

# THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

October 18, 1988

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**Where does  
His Glory  
dwell?**

p. 3 - 4

**The library  
in your church**

p. 5

**Introducing a  
new congregation  
in S. Dakota**

p. 11

**What do we  
believe about  
baptism?**

p. 10, 14

**What are the  
faculty  
members doing?**

p. 12, 13

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**Luther burning the papal bull in 1520, which excommunicated him from the Roman Catholic Church.**

# LIGHT on the WAY

## meditations on God's Word

Cover art from a sketch by M. Muller.  
Religious News Service Photo.

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### THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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Rev. Raynard Huglen, Editor  
Mrs. Wayne Hjermstad, Layout Design  
Editorial Board:

Rev. Robert Lee  
Dr. Francis Monseth  
Mr. Sheldon Mortrud

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## Faith without works is dead

Text: Deuteronomy 7:7-12

Today we commemorate Reformation Day. Most people remember Reformation Day by Luther's nailing of the 95 Theses on the door of the Castle Church on the Eve of All Saints' Day, 1517. In conjunction with the posting of the theses, though, it is ever necessary that the Church remember that Reformation Day is also, and especially, the commemoration of God in His grace granting to Martin Luther the discovery of the Biblical doctrine of justification by faith alone. Here is Luther, born to pious parents, regenerated in baptism, raised as a son of the church, and ordained into the priesthood, unable to understand how he, an impeccable monk, could stand as a sinner before a God of justice and merit salvation. Mediate for a few moments on Luther's own testimony of conversion.

"Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection between the justice of God and the statement 'that the just shall live by his faith.' Then I grasped the justice of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning, and whereas before the 'justice of God' had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love. This passage of Paul became to me a gate to heaven.

"If you have a true faith that Christ is your Savior, then at once you have a gracious God, for faith leads you in and opens up God's heart and will, that you should see pure grace and over-flowing love. This it is to behold God in faith that you should look upon His fatherly, friendly heart, in which there is no anger nor ungraciousness. He who sees God as angry does not see Him rightly but looks only on a curtain, as if a dark cloud had been drawn across His face."\*

Through this experience Luther was given to understand that God did not love him, choose him, or save him because of his merit, holiness or greatness (Deut. 7:7-9). Rather, like Israel in today's text, God chose him because He is God, the faithful God, who keeps

His covenant and His lovingkindness (v. 9). Seeing this, Luther came into a new understanding of God and into a new love of the suffering Redeemer unveiled on Calvary. Yes, indeed, justification is by grace alone, and faith alone.

But what about the second thought of our text, "Therefore, you shall keep the commandments and the statutes and the judgments which I am commanding you today, to keep them?" Does this conflict with Luther's doctrine of justification? Meditate once more on Luther's own words, this time from his commentary on the Book of Deuteronomy.

"Above (v. 7-9), he (Moses) had taught the true worship of God in faith, fear and love of the Spirit; here he has come to the outward work. But first he issues a salutary warning, lest they complete in the flesh what they had begun in the Spirit, and be puffed up by their own work. . . . So he keeps them at the rightful use of the Law by wholly removing boasting and trust in works, and he calls them to trust in grace alone. . . . The glory of the work is not yours but His, . . . and the work is accomplished by His mercy which He first promises by His Word and then also confirms afterward by a work which He does through us. . . . So he wants to say here: If you keep these Commandments (which they still could not do without grace) you will feel by the very experience of it that God is faithful."\*\*

It is God who justifies and produces faith. And it is God who, afterward, works in and through the justified. God creates living faith, and this living faith produces genuine works which exalt the Savior. To Him be the glory!

\*Roland Bainton, *Here I Stand*.

\*\*Jaroslav Pelikan, *Luther's Works, Lectures on Deuteronomy*.



by Pastor  
Ralph Tjelta



## The Word likened to the Temple

In Psalm 26, David writes: "O Lord, I love the habitation of Thy house, and *the place where Thy glory dwells*." David is referring here, in the first place, to the physical structure where God meets His people on earth. In David's day, that was the "tabernacle," or "tent of God," that the people of God had constructed and carried around with them in the wilderness for 40 years. The Lord had blessed this structure with the filling of His glory. When they completed setting it up for the first time, we read in Exodus 40:34, 35, 38: "Then the cloud covered the tent of the meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle... For throughout all their journeys, the cloud of the Lord was on the tabernacle by day, and there was fire in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel."

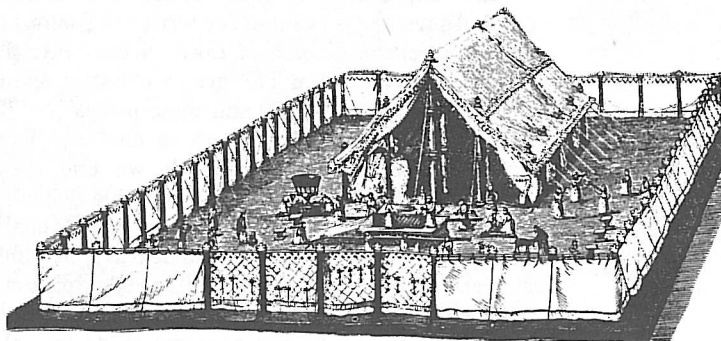
Later on, David's son, Solomon, built the temple at Jerusalem and this became the place where God's glory dwelt. In II Chronicles 7:1-2, we're told that when King Solomon had finished praying a prayer of dedication for the temple, "fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the house. And the priests could not enter into the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord filled the Lord's house." This great temple was destroyed when the people were taken into exile in Babylon.

What does this phrase, "the place where Thy glory dwells," mean today? There is no temple standing today where God's glory dwells in such a powerful way. We may long for such a manifestation of God's glory in our churches and, once in a while, we may even experience an outpouring of blessing by God's Spirit that comes close to this, but God's glory doesn't  *dwell* in our churches in a constant way. Where  *does* His glory dwell today? I would suggest that the place where His glory dwells today (and has always dwelt) is the written Word of God. This is the physical place where we can  *always* meet the Lord.

This month, as we celebrate the Lord's work in the Reformation, and rejoice in the great heritage He has given us as Lutherans, it is appropriate that we consider the beauty and uniqueness of the Holy Scriptures. It appears to me that the Scriptures are much like Solomon's great temple.

The Scriptures are like Solomon's temple, first of all, in their  *basis*. According to II Chronicles 3:1, the temple was built on the spot where

# The place where His glory dwells



the Lord had appeared to David and where David then repented of his sin. The Scriptures likewise come out of personal experiences with God. The Bible is based on the historical workings of God in the lives of its human writers. In order to truly understand and appreciate Scripture, it is necessary for us to know the Lord from whom it comes.

The Scriptures are also like Solomon's temple in their  *appearance*. From the outside, the temple appeared to be an ordinary stone building. However, the inside of the building was covered with rare woods and overlaid with gold. From the outside, the Bible looks like any other book. You have to get inside the Word to discover its real value and beauty.

Once we are into the Word, we discover that its  *contents* are also like those of Solomon's temple. Some of the temple's riches were easily seen. Besides the wood and gold lining the floors and walls, Solomon "adorned" or "overlaid" the interior with "precious stones" (II Chronicles 3:6). Whenever we get into the Word of God, we can easily find "jewels" or special verses for our lives. One such "jewel" for me has been Hebrews 13:7-8: "Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yes and forever." Throughout my theological education and my ministry, I have sought to remember and remain true to the teaching of the Word and the love for the Word I experienced at California Lutheran Bible School under Pastor Maynard Force, Pastor Edwin Petrusson, Miss Federson and those of that era. I need the power in my own ministry that they demonstrated and therefore I have taken their high view of the Scriptures for my own.

"You have to get inside the Word to discover its real value and beauty."



by Pastor  
Craig Wentzel  
Leeds, N.Dak.

"The people of God were judged when they brought idols and perversions into the house of God."

Some of the treasures of the temple were hidden deep in the temple's treasuries. This was where Solomon had put the treasures of silver and gold and utensils that his father, David, had dedicated. There are many treasures hidden in the Scriptures also, treasures out of the lives of God's trusted servants. The writer of Psalm 119 had discovered some of these riches when he wrote: "The law of Thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces" (v. 72) and "I rejoice at Thy word, as one who finds great spoil" (v. 162). How do we find these treasures? In my second year at Bible School, a first-year student asked me what had been the most important thing I had learned at Bible School. My answer was "that the Holy Spirit is a personal teacher." As we depend on the Holy Spirit, He will be our personal guide into the Scriptures, showing us all the treasures of God's Word.

Our guide, the Holy Spirit, will also enable us to see *God's purposes* for Scripture, which are the same as for the temple: presence and peace. As the temple contained the Ark of the Covenant and the Mercy Seat where God had promised to meet His people, so the Lord also meets us in His Word. We experience the presence of the Lord in His Word. Proverbs 16:20 says: "He who gives attention to the word shall find good, and blessed is he who trusts in the Lord." The good we find in the Word is the Lord Himself! The temple also contained the altar where people could be made right with the Lord through animal sacrifices for their sins. The Bible shows us the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross by which we can have peace with God through faith in Jesus' finished work.

*Mistreatment* is something else the Word of God shares with the temple. The people of God were judged when they brought *idols* and perversions into the house of God. Are *we* bringing idols or false gods into the Bible today? Are we painting false, limited pictures of the Lord, or emphasizing a socially popular aspect of God's concern, such as injustice or poverty, over the salvation of souls, or seeking to justify sinful life-styles like homosexuality as good? Belshazzar, King of Babylon, was judged for *misusing the sacred vessels* of the temple. He filled them with wine and used them as drinking cups. Today, many of our words don't mean the same as they used to. Are we taking the words ("vessels") of Scripture and filling them with our own content or meaning? Are we giving different meanings to words like "evangelism" or "salvation" than God intended? In the building of Solomon's temple, there was a great concern

about *reverence*. In I Kings 6:7, we read: "And the house, while it was being built, was built of stone prepared at the quarry, and there was neither hammer nor axe nor any iron tool heard in the house while it was being built." Today, in every denomination, we hear the constant clanging of "higher criticism" and the iron tool of the historical-critical method, as the critics of Scripture attempt to "dismantle" the Bible, "stone by stone."

When the exiles returned from Babylon and rebuilt the temple, we are told in Ezra 3:12 that those who had seen Solomon's temple wept because the new temple was so much smaller. A fellow pastor recently suggested that our present theology and preaching are a "second temple" that our Lutheran forefathers would weep over. That may be, but even more important, are we making a "second temple" out of Scripture itself, by our unbelief or skepticism or wrong preaching? Would our forefathers weep over our views or our limitations of Scripture? If we make Scripture a smaller "temple," we will have a smaller God, because there will be no room for His glory in it!

As Solomon acknowledged about the temple, Scripture cannot "contain" God. Our Lord is bigger than Scripture. But, as with Solomon's temple, God has His eyes on Scripture and all who approach it, seeking Him; and it is "the place where His glory dwells."

#### Biographical information

Craig Wentzel was born at Fergus Falls, Minn., to Art and Corinne Wentzel. He graduated from California Lutheran Bible School, Los Angeles, Fergus Falls State Jr. College, Fergus Falls, Minn., and Concordia College, Moorhead, Minn., where he received his B.A. degree. He attended Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, Calif., and graduated from Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn., with a M. Div. degree.

He was ordained into the ministry of the American Lutheran Church in 1976 and served Grace Lutheran in Nunda, S. Dak., until resigning from the ALC in December, 1987. Since June 1, he has served Lebanon and North Prairie Lutheran Congregations, Leeds, N. Dak. Pastor Wentzel has had a long-standing interest in the ministry of the Lutheran Evangelistic Movement.

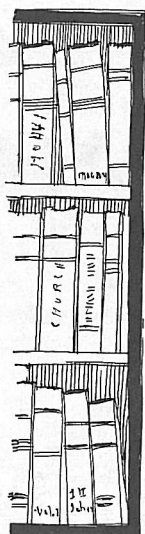
Pastor Wentzel and Barbara Lein, Fergus Falls, were married in 1978. They have two daughters: Abby, six, and Faith, two.

Pastor Wentzel is on the fellowship clergy roster of the AFLC.



# Every church needs a

## LIBRARY



(The second of two parts.)

If the committee uses this Dewey classification methodology, then the 200 numbers can be further broken down.

- 200 — Religion
- 205 — Journals, magazines
- 210 — Natural theology
- 220 — Bibles
- 230 — Doctrines, theology
- 240 — Christian life
- 250 — Homiletic, pastoral
- 260 — Christian Church
- 270 — Church history
- 280 — Denominations and sects
- 290 — Non-Christian religions

In addition to researching public libraries, books and lists, I did two small surveys as well. I wrote letters to 20 churches in the general area of Our Redeemer Lutheran Church and indicated that our congregation desired to form an active library.

In my request I included postcards with the following questions for the recipient pastors to check and mail back to me: Does your church have an active library? Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_ If so, may I visit yours? Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_ I left half of the card space for comments.

I received 14 replies. Three responded with a "yes" and two said that they were currently attempting to create a library in their church. The remainder of the repliers gave "No" answers.

By telephone I contacted two of the "Yes" responders. Both of them stated that they had separate library rooms with their books arranged using a modified Dewey system. One library displayed Women's Fellowship materials in a separate section. Each church reported that its library was open when the church was. Most checkouts occurred before and after Sunday services.

One church, when asked about its treatment of videos, cassettes and the like, replied that all of those materials were kept in the "Resource Room." When I then asked, "Who uses it?" the replay was, "Mostly Sunday School teachers."

For the second part of my letter-writing research, I wrote to the pastors of the AFLC Pacific Coast District and asked them to help me collect information about church libraries. I again included postcards with questions similar to the ones that I had asked the churches in the vicinity of Our Redeemer Lutheran Church (Kirkland, Wash.). After one month's time, four of the pastors returned my cards with the resulting tally: two of the congregations had

libraries and two of them didn't. In answer to my query, "Who takes care of your library?" both of the "Yes" pastors responded — "A dedicated person."

In answer to the question that you are probably now asking, we have our library on shelves and in an organized manner, but how should the system be controlled? Several methods come to mind: one-day-a-week checkout with an appointed person to maintain this process; open shelves with book removal and return at the user's choice; books to be used only at the library.

In my study of church libraries, I found some useful suggestions and one method appealed to me. Keep the checkout card in a pocket on the front cover of the book. The borrower then removes the card, signs his/her name, dates the card, and places it in a designated box in the library. When the book is returned it is placed on a table in a special area. The "keepers" of the library will replace the card and return the book to its correct place on the shelf. The second register should be kept in a reference card file in the library.

Overdue books and some losses of books and materials are inevitable. That is where a bound notebook master list comes into use, to be kept in a locked area accessible only to the pastor and the library committee.

Periodically, and at least twice a year, the committee should recheck its collection. A list then could be published and perhaps the missing books and materials would return. I feel that rigidity of rules should not be stressed above the desire that the church library be a place for use and should express warmth and friendliness.

I've covered a lot of facts, lists and hints in order to help you create a functional library for your church. I've tried to answer the "five": Where, Why, How Who and When?

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church's library is only in the beginning stages. We have the place and some of the books. We've just commenced to form our committee. I'm also excited because I know that our congregation soon will have an active library for the adults, youth, children, Sunday School teachers, and vacation Bible School trainers. I agree with Betty McMichael's two statements: 1) "The church library should be recognized as worthy of adequate support in terms of prayer, space, personnel, and finances." 2) "Since church workers are working for eternity, as well as the present and future, they should have the most useful and presentable information as possible at hand."

"...And they read from the book, from the law of God, clearly; and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the readings" (Nehemiah 8:5).

cont. on p. 7

by Betty Sorrels  
Seattle, Wash.

Dear Christians, one and all, rejoice,  
With exultation springing,  
And, with united heart and voice  
And holy rapture singing,  
Proclaim the wonders God hath done,  
How His right arm the victory won;  
Right dearly it hath cost Him.

# Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice

Fast bound in Satan's chains I lay,  
Death brooded darkly o'er me,  
Sin was my torment night and day,  
In sin my mother bore me;  
Deeper and deeper still I fell,  
Life had become a living hell,  
So firmly sin possessed me.

My good works so imperfect were,  
They had no power to aid me;  
My will God's judgments could not bear,  
Yes, prone to evil made me;  
Grief drove me to despair, and I  
Had nothing left me but to die;  
To hell I fast was sinking.

Then God beheld my wretched state,  
With deep commiseration;  
He thought upon His mercy great,  
And willed my soul's salvation:  
He turned to me a Father's heart;  
Not small the cost! to heal my smart,  
He gave His best and dearest.

He spoke to His beloved Son:  
'Tis time to take compassion:  
Then go, bright Jewel of My crown,  
And bring to man salvation;  
From sin and sorrow set him free,  
Slay bitter death for him, that he  
May live with Thee forever.



The Son obeyed Him cheerfully,  
And born of virgin mother,  
Came down upon the earth to me,  
That He might be my brother:  
His mighty power doth work unseen,  
He came in fashion poor and mean,  
And took the Devil captive.

He sweetly said, Hold fast by Me,  
I am thy rock and castle,  
Thy ransom I myself will be,  
For thee I strive and wrestle:  
For I am with thee, I am thine,  
And evermore thou shalt be mine,  
The foe shall not divide us.

The foe shall shed My precious blood,  
Me of my life bereaving;  
All this I suffer for thy good,  
Be steadfast and believing:  
Life shall from death the victory win.  
My innocence shall bear thy sin,  
So art thou blest forever.

Now to My Father I depart,  
From earth to heaven ascending,  
Thence heavenly wisdom to impart,  
The Holy Spirit sending:  
He shall in trouble comfort thee,  
Teach thee to know and follow Me,  
And to the truth conduct thee.

What I have done and taught, teach thou,  
My ways forsake thou never;  
So shall My kingdom flourish now,  
And God be praised forever:  
Take heed lest men with base alloy  
The heavenly treasure should destroy:  
This counsel I bequeath thee.

Martin Luther  
(*The Lutheran Hymnary*)

## THE CHURCH AND THE BOOK

However, if the figure of Luther in that great monument (in Worms, Germany), standing there with the Bible clasped to his bosom, beautifully symbolizes the relation which existed between the man and the Book, it no less beautifully typifies the relation that exists between the Book and the Church that bears the great Reformer's name. Here also the two go together, the Church and the Book. The existence of the Lutheran Church is justified by her attitude toward that Book; nor does the Lutheran Church exist for any other purpose than that of spreading the truth revealed in this Book for the accomplishment of the gracious purpose for which it was given, that of "making men wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

O. C. Kreinheder

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# Serving the Lord

by Mrs. Dennis (Ceta) Rude  
Lake Alma, Sask.

## On healing

I helped my son into his unwieldy body brace and watched the struggle in his face as he geared himself up to go to school another day, his upper body encased in hard, thick plastic. He's worn the brace through the first year of high school. He'd worked willingly through the summer heat helping his dad with the farm work, his skin chafed and sore under the brace. But now, in his second year of high school, his will was breaking down. He wanted to throw the brace and take his chances without it.

At the end of his eighth grade, he had been diagnosed as having scoliosis, curvature of the spine. But in addition to this, his spine was many degrees from its proper alignment. Now, after a year, the curvature showed some signs of improvement but the rotation of the spine remained serious.

Only at night when he slept and during the 15 or 20 minutes of exercises which he did faithfully every day was he free of the straps which pressed the plastic into his back in a way which was meant to force his spine into the correct position.

I remembered an incident earlier in his life just after he had begun his first year of school. He woke up one morning very sick and feverish. The doctor diagnosed his illness as double virus pneumonia. We don't have drugs that will affect the virus, he explained, but we will place him in the hospital and do all that we can for him.

That night after everyone was asleep, I knelt by the bed and asked Jesus to go into my little boy's room so that he would not feel lonely. Then I added that while He was there would He please touch him with His healing power and make him well.

Even as I prayed I could not feel any real sense of faith that God would heal him. So I confessed this honestly, saying, "Father, I don't have the faith that You will heal my son but I know that You are able to heal and that You can heal him in spite of my lack of faith."

After spending some time on my knees I was able to fall asleep.

The next morning my husband and I went to the hospital to talk with the doctor. He greeted us happily. Your son's temperature dropped steadily during the night, he told us, and he showed us his chart, pointing to the line which curved steadily downward. I don't know how it happened, he said. Perhaps the drug had some effect after all. But he is much better. In fact he is going to be just fine. And in a few days we brought our son home.

Now, some years later, our pastor spoke against any emphasis on healing. He felt that if a person prayed for healing and didn't receive it, that person's faith would be seriously undermined. I had read many verses in the Bible that testified of God's healing power and I read stories of healings that were taking place today. But I was now more hesitant to ask for healing than I had been for my six-year-old.

That evening I talked it over with God and asked, "Father, should I lay hands on my son and ask for healing for his spine?" The verse that came to mind was Luke 13:11. I looked it up in my Bible and discovered that it spoke of the woman who was bent over and could not straighten herself. Jesus called to her and told her she was free from her infirmity. He then laid hands on her and she was healed.

I began to grow excited, but cautiously I asked God to confirm it in His Word. This time the verse that came to mind was Mark 4:40. I looked it up and found this. "Why are you so timid? How is it that you have no faith?" (NAS).

I now felt quite sure that God was willing that I ask for healing for my son. When I went to find him, he was in the half-bath off the entrance of the house. If I am to ask for his healing, I decided, he will come out of that room and mention his back. That is exactly what he did. Still I held back. I wonder that God did not give up on me. I

marvel at His graciousness.

Now I was praying again. "Father, if I ask my husband and he agrees, then I will ask for healing." He was downstairs. When I related to him my story, he told me simply to go ahead and pray.

By this time my son was getting ready for bed. I told him I felt that I should pray for healing for his back. He agreed and I touched his back and prayed a simple prayer of healing.

In a couple of weeks we took him back to the center for his checkup. After looking at the x-rays of his back the specialist was jubilant. He explained that the spine had rotated back 16 degrees toward its proper position. He called the nurses and the workers at the center to come and look at the great improvement.

Each subsequent checkup revealed rapid improvement. Before the end of the school year the brace was removed and our son, ten years later, is well-built, active and healthy.

As you can see, I am no authority on healing. In these cases I can only say that God's mercy is stronger than my unbelief. I have prayed for healing when I did not seem to receive an answer. But I know that God is not dependent upon my feelings. And I know that a mother and father can come to the Father on behalf of their children and He will meet them with kindness and mercy.

### FREE PROMISE OF GRACE

The Gospel blocks the way of all self-devised efforts to gain holiness. It deprives man of his self-confidence and of the idea that he has a rightful claim on God. Instead it proclaims through Word and Sacrament a free promise of grace which has been made available by an act of God, and which gives fully and completely (*rotunde et universaliter*) what could never be attained by self-devised methods.

Adolf Koberle, *The Quest for Holiness*, Augsburg Publishing House.

## ACCEPTING RESPONSIBILITY

A lady had given a stirring address on public radio about the plight of the world's children and the social and material handicaps with which many of them face the world. The picture is bleak and the task of helping many of the little ones tremendous. But that is not the primary burden of what we write now.

At the close of her talk, the woman said that she wanted to offer a prayer. "If you are not religious," she declared, "then substitute the words, 'I accept responsibility for,' for 'let us pray.'" The prayer then enumerated various conditions and situations relative to children which need amelioration or improvement.

As you would have reacted as you heard this, and as we did, the thought came, are those who pray to God, the "religious," only to pray or do they accept responsibility also?

We know the answer to that. Certainly, the pray-ers accept responsibility and we like to think that they do so more than the others do. Prayer is laying a matter out before the Lord, as Hezekiah did under the threats of Assyria's Sennacherib. It is opening oneself and one's situation to the spiritual forces of the Lord. And prayer, when it comes down to it, is the offering of one's being, and all that that means, to God's service and to providing a solution to the problem or opportunity at hand.

We pray *and* we accept responsibility. We see the spiritually lost and pray for their salvation. But we also try to witness to them, befriend them and bring them into contact with God's Word. For those beyond our "space," yes, even to the ends of the world, we support mission efforts to bring them the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We see the material needs of our fellowmen and pray for relief for them and better conditions in which to live. But we also aid our neighbor near at hand through acts of kindness and we give our gifts to agencies of mercy so that they can reach out to our neighbor who is farther away.

If we are "religious." Better yet, if we know God the Father through His Son Jesus, we pray *and* accept responsibility.

## BENEVOLENCES STATUS

There isn't any Association Benevolences report in this issue of the *Ambassador*. The most recent one available to us when this *Ambassador* was prepared was that of August 31, the record of our giving through seven months of the fiscal year.

Let us remind one another that the word "benevolence" comes from two Latin words: *bene* (well) and *volens* (to wish). That is, in giving our gifts to our common work (Schools, Missions, etc.), we are desirous that good will come and are doing something tangible (accepting responsibility) about it.

The status of our church's giving through the end of August gives some cause for rejoicing. Forty-one per cent of the total goal had been reached in comparison to 40 per cent a year previous. Another thing, over \$23,000 more had been given in a comparable period than last year.

Further, it is interesting to compare the situation on August 31 with that of recent years at the same point in time: 1984 — \$371,956.28; 1985 — \$388,146.93; 1986 — \$404,859.51; 1987 — \$410,812.85; and 1988 — \$432,844.48. The income has grown each year and in all by almost \$61,000. And this in a time when the total goal, over the five-year period, has increased from \$1,003,095 in 1984-85 to \$1,057,504 in 1988-89. There have been two higher goals than the latter in between, however.

So while there are some encouraging statistics, it should be made crystal clear that much remains to be done in order to meet our budget goals this year. It is important that we succeed. First, the needs are there for God's kingdom. The harvest is great and God is counting on us to gather a part of it in, the part that falls to our responsibility. Second, we need to be successful for our own sakes. It is some time since we have met our goal fully. We must approach the final decade in this century with a show of consecration to the task and not hesitantly.

There have been economic problems in a number of areas where our people live. Drought has affected rural sections in parts of our country and small towns suffer from that also. Some of our people won't have as much to work with this fall.

But in spite of that and other down-turns our people may have suffered, our goal is attainable, of that we are confident. We must do everything possible to reach the \$1,057,504, and that would be our first million dollar total raised in a fiscal year.

Let us do what we can, as individuals and congregations. This is no time to grow slack. It is a time to go forward.

## ELECTIONS APPROACH

Few nights in a year provide the excitement and suspense that Election Night does. It is a favorite of ours. With three or four TV channels to watch (some have access to more), a news magazine and newspapers to consult, and food upon which to snack, let the returns roll in.

Oh, some of the excitement is gone nowadays. The network news people, by means of computers and sophisticated polling techniques, know too much too soon. Some races are called with only a handful of the precincts reporting. Once in a while the computerized experts are wrong, but usually they're found to be correct when it's all over.

If one follows the political races at all, there will be causes for rejoicing on Election Night. Some of our favored candidates will win. They are good people and can continue to serve their constituencies well. Our judgment has been justified. But there are always disappointments on Election Night, too. Good men and women go down to defeat, sometimes very unexpectedly. At times the losses seem unexplainable. Our sense of disappointment is great. How much greater it must be for the candidates themselves who have "given it all they had" and still came out on the short end?

November 8 is Election Day. We trust that AFLC people

◇

# Questions on creation and evolution

by Craig Gray  
DeKalb, Ill.

(The last of four parts.)

What is the strongest case for creation as seen in science? Since God has finished His good creation, He now preserves it. It is with no coincidence that the most basic, universal and best proved laws of nature support this. These laws of thermodynamics are definite scientific facts.

The First Law states, "Energy can be transformed in various ways, but it cannot be created or destroyed." It is also called the "Law of Conservation of Energy." This Law credits creation in two ways. First, energy is being neither created nor destroyed. This is exactly what the Bible tells us! God created it *once*. Next, this Law contradicts and disproves the theory of evolution which states that "creation (or, *increasing* organization, integration and development) is taking place today continually. This cannot be so for more energy cannot be created. Remember, this Law is universally accepted.

The Second Law states, "In all energy transformations there is a tendency for some energy to be transformed (lost) into non-reversible heat ener-

gy..." This means that things run down and wear out. The evolutionary theory is based on innovation and development. Today we see only conservation and deterioration. These Laws hold many more fascinating applications to prove creation.

The main contrast here is between the *theory* of evolution and the *Law* of Thermodynamics. It is actually no conflict at all. The proven Law easily wins.

Even so, why do so many still believe in evolution? The truth is, evolution is dying out. Many are recognizing it as a very weak theory and are rejecting it. Two thoughts are prevalent here:

1) There is no evidence, whether scientific or Scriptural, for evolution.

2) The only reason most people still believe in evolution is because they have been "cowed" into accepting it out of fear of being called ignorant, reactionary, or the like.

Can the creationist ever defeat evolution? Evolution may be a dying theory, but it will not be defeated until Satan himself is destroyed. We can take it on whenever the need occurs and defeat it locally and temporarily. We must publish the good news of salvation through this proof that God exists. We can speak as confidently of the death of evolution as we can of the second coming of Christ! Evolution is foolishness; it is science falsely so-called (I Timothy 6:20). "In the beginning, *God created* the heavens and the earth."

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## What evangelical Lutherans believe about baptism

by Pastor Mark Bateson  
Colfax, Wis.

"He who believes and is Baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16).

What do we as conservative evangelical Lutherans in the Association believe about Baptism? It is important that we know what the Bible has to say about holy Baptism, since so many false views and teachings about it are prevalent today.

### Baptism is a Special Form of the Word of God

We believe that baptism is not simply water, but as Martin Luther says, "It is water comprehended in God's command *and* connected with God's

cont. on p. 14

## EDITORIALS

are among those Americans who vote faithfully. A few more votes here and there could have turned many an election around. The total of those who vote in the U.S. is shameful. We wouldn't want to lose the franchise and so we should cherish it. What we say for Americans we say for Canadians and citizens of other countries as well. Exercise your right to vote when the opportunity comes.

Know the candidates and their stands on the issues. Pray about the elections. If you live in Minnesota, vote NO on the lottery question which will be on the ballot. A lottery will hurt rather than help our society as a whole.

Vote for the candidate of your choice and on the issues on November 8.



# Introducing new AFLC congregations

## Grace Lutheran, Bruce, S. Dak.

**G**race Lutheran was formed by the merger of First and St. Petri Lutherans. First Lutheran was formed after a small rural congregation, Deer Creek, formed in 1879, moved its building to Bruce, in 1922.

The St. Petri Lutheran Church was organized in 1886, known as Vardahl Lutheran. It was reorganized in 1890 and named St. Petri. This building was moved to Bruce and annexed to First Lutheran in 1956.

A new chancel, choir loft, pastor's study and basement were built, at a cost of \$10,000. Dedication services were held November 4, 1956.

On January 26, 1969, fire destroyed this building. By April 27, 1969, a new building site had been purchased from the city for \$21, building and finance committees selected, and building plans were approved. Dedication services were held November 16, 1969. Despite the loss of a building, services were held every Sunday in the Bruce Gym.

Pastors since the formation of Grace Lutheran have been: Edward A. Bersagel, 1954-63, Donald Sponheim, 1964-70. Under Pastor Sponheim we were privileged to have five interns serve us. They were Eldon Thurow, summer of 1966, Willis Bloedow, 1966-67, Aaron Ronkin, 1967-68, David Hinrichs, 1968-69. (He lost all of his books in the fire.), and Keith Hedstrom, 1969-70.

At this time we became disaffiliated with the Estelline parish. Eldon Thurow was our first pastor to live in Bruce; a parsonage was purchased while he was here from 1970-73. Ronald Brugger served from 1973-77, and Norman Peighley, from 1977-88.

The old building had \$46,000 insurance on it and the new structure cost \$103,000 furnished. By 1978 this debt was paid off plus paying \$10,000 for a parsonage.

Today Grace Lutheran has 438 baptized members with 329 confirmed.

On December 30, 1987, Grace withdrew from the ALC and joined the AFLC. Rev. Joel Lohafer is the present pastor. He was ordained this past summer.



Grace Lutheran Church

## Preaching missions

### **Park River, N. Dak.**

Victory Lutheran Church  
James Rasmussen, pastor  
Oct. 23-26

Rev. David Molstre, Fargo, N. Dak.,  
speaker

### **Eden Prairie, Minn.**

King of Glory Lutheran Church  
Leslie Galland, pastor  
Oct. 23-26

Rev. David Barnhart, Eagan, Minn.,  
speaker

### **Greenbush, Minn.**

United Lutheran Church  
Philip Rokke, pastor  
Oct. 23-26

Rev. Joel Rolf, Devils Lake, N. Dak.,  
speaker

### **Newfolden, Minn.**

Westaker Lutheran Church  
LeRoy Flickinger, pastor  
Oct. 23-27

Rev. Donald Greven, Minneapolis,  
Minn., speaker

### **Thief River Falls, Minn.**

Our Saviour's Lutheran Church  
J. A. Grimstad, lay pastor  
Oct. 27-30

Dr. Francis Monseth, Rogers, Minn.,  
speaker

Theme: Second Coming of Christ  
**Spicer, Minn.**

Green Lake Lutheran Church  
Rodney Johnson, pastor  
Oct. 23-27

Rev. Herbert Franz, Dollar Bay,  
Mich., speaker

### **Edinburg, N. Dak.**

Grace Lutheran Church  
James Rasmussen, pastor  
Nov. 6-9

Rev. Dale Mellgren, Tioga, N. Dak.,  
speaker

### **Ferndale, Wash.**

Triumph Lutheran Church  
James Fugleberg, pastor  
Nov. 6-10

Rev. J. G. Erickson, Minneapolis,  
Minn., speaker

## New congregations

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Center-  
ville, S. Dak.

### **HOME MISSION NEWS**

A new congregation, Trinity, has begun to meet for worship at Janesville, Wis. Lay Pastor Ken Thoreson, who serves Bethany Lutheran Church, Brodhead, Wis., is providing pastoral assistance for the new fellowship, which gathers each Sunday in the Edison Middle School at 8:30 a.m.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8).

## My life was changed

**M**y name is Jair Goncalves Coelho. I live in Vitoria, Espirito Santo, and come from a family with a German Lutheran background.

Before I received the present of eternal life, I was a teenager who didn't have peace in my heart. Even though I grew up in a religious family I was not a happy person. I sought peace in things that pleased me for a time, but when the pleasure passed I would see how my life continued to be unhappy and without hope, without goals.

Through an invitation I started participating in church activities and was able to see that God was speaking to me through His Word. One day I received the Lord Jesus into my life and thus have the gift of eternal life and the certainty that if I were to die today, even this moment, I would go to heaven.

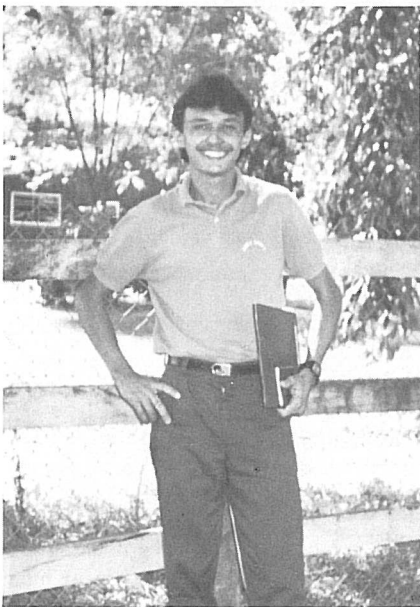
After my decision for Christ, I was able to see a change in my life. One of the changes was in my relationship with my father. Before, all I wanted was for him to understand me, but I had never before tried to understand him; now I do. My relationship with other people, especially people in authority, changed. I became more submissive and starting thinking about

others instead of only myself. I had many problems, which is normal in everyone's life, but now I can resolve them in a better way, knowing that I have a Father who will help in all situations.

My reason for being here at Bible School (Escola Biblica Luterana Livre) is to learn more about and deepen my knowledge of the Word of God and, if it is His will, to take His Word to many people. I want to be a good sower of God's seed. I am praying about this.

A verse that is important to me is Philippians 1:6, "And I am sure that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ." God is working in my life and will continue to do so.

This year I am helping out at the newly established congregation at Cohapar. Clerio, Ruskin, Yara and I spend Sunday afternoons visiting families in the community, evangelizing and discipling, besides working with the young people. The congregation is an enthusiastic new group and we ask for your prayers for us.



Jair Goncalves Coelho

## Focus on the Schools' faculty

The faculty members of our AFLC Schools are facing a full schedule for this fall, both in the classroom and in ministry beyond the campus.

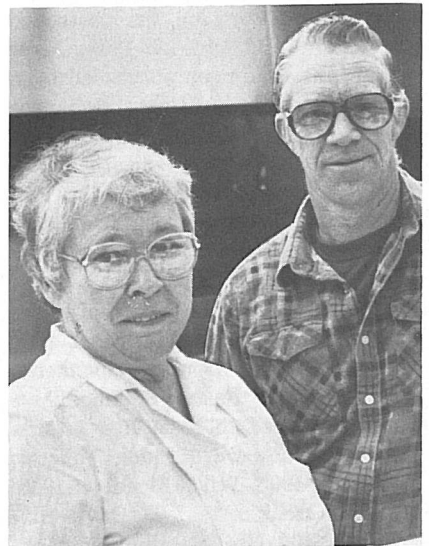
**Dr. Francis Monseth**, seminary dean, is providing interim pastoral services for Solid Rock Lutheran Church, the new Home Mission congregation in Brooklyn Park, Minn. He will also be speaking for special services at Fosston, Minn. (Oct. 9-12), Thief River Falls, Minn. (Oct. 27-30), and Mason, Wisconsin (Nov. 10-13).

**Rev. Robert Lee** continues to serve as interim pastor for Faith Lutheran Church, Ottawa, Ill. He will also conduct weekend Bible conferences at Valley City, N. Dak. (Oct. 28-30), and Fargo, N. Dak. (Nov. 18-20).

## Love constrains

When someone asked a missionary if he *liked* his work in Africa, he replied: "Do I like this work? No; my wife and I do not like dirt. We have reasonably refined sensibilities. We do not like crawling into vile huts through goat refuse. We do not like association with ignorant, filthy, brutish people. But is a man to do nothing for Christ he does not like? God pity him, if not. Liking or disliking has nothing to do with it. We have orders to 'go' and we go. Love constrains us."

—selected



Clyde and Pat Hendrickson are the new assistants in maintenance and the kitchen. They moved to the campus from Binford, N. Dak., this past August.

**Rev. Philip Haugen** serves as the adult class teacher for this fall quarter of Sunday School in his home congregation, Faith Lutheran Church, Minneapolis. He is also scheduled as the speaker for special meetings at Elim Lutheran Church, Osakis, Minn.

**Rev. Ralph Tjelta** conducted parish education workshops together with his wife, Katha, in Thief River Falls (Sept. 17-18) and Ishpeming, Michigan (Oct. 1-2). He also assists with the new Home Mission congregation at Blaine, Minn.



Lynn Erickson, Badger, Minn., enjoys the heavily used salad bar.

photos by S. Hjermstad

## THE AFLBS CAFETERIA

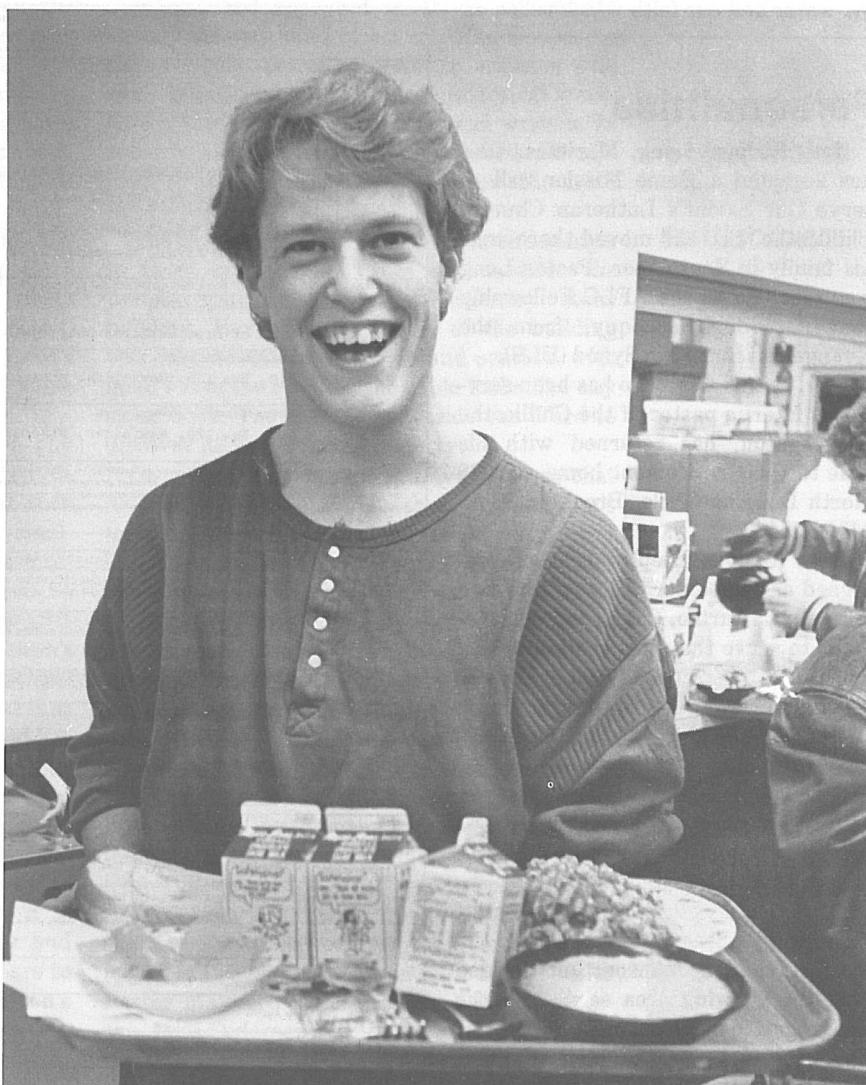
**Dr. Steve Lombardo**, newest member of the faculty, will teach the adult Sunday School class at Medicine Lake Lutheran Church, Plymouth, for the fall quarter. He will also serve as the guest evangelist for special meetings at Hatton, N. Dak. (Oct. 16-19) and as the speaker at the Southwest Central Minnesota District convention, Green Lake Lutheran Church, Spicer, Minn. (Nov. 19).

**Rev. Donald Greven**, Bible School dean, serves as interim pastor for the Blaine Home Mission congregation. His fall schedule also includes speaking engagements at McVile, N. Dak. (Oct. 21-23) and Newfolden, Minn. (Oct. 23-27).

Remember to pray for our faculty!



This year's 99 member student body fills the cafeteria.



Allen Wanha, Dassel, Minn. "Is this the next best thing to 'tummy heaven'?"



# BAPTISM

Word." The word of God connected with holy Baptism is the word of institution recorded in Matthew 28:19: "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." The key to rightly understanding Baptism is recognizing that it is a personalized form of the Word of God offered to each one of us.

## The Power of Baptism

We believe that since Baptism is the Word of God connected with water, it works exactly what the written and preached Word effect — namely, the forgiveness of sins and salvation to all who believe (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; Titus 3:5; I Pet. 3:21). The power of Baptism is not in the water itself but in the Word of God which accompanies the water and our faith which relies on

the Word of God connected with the water (Jn. 3:5; Titus 3:5).

## The Vital Need for Infant Baptism

We believe that infants are born in original sin and need to be cleansed of their sin and born again (Ps. 51:5; Rom. 3:9-20). Infant baptism is the God-appointed means by which children are brought to Christ and received by Him so that they share in *all* of His grace and blessing — including salvation (I Pet. 3:21) and the new birth (Jn. 3:5; Titus 3:5). As our Lord Jesus says: "Let the children come to Me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God" (Lk. 18:16).

## The Indispensability of Faith

We believe on the basis of Holy Scripture that what God offers in holy

Baptism must be received with a living faith if one is to remain in the covenant of his baptism (Jn., 1:12, 13; 3:16; Eph. 2:8-9). Only true believers in Jesus Christ are saved from their sin. Those who do not believe in Christ as Lord and Savior are lost, even if they were formerly baptized (Mk. 16:16).

## Baptism is a Powerful Means of Grace

We believe that the ultimate purpose of Baptism is to bring about a saving faith relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ, in which He is trusted as Lord and Savior (Mt. 28:19). Baptism must never be viewed as an end itself or as a guarantee for salvation apart from faith in Jesus Christ. It is rather a powerful means of grace through which God works faith and gives His saving grace (Titus 3:5; Jn. 3:5).

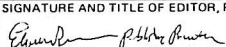
# Personalities

**Rev. Richard Long**, Marietta, Ga., has accepted a Home Mission call to serve Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Chillicothe, Ill., and moved there with his family in September. Pastor Long was received on the AFLC Fellowship Roster through colloquy, from the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS).

**Rev. James Asp**, who has been serving as interim pastor of the Chillicothe congregation, has returned with his wife to their retirement home at 8228 North Douglas Circle, Brooklyn Park, Minn. 55443.

**Rev. Orville Hiepler** recently resigned as the pastor of First Lutheran Church, Camarillo, Calif., and will continue to serve the congregation until a new pastor is secured. Pastor Hiepler hopes to soon be able to begin a church planting ministry for the AFLC in southern California.

**Rev. Jay Eberth**, Grand Rapids, Mich., has accepted a call from Hope Lutheran Church, Wyoming, Minn., where he and his family moved in September. Hope Church was previously a part of the Stacy parish, served by Pastor Wendell Johnson, but decided that the growing area served by the congregation needed a full-time pastor. The Eberths' new address is 18231 Vauxhall Street N.E., Wyoming, Minn. 55092.

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PS Form 3526, Dec. 1985

# Excursion in the Dakotas

by Raynard Huglen  
Editor

(The second of two parts.)

**B**uffalo is the seat of Harding County, the northwesternmost county in South Dakota. It has a population of some 450 people, small for being the center of county administration. It doesn't have all services, but more than the usual of a town that size. The courthouse is rather like an overgrown house and is painted white.

I could find out nothing about my uncle's homesteading venture in 1908 or 1909. The registrar of deeds did show me on a map where the brothers

(Ormiston) with whom he had gone out had their land and the next day I drove out to see what I could of that. Since returning home I discovered that I had been directed to the wrong range and hence was several miles east of where I should have been. And so it goes.

Nor could I find out anything about the Lutheran Free Church work out there early in the century. Again, after getting back, I noticed on a map I had bought that there was a Boxelder Creek a few miles north of town. Undoubtedly, the congregation mentioned last time took its name from that stream. Perhaps it met in a Boxelder schoolhouse.

Wednesday afternoon after dinner at the cafe, I took a trip to Camp Crook, near the Montana line. Seven miles short of there I turned north and drove up to the Bullock Church, long abandoned, although the cemetery is still used. My brother-in-law, Elmo Agrimson, who recently passed away, was confirmed in that church. The family's congregation didn't have a church building and Bullock Church was rented for the occasion. Inside the church, which resembled a schoolhouse, I looked for evidence that it had been a church. There it was, two short sections of what had once been an altar kneeler. There was no separate chancel and it looked like 30-36 people could be accommodated in the building with three seats abreast on each side of an aisle.

Retracing my way to the highway, I stopped to examine a small house near an intersection. It dawned on me that I was looking at a real homestead shack.

## News of the churches from here and there

**Edinburg, N. Dak.** — The church building of Grace Lutheran will be dedicated at a service on Sun., Oct. 30, at 3 p.m. All are welcome to attend.

**Grand Forks, N. Dak.** — Trinity Lutheran received new members into the congregation at the worship service on Aug. 28. Those received were Dr. and Mrs. Philip Furman, Eric and Jon; Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Nielsen, Karen, Sarah and Rachel; Mr. Glenn Reck; and Mr. Glen Larson. A fellowship dinner was served following the service.

**Morris, Ill.** — Spiritual Life and Growth services were held at Bethlehem Lutheran, Sept. 18-21. The guest speaker-evangelist was Rev. Jack Aamot, director of Lutherans for Evangelism (Lutheran Evangelistic Movement). An area-wide LEM conference was held at the same time.

**Canton, S. Dak.** — Rev. Herbert Franz, Dollar Bay, Mich., was the speaker at evangelistic meetings at Redeemer Lutheran, Sept. 18-22. His messages were based on the theme "What You Need in Times Like These."

## PRINTING PRESS FOR SALE

The AFLC Board of Parish Education is selling a Gestetner 329 Offset printer. If interested, contact Ernie Miedema at (612) 545-5631.

Its dimensions were approximately 10 x 12 feet. In the corner nearest the door was a short rod for hanging clothes, and a washstand. The stove had once stood next to that. In the far corner was a wood box; the third corner contained a small square table, while the fourth corner no doubt held the bed or cot. There were two windows, and two doors on adjoining walls. The latter puzzled me. Among papers on the floor was one in the Norwegian language. I forget if it was *Skandinaven* or *Decorah Posten*, but its presence gave a clue to who the last occupant was. Many a museum would like to have a shack like that one.



Capitol Rock.

Just west from Camp Crook and across the Montana line is a formation called Capitol Rock. I had seen it 17 or 18 years before and went to look at it again. It roughly resembles a capitol or parliament building, hence the name. To get there it was necessary to go over some land recently burned. While that fire had occurred earlier in the summer, three days before I came at least 27 fires started by lightning strikes had been reported in the county. Later, in the cafe in Camp Crook, I heard a couple men talking about their fire fighting experiences several days previous. It is sad to see burned-over land, and pine trees which it will take years to replace.

That night in Buffalo I called on the ELCA pastor. He serves three congregations, one being in town. He said that he goes to all three churches on a Sunday, covering 140 miles in making the circuit. From the schedule he outlined, which often allows for Bible stud-



The homestead shack.

## DAKOTAS

ies in the outlying churches, as well as the worship services, it looks like he is gone from 10-12 hours on a Sunday, once the service in town begins. No time for an afternoon nap in his schedule.

By Thursday noon it was time to leave the friendly community of Buffalo. My mission hadn't been accomplished, but it was time to move on. After lunch in a steakhouse which opened that day, I headed toward Reva. On the way, I turned in to the Reva Gap campground where two nephews and I had camped in the early '70s. South of the camping area there are some interesting formations called "The Castles." Our congregation, Slim Buttes, was going to have an outdoor service with potluck dinner the following Sunday at Reva Gap.

I found Pastor and Mrs. Jim Johnson at the parsonage in Reva. Reva isn't a very big place, but with several houses as possibilities I inquired at the store as to which place was theirs. The Johnsons had just recently returned from the Leadership Retreat at Medicine Lake and were excited about what had taken place there spiritually. Pastor Johnson is the Luther League Federation president. Mrs. Johnson is the former Marsha Jacobson of Binford, N. Dak. Jim and I drove the two miles east to his church and he showed it to me. It is easy to see that the new addition on the south, on both levels, has made a big difference for overflow, for Sunday School, for Ladies Aid, and for Pastor Johnson, who has set up an office in the lower level. I left him then and continued on to Faith.

Our pastor at Faith is Todd Klemme. He returned to the parsonage from Eagle Butte just after I arrived, having been over at his other congregation, Emmanuel. They were expecting me and Mrs. Klemme (Miriam) had prepared a turkey supper! We had a pleasant visit. The Klemmes have two little girls.

Dr. Wayne Sletten, whom I have known for a long time, invited me to play horseshoe over in the park kitty-corner from Bethel Lutheran, their church. Not having played for some years, I was reluctant, but enjoyed the outing. The last game was a doubles match with two other men.

Pastor Klemme showed me the remodeling which had just been completed in the church sanctuary. An imita-

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### THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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tion brick has been put on the lower walls of the sanctuary — and chancel. There are two or three arch beams in the ceiling. All is very attractive. How many times I've been in Bethel Lutheran for Luther League conventions, other district functions, with AFLBS groups, etc.

I spent the night at Slettens' at their beautiful home just outside town to the west. Wayne has his veterinary clinic there also. Wayne and Karen are the parents of Mrs. Jon (Lynn) Wellumson of Williston, N. Dak. He is our pastor there.

After a good breakfast on Friday morning, which included rolls baked by Mrs. Bob Samuelson, I was on my way. At the Conoco station in Timber Lake, S. Dak., I saw something unusual. Around the upper walls of the station were posters showing annual precipitation for the area month by month, from perhaps 1912 and on. I paid special attention to the 1930s. Two of the years, not consecutive, showed totals of less than six inches moisture. In all the other years no total was below double digits and some went into the lower 20s. I haven't heard of precipitation totals below six inches anywhere in this dry year and we certainly hope we don't see the likes of that again.

Late Friday afternoon, after driving through the south central portion of North Dakota and getting into the eastern part, I arrived at the farm

home of Roy and Beatrice Rasmussen, rural McHenry. I worked for them, especially in the harvest, in 1946 and 1947. It is special to be able to come back in 1988 and find them still living on the farm, although Roy has been retired for some years. And it had been some years since I had last visited them.

They are the parents of our pastor James Rasmussen, Park River, N. Dak. I performed the marriage of Jim and the former Jane McCarlson, who was a member of my congregation, Tabor Lutheran, Webster, S. Dak. Their oldest son, Eric, was visiting his grandparents as I made my overnight stop at the farm.

That evening I went over to the other house in the yard to say hello to Mrs. Gerald Twedt. Her husband does the farming of the Rasmussen land. Mrs. Twedt is the former Beverly Jones of United Lutheran, McLeod, N. Dak. She is a former student of mine at AFLBS. She and her husband have three children.

It was good to be at Rasmussen's again. I have many good memories of hard work, pleasant living and good fellowship, also in their congregation, Gethsemane Lutheran, now closed. But on Saturday morning I had to move on, going to Fargo, N. Dak., where I made two hospital calls and then drove home to Newfolds after a very interesting and refreshing trip.