishment a reality.

LEAF was organized in 1992 by eight U.S. Lutheran pastors who visited the newly independent nation to attend an education conference. AFLC pastors who were part of the group included Pastors Martin Horn, Robert Lee, Mel Meyer and Todd Olson. Seeking for avenues to assist the churches of Estonia, the pastors were introduced to a prominent Lutheran clergyman, Rev. Eenok Haamer, who informed them of a government decree authorizing religion classes in all public schools and the need for trained faculty.

At a meeting on the campus of the 17th century university at Tartu, the eight pastors personally pledged to raise \$10,000 for the new theological academy, a goal suggested by Rev. Haamer to cover the initial expenses involved in establishing the school. Classes opened in February 1993 with a guest faculty member from the U.S., Free Lutheran Seminary Dean, Dr. Francis Monseth, representing LEAF for the first two-week session.

Other academy projects funded by LEAF, in addition to the pledge, include the purchase of equipment and student aid. Also, an important step for the future of the institution was taken last winter with the sponsorship of Mrs. Tiiu Nigola, administrator of the academy and secretary for the Society of Religion Teachers,

Storm damages Campo Mourão campus



Pictured is the new extension to the administration/classroom building on AFLC-Brazil's Campo Mourão campus. The lower level houses the new clinic and the upper level is unfinished future classroom space. The roof, formed concrete sheeting, received major damage from high winds on September 13, 1994.



Pictured is the mission's group house, formerly the John Abel home. At the time of the storm, the roof was being rebuilt. The storm broke windows and caused water damage. Repair estimates on the campus are nearly \$6,000. This is an unplanned expense so any gift designated to "Brazil Storm Damage" will be greatly appreciated.

to study in the United States at the Association Free Lutheran Bible School.

The eight charter members of LEAF included pastors from three different Lutheran groups: The AALC, AFLC and ELCA. Current co-chairmen of the organization are the Rev. Charles Eidum and the Rev. Robert Lee, AFLC President. LEAF functions under the umbrella of the East-

ern European Mission Network (EEMN), an inter-Lutheran fellowship dedicated to a ministry of encouragement among Lutherans in the former Soviet bloc countries. The director of EEMN is AFLC Pastor Don Richman.

Further information about LEAF or EEMN can be obtained by writing to: 10800 Lyndale Ave. South, Suite 120, Bloomington, MN 55420-5614.



Each time I have a birthday
I'm as happy as can be.
My mom bakes a great big cake
And the gifts are all for me!
All for me, all for me!
On my birthday, every gift is all
for me!

When Jesus has a birthday
I'm as happy as can be.
My mom bakes a great big cake
And the gifts are all for me!
All for me, all for me!
On His birthday, every gift is all
for me!

Reach out this Christmas

Do the words reflect your home and church at Christmas time? Several years ago, my answer was a sad, "Yes." That is when our church decided to do away with the exchanging of needless grab-bag gifts to each other, and we decided to celebrate Jesus' birthday instead!

We selected to have a "Happy Birthday, Jesus" party. We choose a family-in-need, and we each gave what we could to let them have a joyous Christmas and to show them the love of Christ. One family we helped did not even have pillows for their beds. Some of the children had only mended hand-me-down socks for quite some time. What joy it gave us to give "in Jesus' name" to that family!

Consider giving a birthday party for our Lord this Christmas! To start, ask one or two individuals in your church to decide which needy family in the congregation or community needs help. When they have settled on

a family, they should go privately to the adult in charge and explain what the church or Sunday School would like to do. Among other things, assure the family that their name will not be publicly given out. If the family is open to such a ministry, ask the parent(s) to list each child, his age, size, and specific needs. Ask for something special each child also might want, and not necessarily need. And don't forget about mom and dad. Could she really use a new frying pan, kitchen towels, or clothing just for her? Could he use some tools or fishing gear. Do not pry and possibly offend, but explain what a joy it is for your group to be able to do this for them.

Next, take the information you have received and put together a master list of gifts to be given. Ask the individuals in your church group to sign up for whatever they would like to give. (If they give clothes, make sure they

Youth

The adult guarantor

While it is a goal to train youth to own their own program or ministry, adults must play a primary role in this ministry. In fact, a Christian family can do much to instill in its members a strong desire for ministry.

Many opportunities exist for adults beyond their immediate family. Often times parents can "mentor" other youth in their congregation, youth group or community.

An adult guarantor or mentor points their charges toward the future by serving as an **encourager** or as a **discipler**. The pre-

sent becomes a learning classroom for the future. The past is filled with lessons which can be remembered in the present and future.

The adult guarantor is a positive role model. The Christian walk is exemplified at a time when such is needed. The example of an adult who has a regular devotional life is very powerful. Christianity, it is said, is caught more than it is taught. Mentoring will help the youth in a group and as individuals through those rough times in pre-teen and teen life when they need a Christian "hero."

Mentoring in the youth group

will be more structured and formal. There will be the teaching of the Word of God, prayer and teaching of leadership skills, which will enable a student to become a minister of God's Word to others, both older and younger.

This instruction may also be on a "one to one" basis. The student can spend time learning Scripture, how to study the Word, peer ministry, teaching Sunday School and VBS, etc. It may even include tutoring in school subjects.

Forming positive relationships is the center and core of adult ministry with youth. The relationships will motivate youth to

write down the size they will give.) Each person should wrap his gift and label it appropriately. (Example - "girl, age 8" or "Mom".) It is not necessary to label who the gift is from. Once the gifts have been purchased, invite those participating to gather at an announced time for a party with each one bringing a gift. Then, at a convenient time for the family, have the original individuals who selected the family deliver the gifts to the home. And be ready for a blessed Christmas!

This Christmas will be
different,
Very different from the start.
I've got a special gift for Him;
I'll give Him all my heart!
All my heart, all my heart!
On this Christmas I am giving
all my heart!

— by Mrs. Laurel Jennings
AFLC Parish Education

(If you would like to use this idea and have any other questions, feel free to contact the Parish Education office, (612) 545-5631.)

Ways an adult can encourage youth

become Christians and to live for Christ in their congregation, youth group and community. Beyond this, the student may develop a sense of call into full-time ministry as a pastor, missionary or other worker in the Lord's kingdom.

How do you find someone to mentor? You can find someone informally by simply being a friend. Leadership training for ministry can be taught in our families by going to a nursing home to sing, etc. Pray that the Lord will lead you and guide you.

— by Rev. Dennis Gray
Youth Ministries Director

1995 Ambassador Schedule

The 1995 schedule of *The Lutheran Ambassador* is given below. Beginning with the new year the magazine will change from 24 issues a year of 16 pages each to 16 issues a year with ten of them being 24 pages in length and the other six being 16 pages long. The result will be issues will be put out approximately every three weeks. Another change coming to the magazine is the addition of a group subscription rate. Subscriptions that are sent in as part of a congregational group will cost \$15 per year. Those that are done individually will be \$16. Note below the special emphasis of each issue. Those who might have an interest in writing on a particular subject or know of someone who would or some topic that would be appropriate are encouraged to contact the magazine staff.

Date of Issue	Editor's Deadline	Special Emphasis
January 17	December 9	Evangelism
February 7	December 30	Age Issues
February 28	January 20	Lent
March 21	February 10	AFLBS & AFLTS
April 11	March 3	Easter
May 2	March 24	Pre-Conference & What is the AFLC?
May 23	April 14	Children & Youth
June 13	May 5	The Christian & Politics
July 18	June 9	Conference Review
August 8	June 30	Sunday School
September 5	July 28	Gender Issues
September 26	August 18	Conflict/Unity
October 17	September 8	Missions — Home & World
November 7	September 29	Reformation
November 28	October 20	Thanksgiving & Advent
December 19	November 10	Christmas

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences – January 1 - October 31, 1994

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN OCTOBER	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$256,591.00	\$14,378.96	\$172,411.52	67
Seminary	148,000.00	6,046.26	94,553.02	64
Bible School	232,562.00	7,892.27	119,305.05	51
Home Missions	319,086.00	17,001.78	182,171.30	57
World Missions	342,788.00	20,118.84	238,860.65	70
Capital Investment	37,395.00	962.92	20,115.23	54
Parish Education	67,868.00	3,462.39	32,812.47	48
ARC	8,600.00	321.03	6,029.82	70
Church Extension	10,000.00	201.03	8,644.00	86
TOTALS	\$1,422,890.00	\$70,385.48	\$874,903.06	61
1993 Goal 91%	\$1,347,747.00	\$113,002.51	\$875,953.99	71
1994 Goal 83%				

PEOPLE and PLACES

Two churches dedicate new buildings

On November 6, 1994, **Bethany Lutheran, Binford, North Dakota**, dedicated their new church building and on November 20, **Calvary Lutheran, Fergus Falls, Minnesota**, dedicated their new worship facility. The Binford church replaces their original facility built in 1903. The Fergus Falls congregation outgrew their original building completed in 1974.

Rev. John Allstaedt, Eben Junction, Michigan, has been placed on the AFLC Clergy Roster by a recent action of the Coordinating Committee. Pastor Allstaedt and his wife Tina, serve Calvary Lutheran in Eben Junction.

Rev. John Dennis, Bethel Park, Pennsylvania, has been accepted on the AFLC's Fellowship Roster by action of the Coordinating Committee.

Rev. Joel Rolf, Radcliffe, Iowa, has resigned from Salem and Stavanger Lutheran parish in order to accept the call from Grace and Zion in Valley City, North Dakota.

Rev. Phil Rokke, Minnewauken, North Dakota, has resigned from Trinity and Christ Lutheran in Devil's Lake. He and his family have moved to Newfolden, Minnesota.

Roseau, Minnesota — The Rose and Spruce Lutheran parish is experiencing record growth. Spruce, a 70-year-old church seven miles southeast of Roseau, recently took in 12 new members. Rose, a 106-year-old congregation three miles west of town has taken in 26 new members with more taking instruction classes. Prosperous area industry is drawing more people into that Minnesota-Canada border community.

Rev. Ken Wilsdon, Kalispell, Montana, has accepted the call to Bethlehem Lutheran in Calgary, Alberta, where he has already begun serving.



Montgomery, Illinois — Pictured are three officers of St. Olaf Lutheran with Pastor Brian Pearson and AFLC President Robert Lee on the occasion of Pastor Pearson's installation service held earlier this fall. St. Olaf is a new AFLC congregation. The last week of August, AFLBS BARNABAS team joined over 20 members of the congregation and went to 2500 doors handing out brochures introducing the community to St. Olaf's new affiliation and new pastor. St. Olaf has an active youth ministry with about 40 teens gathering Wednesday evenings for Bible study.

Winger, Minnesota — Dovre Free Lutheran is looking for copies of an out-of-print book titled: *Hymns for Praise and Service*, published by The Rodeheaver Co. Sacred Music Publishers, Winona Lake, Indiana. Please contact Meredith Bursheim, P.O. Box 125, Winger, MN 56592

Rev. Wes Langaas, Thief River Falls, Minnesota, was installed earlier this fall as the first pastor of the new Abundant Life Church. AFLC President Robert Lee officiated at the installation service.

Amery Free Lutheran, Amery Wisconsin, is beginning a special outreach project involving the *Jesus* video. Money has been raised and 120 copies of the video have been purchased. More copies may be purchased in the future as the congregation seeks to place the video, free of charge, in many homes throughout their surrounding area. The video tells the story of the life of Jesus and is based on the gospel of Luke. During the upcoming outreach period the gospel of Luke will be the focus of the Sunday morning sermons and the congregation's home Bible study groups.

Rev. Scott Gray, Morris, Illinois, has resigned as the pastor of Bethlehem Lutheran in order to accept the call from Faith Lutheran in Fairbury, Nebraska. He expects to begin his ministry there on December 1, 1994.

Dr. Dan Rose and Dr. Steve Gander, East Grand Forks, Minnesota, left at the end of October for Campo Mourão, Brazil, where they set up a temporary dental and eye clinic at the Global Health Clinic. The AFLC-Brazil headquarters and schools and the Miriam Infant Home are also located on the Campo Mourão campus. The two doctors from Christ the King Lutheran Church also collected shoes and clothing from other congregations in the Northwestern Minnesota District and delivered them to the mission.



Murrieta, California — Pictured are Rev. Curtis Emerson and Dr. Orville Heipier at the installation service of Pastor Emerson at Shepherd's Church of the Valley on October 30, 1994. The address of Pastor Emerson is 28805 Corte Suerte, Menifee, CA 92584. Phone (909) 672-7816.

While you are waiting ...

Waiting can be done in a variety of ways. While sitting in a car at a traffic light some people bang on their steering wheel as if the vibration will cause the red to turn green faster. Others take note of everything around them except for the change in the light in front of them. Still others use the time to enjoy their music as well as share it with everyone else.

In some ways all of life is a time of waiting. It is a time of looking ahead to the return of Jesus Christ.

We can not dictate the time of Jesus' return. We have to wait. That is an inescapable fact. What we do while we wait, however, is a question we each must ponder.

As waiting at a traffic light can be done in a variety of ways, so do people take a variety of approaches towards waiting for the Lord's return. Some of the early Christians in Thessalonica had gotten the idea that because Jesus may return soon, work and service was something they did not need to concern themselves with. Their approach to waiting appears to be to simply sit back and enjoy the scenery. In his first letter to them the Apostle Paul urges, "Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you ... warn those who are idle" (I Thessalonians 5:12, 14). Paul wants the Thessalonians to see that the best way to prepare for Jesus' return is to be busy doing the work God had called them to do.

In the gospel of Matthew chapter 25, while talking about His return, Jesus tells a parable of a master who, before going on a journey, entrusted his property to his servants. While he was gone the master expected the servants to put what he had given them to use. When he returned the master found one servant who claimed he was motivated by fear and spent the time of the master's absence doing nothing with what he had been given. The other servants had used what they had been given. Upon the master's return they received praise and reward but the servant who had done nothing was condemned.

What are you doing with what the Master has given you? How are you spending this time of waiting for His return? You could spend it like the man at the stop sign, pounding on something out of frustration at the world around you. You could be like others who look all around them, but fail to focus on what is most important. You could be like the one listening to his loud stereo, indulging his own desires with little concern for its affect on the people around him. Or you could be one who is "making the most of every opportunity" (Ephesians 5:16).

The time for doing God's work in this life is very limited. Let us not waste it. The days of waiting are short. Let us with confidence and anticipation enjoy and use them to God's glory.

Some things are not that important

Some fly balls were dropped. People swung at some pitches they shouldn't have. Base running errors were made. All those things were quickly forgotten, however, after the softball game was over and our team had won the championship.

When things are done that should not be done it can seem pretty major at the time. But if the end result is positive, those earlier misdeeds do not seem so important. The disappointment fades in the midst of the celebration.

A great celebration is coming for the children of God. Jesus is going to return! A loud voice from the throne will proclaim: "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Revelation 21:3,4).

Our errors in the game of life may cause us to wonder if we have blown any chance for victory. Take heart! When we confess our sins God "is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9). Because Christ died for our sins the victory has been won and we can still take part in the celebration.

Some errors are not committed by us but against us. The hurt can be great. It may seem unforgettable and unforgivable. Look ahead to the celebration. The tears will be wiped away. The crying and pain will be no more. We will see that the errors did not cost our team the game. The triumph of Jesus cannot be taken away. The momentary transgressions of the present will not seem so major in the unending celebration to come.

We are strengthened for today by looking forward to what is ahead. The assurance of Jesus' return and all that means for the one who is trusting in Him transforms the way we approach our present challenges. It gives us reason to relax, to forgive, to serve, to rejoice, to love. "Therefore we do not lose heart. ... For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" (II Corinthians 4:16-18).

The Last Word

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.
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Second-Class

Our Three Enemies

How would you like to be fighting without knowing who the enemy is? I can almost guarantee you would lose the battle and perhaps even the war. As Christians we are in a war and ignorance is never bliss when it comes to the battle we are in.

The Internal Enemy

Unfortunately in our society, our homes and our lives there is a problem with fighting and quarreling. The Bible is clear about the source of this destructive behavior. At the very core of who we are as people is an innate self-centeredness. This is called our flesh or our old sinful nature. When we do not get our way we express ourselves with destructive thoughts, words, and actions. Warren Wiersbe says that this "war in the heart is helping to cause the wars in the Church!" Not only is our old sinful nature destructive to us but also to those around us.

How do I know when I am being tempted by my flesh? In Galatians 5:19-21, we have a list of the things that come from our being self-centered. Here is the list from Galatians: "sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissension, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like."

Once I know I am struggling with the flesh I can walk in victory by remembering some key issues. I need to remember my position as a Christian. Once I become a Christian, the Bible says, "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires" (Galatians 5:24). I then need to put on the Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 13:14 says, "Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature." Finally, I need to actively walk by the power of God's Spirit. "So I say, live by the

Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature" (Galatians 5:16).

The External Enemy

The next enemy we face is the external enemy, the world. The Bible teaches that the world is the prevailing philosophy of the times and the organized systems that express that philosophy. We see that influence expressed in advertising, fashion, entertainment and music, religion, politics, education, sports, etc. Dear reader, are you a friend of the world or a friend of God? Unfortunately many people, even Christian people, have been more influenced by the world than by the Word of God. How do I overcome the world? I must rely upon the power of God's Holy Spirit living in me and must recognize in this struggle that I live solely by grace.

The Infernal Enemy

Freedom In Christ Ministries has done a survey of 1700 kids and found that 71% reported they have heard voices. Are they crazy or is there a battle going on for their minds? The final enemy we face is the devil and his demons. The Bible tells us, "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 6:12). The Bible clearly teaches an evil being exists who is the enemy of God's children. He is described by many names: Satan, devil, Beelzebub, serpent, murderer, roaring lion, liar, tempter, dragon, evil

one, accuser of the brethren, the prince or god of this world, and prince of the domain of the air.

How do the devil and demons tempt Christians? The primary means is through the placing of thoughts in our minds. (John 13:32). Many of the thoughts I have as a Christian are not my own but have been placed in my mind by Satan and his demonic forces. This is why the Bible says I need to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

How can I walk in victory over this enemy? First, I need total submission to God. The Bible says we must "not give the devil a foothold" (Ephesians 4:27). Submission is an act of the will! I must choose to submit to God in all areas of my life. Secondly, I must resist the devil by verbally confronting Him when I am under his attacks. Jesus resisted Satan in the wilderness by quoting Scripture. Thirdly, I must walk closely with God. He is the one who rescues me from the devil. (Colossians 1:13). Fourth, I must live a life of humility. God hates pride! (Matthew 23:12). We are reminded in I Peter 5:6 that God will lift up the humble in due time. The emphasis in spiritual warfare is not on trying to defeat Satan but on walking humbly and faithfully with God.

Please understand who your three enemies are and then walk in faith and victory. As you do this you will experience more of the abundant life Jesus has for you. Welcome to the battle.

— by Rev. Todd Olson