



THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

September 15, 1992



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September 15, 1992 • Vol. 30, No. 17

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

is published biweekly (except for the second issue of July and the second issue of August) by the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441.

CONTENTS

Three Keys To A Growing Church: Prayer	p. 3
Evangelism	p. 4
The Pastor	p. 6
The Church Growth Movement Clarified and Criticized	p. 5
A Call To Creative Giving	p. 8
Now That I Am Confirmed	p. 10

COVER: Fall in Wisconsin
Photo by Roger C. Huebner, D. D. S.

Subscriptions: \$12.00 year, U. S.
\$15.00 year, International

Write to:

The Lutheran Ambassador
3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

Send all communications concerning this magazine to: Solveig Hjermstad, Assistant to the Editor, Box 423, Faith, South Dakota 57626. Phone (605) 967-2381. Fax (605) 967-2382.

USPS 588-620 ISSN 0746-3413
Second-class postage paid at Minneapolis, Minnesota, and additional mailing office.

Postmaster: Send address changes to *The Lutheran Ambassador*, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441.

Rev. Robert L. Lee, Editor
Mrs. Wayne Hjermstad, Assistant to the Editor

Editorial Board:

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An Unchanging Gospel In A Changing World

But now abide faith, hope and love, these three; but the greatest of these is love (1 Corinthians 13:13).

As we move into the final decade of the twentieth century, people are clamoring for change in the economic, political, social and even the religious circles of our world.

Someone has said: "You cannot run a church like General Motors." Certainly a church should not operate like a corporation in the matter of governing itself in spiritual matters.

Having said that, however, a church should probably have a mission statement in order to keep on track and in focus.

A speaker at a seminar made this observation: "The church, as an institution, has gotten out of focus." In a later statement he said: "The last 20 years is marked by missed opportunities because we have not watched the maps."

Today congregations are wrestling with this matter of "church growth" in some form or another. There are any number of seminars or programs to which one can subscribe. Many of them are excellent. Yet the haunting question is how to be effective in ministry to a secular society.

The gospel of secular man seems to be to fill one's life with "things," whatever they may be. Then we will be happy and find peace. The fact is, the more this gospel is practiced, the more one needs and there is no end to this striving for things. The end result of this secular gospel is that man gets all wrapped up in self. Life becomes increasingly empty, lonely, guilt-ridden, and in some instances suicide results.

In stark contrast we have the unchanging Gospel of our Lord, which offers life, healing and fulfillment. Jesus Christ was able to fill people 2,000 years ago and is able to do the same for twentieth century man.

In the book, "The Measure of a Church," by Gene Getz, there is a simple formula for dynamic church

Light on the Way

growth. This formula is summarized in three words. They are faith, hope, and love. Even though these concepts cannot be perfected in a local church, Jesus Christ is the example of them in relation to God and mankind. As individuals come to a living faith in Christ and participate in a local congregation practicing these concepts, a wonderful kind of growth will result.

Experts writing on these topics seem to indicate the future church, in light of today's world, is to flourish in small groups where there is a caring ministry.

This seminar speaker also stated: "The twenty-first century church that has not the small group approach is irrelevant."

There are those today who believe all that is necessary for a growing congregation is build a fine building in a good location and the people will come. That may have been good strategy at one time, but will not be very successful today.

"The grand day of the Gospel has ended," is the phrase one retired minister used to describe our present situation. What he meant was people are no longer attracted to a building or a particular type of program.

People will come to a "caring" place. A congregation which reflects faith, hope and love will meet their deepest needs. This will be a place where people can meet the Lord and thus the church will grow.

In the unchanging Gospel we have the vital ingredients for church growth. The Christian congregation has a glowing future when it demonstrates faith, hope and love.



— by Rev.
Larry Severson

PRAYER

Three Keys To
A Growing Church

It is written: "My House shall be a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of robbers, Luke 19:46.

Jesus went often to the congregation in the synagogue. There He would teach the Word to friendly and hostile hearers. There He would answer questions that came from the common folk as well as the religious leaders of that day. What Jesus saw on this day was particularly disturbing.

In the text before us (Luke 19:41-48), Jesus had just entered Jerusalem on what we know as Palm Sunday. As He looked over the city, grief filled His heart as He saw a people who did not know the "things which belonged to their peace." Jesus knew of their impending destruction. He knew of His Father's Judgment. He knew that their own unbelief and godlessness had brought this most deserving justice from His Father. He knew that their rejection of Him would ultimately bring horrifying ruin for both young and old.

With this in mind, Jesus turns to the church there at Jerusalem. But what He saw in that congregation evoked an action on His part that should serve to awaken us in our day. His description of that congregation is most sobering. Jesus called it a den of thieves. Knowing the convictions and activities of the religious leaders, the congregation was busy with worshippers and doers. For the most part, the Scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees were zealous to see that everyone was following the modern interpretations of what constituted a growing and faithful church. Many gave of their time and money beyond the minimum requirements. spiritual activities were faithfully done under the watchful eye of jealous priests. But Jesus, the seer of all hearts, saw the commotion entirely different. The congregation had become a den of thieves. Robbery was taking place! The people's knowledge and faith in the God of Scriptures was taken from them. The people's trust and confidence in the Word was daily undermined by wrong teaching. The people were continually strapped with one burden after another. The eternal hope in a crucified and resurrected Savior was replaced with a paltry dream of heaven on earth. The way to heaven did not include a Savior named Jesus who was the only way to the Father. Truly this congregation was a den of thieves. The action He took was to throw them out.

There is much activity and preaching within our churches today that does nothing more than rob her true worshippers of the faith and comfort in Christ. For in spite of the multitude of activity, Jesus still looks for a House of Prayer. The effectively growing congregation is a praying congregation. There is no substitute.

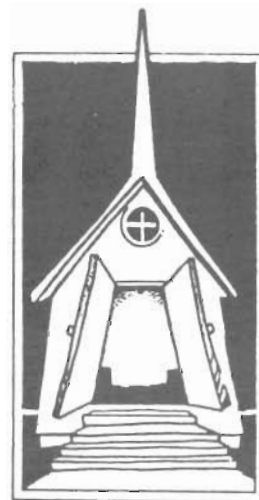
It is no little matter when the whole church lifts its heart and voice to the throne of God in prayer, in praise and thanksgiving. As God's people pray together, it is a testimony to each other and to the world that God is God.

What this testimony is can be expressed in the following statements on prayer:

1. Prayer is born of man's need for God. Sin has separated us from Him.
2. Prayer, as O. Hallesby has stated, is a statement of helplessness. We are unable to restore that broken fellowship with our Creator.
3. Prayer is a confession of dependency. We are dependent upon Jesus Christ to restore that relationship and to make us one with the Father.
4. Prayer is an expression of the true worship and praise to our God for His faithful work to bring us salvation through the forgiveness of His beloved Son. I Corinthians 1:30, 31 says: "But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who has made to us wisdom from God — and righteousness and sanctification and redemption that as it is written he who glories, let him glory in the Lord."

When God's House has become a House of Prayer, a humbled people meet in total dependence upon a God who can answer the supplications of a needy people. What is witnessed by all, from within and without, is that our God is at work in the lives of His people. It is His work that we so desperately need. It is His work that the world so desperately needs to see. The church in Acts grew because God's people had become a praying people.

Real church growth and prayer cannot be separated. Jesus continues to look for the church that is on its knees. The gathering of God's people for prayer in Jesus' name glorifies the most gracious and holy God. When God's people exalt Christ Jesus, His Kingdom grows.

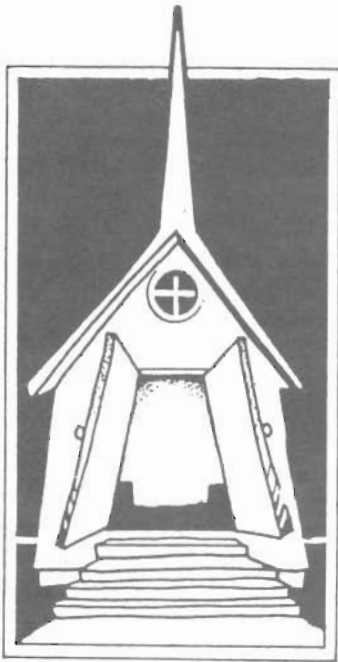


**"The Church
in Acts grew
because God's
people had
become a
praying
people."**



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

Three Keys To A Growing Church



“Unless the church is a witnessing, living, caring fellowship in the community, the church ceases to function as a mission of the Lord.”



— by Pastor Herbert Franz
Dollar Bay, Michigan

Reprinted from a two part article in the June 26 and July 10, 1979, Lutheran Ambassador.

Many congregations have at least one week of evangelistic meetings each year. This is an excellent idea, but we must remember, however, that evangelism should be the church's mission all year. Some churches have a week of special meetings only because it has been a long-standing tradition in their church, and when the week of meetings is over, the people breathe a sigh of relief. God forbid such “evangelism.”

The church is in constant need of renewal. Dr. George Sweazy said that of every two persons received into the Christian Church through profession of faith, one has dropped out. In many of our Lutheran churches, we could say the same. How many of our confirmands remain true to their vows after confirmation? How many of these young people do we see attending church regularly after they are confirmed? That is why we need an on-going program of evangelism (which includes special evangelistic meetings and Bible conferences each year) in order to reach these people.

The Church of Jesus Christ has been called to evangelize. What is **evangelism**? It is winning men and women to Jesus Christ. It is reaching out to fallen mankind with the gospel of Christ. Jesus said in Matthew 28:18-20: “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.” The church's message is summed up in the words of Christ in John 3:16. We need to tell people that God loves them and He desires that they repent of their sins and place their trust in Jesus Christ. Evangelism is to make each person conscious of his own need for a personal decision for Christ. Salvation is a matter of life or death! It is that urgent! Evangelism is therefore so important that it must go on 365 days a year. Unless a church (in sermons and personal visitation and confrontation) is kept continually reminded of the urgent motives for evangelism it will inevitably drift away from it. Unless the church is a witnessing, living, caring fellowship in the community, the

church ceases to function as a mission of the Lord.

Why do we need evangelism **within** our churches? Are not all the people saved? How many really have assurance of their salvation? Ask them the question: “If you should die tonight and you should come to the portals of glory and Jesus should ask you, ‘What right do you have to enter into My heaven,’ what would you say?” Many people within our churches would not know what to say. Is baptism enough to save? How about the Lord's Supper? The catechism tells us that the sacraments are only efficacious when they are received with a response of **faith** in the heart. What is faith? “I truly believe in Christ when I heartily accept Christ as my Lord and Savior and trust in Him alone for the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.” Receiving Jesus Christ is the only way to be saved (John 14:6 John 1:12, I John 5:12). Evangelism presents this truth to people.

Is there any difference in the concept of evangelistic meetings today as compared to years ago? Today there is much evangelism which preaches **commitment without repentance of sin**, and this produces spiritual “stillbirths.” It's like placing a bandage on a festering sore instead of taking out the infection, and the last state is worse than the first. Many are offended when a preacher asks for a decision from people brought up in the church, but we are missing the mark if we don't invite people to come to Christ. When I was a young boy, a peddler lady visited our home and spread out all her merchandise in front of my mother in order to make a sale. Wouldn't she have been foolish if she had left her sales book in the car and never asked my mother if she wanted to buy anything? The same is true in presenting Jesus Christ to people. We need preaching in our churches today that compels individuals to make a personal decision to repent of their sin and receive Jesus Christ as their own Savior and Lord.

EVANGELISM

Motives for Evangelism and Evangelistic Meetings

1. **Men and women, boys and girls, are lost in sin and need a Savior.** Our modern society has dropped the word "sin" from its vocabulary. Yet we know that sin is found wherever man is found. Sin reveals itself in man's frustration, restlessness, hate and worry; man's drive for materialism and pleasure; man's disappointment in himself and shame over sinful habits he cannot break. Sin is not only wrong **doing** but a wrong inward **condition**, although each produces the other. The evangelist's task is to preach the Truth of God's Word to reveal sin and also to present Christ as the only answer.

2. **To reach the indifferent souls inside the church as well as outside it.** The church is a "hospital for sinners, not a hot-house for saints." People need to be awakened to the fact that being "religious" or just believing in the existence of god or attending church will not get them to heaven. Receiving Jesus Christ into their lives as their personal Savior is the only way to be saved.

3. **People need to know that they were created for close, daily fellowship with God.** People are groping for reality, direction, and fulfillment in life. Without Christ as their Savior and Lord, people are missing the greatest good that life can give them. Evangelistic preaching presents Christ as the only One who can fill life's void.

4. **Families need to be straightened out.** Many homes are heading for breakup and ruin unless the Lord Jesus Christ is allowed to enter and restore love, understanding, and healing.

5. **To prepare people for living victoriously and dying triumphantly.** When a person is ready to die, he is ready to live. History shows that cultures which lose the belief of the immortality of the soul increase in social prob-

lems, immorality, and crime. A social gospel without repentance of sin will not change social conditions. When a person has confessed and turned away from his sin and is brought into a right relationship with God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, his life will have new meaning and purpose.

6. **To strengthen and edify the church as well as its members.** Remember this — the church is not a building, it's people. **You** are the church! The church is only as strong as its individual members. Before a person is saved, the church is a chore and a bore, and he supported the church with leftovers in time, money and talents. As a result of new life in Christ, he cherishes the fellowship with other believers, finds worship meaningful, and is strengthened spiritually by personal involvement in its various ministries.

7. **To challenge Christians to full surrender to Christ (Romans 12:1-2).** God cannot use a lukewarm Christian; He cannot bless a half-hearted commitment. Willing surrender of all we are and have to the control of Jesus Christ is the necessary step in order to experience His joy, peace, guidance, and power in our lives.

8. **To arouse the church to its responsibility of being a lighthouse for Christ in the community.** We are not saved to sit, but saved to serve. The world does not need pew-warmers, but soul winners! Christ's command is clear: "Ye shall be my witnesses Go ye ... As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." If we do not warn the wicked of their sin, their blood will be required at our hand (Ezekiel 3:18). Every Christian has a work to do. Every church has Christ's commands to obey. We must pray for Christ's love for people and a burden for souls that will result in action to get the gospel out in every way we can.

The Church Growth Movement Clarified and Criticized

There is a movement in our land known as "Church Growth." It had its beginning back in the early sixties and has gained considerable momentum in recent years. The late Dr. Donald McGavran, now known as the father of the Church Growth Movement, was from 1937 to 1954 a missionary in India. During that time, he became very concerned about the growth of the church. He said, "I often came empty-handed out of ripe fields and wondered why."

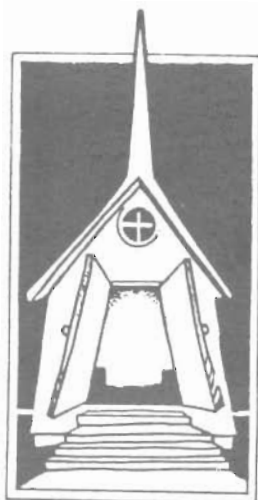
During the fifties and sixties McGavran made a study of various mission societies and, as a result, wrote his first book on Church Growth and began to systematize and fit its concepts to missionary work in all continents except North America.

It wasn't until the fall of 1971 that Church Growth was introduced to North America via a Church Growth class offered in Pasadena with Dr. McGavran and a student of his, Winfield Arn, teaching the class. Since that time, Church Growth seminars and seminary courses have become increasingly popular. AFLTS has offered such a course for the past 11 years.

What does this movement have to offer, and is it worthy of our attention and effort?

With these questions in mind, let us look at some of the pros and cons of the Church Growth Movement. It is true that not all those interested and involved are so for the right reasons. Without a doubt there are some, perhaps many, that are only concerned with numbers (continued on next page)

THE PASTOR



Among the most wonderfully evident truths in all of the Scripture is that our gracious God earnestly desires the salvation of every person! He is "not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance," (II Peter 3:9). To this end, full provision was made on the cross of Calvary for the forgiveness of all people (I John 2:2). To this end, the church has been empowered by the Holy Spirit for bold and courageous witness (Acts 1:8). To this end, God has given gifts to His church for effective and edifying ministry (Ephesians 4:7-16). God wants His church to grow! Indeed, He wants His church to multiply as lost souls, precious in His sight, are brought into His everlasting Kingdom!

Feed the Flock

Included among the gifts our Lord has given to the church that she may be enabled to grow is that of pastor-teacher (Ephesians 4:11). In faithful administration of the means of grace and in dependence upon the ministry of the Holy Spirit, this office is of great significance in realizing fruitfulness in church-building. "The calling of a pastor," Georg Sverdrup said, "creates a living center for the work of the congregation, and the work of the individual Christian gathers around the pastoral office. The pastoral office is the trunk which constantly brings nourishment to the branches."¹ It is pre-eminently the preaching and teaching of the Word that provides such necessary nourishment. Conscious of his stewardship, the pastor seeks to "feed the flock" as an under-

shepherd of Jesus Christ (I Peter 5:1-4). The good news of God's grace in Christ nourishes the soul and thus strengthens for effective service.

In one of his final charges to young Pastor Timothy, the Apostle Paul emphasizes the preaching of the Word as primary in fulfilling his ministry (II Timothy 4:1-5). He calls him to "do the work of an evangelist," (v. 5). God continues to encourage all the "Timothys" among us to recognize the centrality of preaching the Word. Following upon the great doctrinal recoveries of the Reformation was the resurgence of preaching. And for those to whom salvation by grace alone has been made precious, courageous and happy proclamation flows. Luther's high estimation of preaching is unmistakable.

The public ministry of the Word, I hold, by which the mysteries of God are made known, ought to be established by holy ordination as the highest and greatest of the functions of the church, on which the **whole power of the church depends** (emphasis added), since the church is nothing without the Word and everything in it exists by virtue of the Word alone.²

Foster the Gifts

As a gift to the congregation from our Lord, the pastor is also called to encourage the ministry of "the saints" in and through the congregation (Ephesians 4:12). That every Christian is gifted by God to serve in some significant

CLARIFIED, CRITICIZED—

and not with the souls of men. To them, Church Growth is simply a tool to achieve their own numerical goals and perhaps even their financial goals. Sad, but true.

To the evangelical Christian, Church Growth is defined very accurately with the words of Dr. C. Peter Wagner: "Church Growth is all that is involved in bringing men and women who do not have a personal relationship to Jesus Christ into fellowship with Him, and into responsible church membership." When defined and understood in this light,

it is clear that Church Growth is not a new movement but is as old as the Scriptures and the command Christ gave to His disciples before ascending into heaven. So-called Church Growth experts continue to write books and produce tools which are intended to help the pastor and his congregation realize positive growth. We know, of course, that buying and reading a book or using a ready-made Church Growth program will not automatically bring growth. Such materials can introduce new insights and ideas which can be helpful, but only when coupled with the firm conviction that Christ wants

"The salvation of souls and the building up of the saints have become their priority."

the lost saved and followed by an obedience to Him in carrying out of that task. As all materials produced by man, Church Growth materials must be tested to make sure that they follow the standard of the Holy Scriptures.

Churches experiencing respectable

capacity is clearly taught in God's Word (I Peter 2:9).

In his prescription for truly "living" congregations, Sverdrup believed that the pastor's greatest task, next to the salvation of souls, is to foster the gifts of grace within the congregation. He believed Scripture describes individual Christians as "alive and working, witnessing and prophesying, and these tasks cannot be done vicariously for the members by a salaried pastor."³ The teaching of Sverdrup was that "no talent lies unused but that each one is encouraged and given the fullest possible opportunity for expression."⁴ Included in these opportunities were testimonial meetings and lay preaching.

On the occasion of the centennial of Sverdrup's birth, John Stensvaag sought to paraphrase the great burden of Sverdrup for "free and living" congregations, the ideal that remains before us today as an AFLC. In his conclusion, he said:

You who are pastors will have to preach with greater evangelistic zeal than ever before and in addition seek to foster an expressive Christian life within the congregation. It is your responsibility not only to bring to light the gifts and talents within the congregation but also to help your people to put them to use by setting before them definite opportunities and specific projects. And pastors, remember this, that if the free and living congregation is to emerge, than you must be willing to yield to the principle enunciated by Christ when He said: 'Except a grain of wheat falls into the

earth and die, it abideth by itself alone, but if it dies, it beareth much fruit.' Only as you are willing to die, only as your ego is crucified, can you expect to see fruit. You must decrease, that the congregation may increase. You must draw back, so that the other gifts of grace may come into their own.

The way is not easy. But only as people and pastor yield to the vision and pay the cost can the congregation become the flaming, evangelizing force it was intended to be. Only so can it become an organism pulsating with divine life.

But can we ever expect to have such congregations? Sverdrup's one answer would be — if each of our congregations were to become a mighty power house for God, a veritable fountain of life. What could not then be achieved! What could not then be accomplished for the advancement of the Kingdom of God and the salvation of the world.⁵

Endnotes:

¹ Sverdrup, Georg. "The Heritage of Faith," Melvin A. Holland, trans. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1969), p.1.

² Luther, Martin, "Luther's Works: Church and Ministry II." Vol. 40 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1958), p. 12.

³ Sverdrup, p. 50.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Stensvaag, John. "Georg Sverdrup for Our Day," (Minneapolis: The Commission on Evangelism, n.d.), pp. 15-16.



— Dr. Francis Monseth
AFLC Dean

and sometimes even phenomenal growth are doing so, not because they have a successful Church Growth program, but because they are incorporating Biblical principles of growth into every ministry of their congregation. The salvation of souls and the building up of the saints have become their priority. They are pulling out all the stops in order to bring as many as possible, as soon as possible, to a living relationship with Jesus Christ.

The pastor is a key person in the growing congregation. Through his preaching, teaching, counselling, discipling and development of leadership, he

is always faithful in his use of the Scriptures and thus raises the awareness of his people to the fact that Christ wants his congregation to grow and that He desires to use people in reaching the lost, as well as building up the body of Christ. Thus it becomes a team effort of the pastor and his congregation.

Yes, I believe Church Growth is worthy of our attention and effort, as long as we approach it from a Biblical perspective. It must be stated that congregations desiring to grow cannot simply duplicate the program of a growing church. Each congregation must develop a program through which

it meets the needs of its own people and community, serving to the best of its ability with the resources God provides. Jesus said, "I will build My church." He also said: "Go and make disciples."



— Rev. Elden Nelson
AFLC Home
Mission Director

For God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, have an abundance for every good work, II Corinthians 9:8.

Let me tell you how this promise worked itself out in a marvelous way in the beginning of the mission ministry of Ruby and myself.

We had recently arrived on the mission field in Bolivia with the idea of getting some orientation from the older missionaries of the World Mission Prayer League and having one of them make an investigation trip into Brazil with me and bring back recommendations to the annual field conference. Ruby was busy looking after two-year-old David and waiting for the arrival of Jonathan. We found that the cost of an approximately 30-day trip for two men to fly to the largest city in Brazil, Sao Paulo, and travel out from there in two different directions would come to about \$800. Elmer Fenner was to go with me. He was willing to share some of the expenses. However, I didn't think this was fair because it was our vision and project. We asked that all pray for this amount, even though there wasn't time to notify the home office or get this request into the monthly prayer letter.

A Call To Creative Giving

About a week later, after many of us began asking God specifically for \$800, a marvelous thing occurred. We got a telegram from the home office stating that \$800, yes, not a penny less or a penny more, had been deposited to our account. This gift came from a small rural church in the state of Washington. Praise the Lord! Certainly "God is able to make all grace abound ..." To us this was a divine seal upon the plans to open the work in Brazil.

May I tell you the story behind this gift?

In the fall of 1952, Ruby and I and baby David set out on our first deputation trip. Ruby's sister, Margaret, came along as our pianist. We were visiting churches in North Dakota, Montana, Idaho, Washington and on around to California and back to Minneapolis. When we arrived in LaCrosse, Washington, we stayed in the home of Pastor Ray and Esther Larson. These friends in later years left the ALC and joined our Association. Their daughter, Solveig, wife of Rev. Wayne Hjermstad, is assistant editor of *The Lutheran Ambassador*. Pastor Larson always had a vision for World Missions and imparted this to his church, Selbu Lutheran. We had three days of mission meetings in his congregation.

Little did we know that later in the

fall they would have their annual mission festival, at which time members would bring various homemade items and auction them off to teach other. Ray had a big box of carrots from his garden and they fetched a very good price. Shortly thereafter, the mission committee of the congregation decided where to send the monies. It was then that they decided to send \$800, via the Minneapolis office, to help us open the work in Brazil. We have never forgotten this marvelous answer to prayer and how God encouraged us as new missionaries. In a real sense, this congregation had a part in opening the new Lutheran mission field in Brazil.

**"In the hands of
a sovereign God, who
sent His Son to a lost
world, you and I can
make a difference."**

What are some of the things God wants to say to us through an experience like this? What is something He would say that would apply to us in our



Wagner dos Santos

Miriam Infant Home

For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the Lord will take me up, (Psalm 27:10).

Hi! My name is Wagner dos Santos. I am two years old and come from a town called Nova Cantu. After I was born, my mother left me with another woman so she could work. She paid this woman to care for me, but she never came to see me.

This woman where I stayed also had three other children she was supposed to take care of. But she did not

seem to care very much and the officials were notified. When the social workers arrived to our place to check out the complaint, they found me dressed like a girl. I even had finger-nail polish on.

The judge took me away from this woman and sent me to the Miriam Infant Home. My mother does not bother to come and see me. I am waiting for someone to love me and adopt me. Meanwhile, I live here at the Miriam Infant Home and receive loving care from our "mother" Julia.

churches of the AFLC today? First of all, it is quite obvious that we have an all-knowing God who delights in answering prayer and in meeting the needs of His children. Also, I believe He is saying that no congregation, not even a country church, is insignificant in His plan. The Lord Jesus Christ will use those who make themselves available and fit them, their service, and their gifts into His world rescue plan. Next, the local church must have pastoral and council leadership and vision, for people will go no further than their leadership. In connection with this, the leadership needs to be creative. This country church had a fall mission rally, and part of it was a special program and an auction for missions. Some churches give dinners, other promote pledges, others show films, and so it goes. There is a time for creative fellowship to enlarge people's vision and point them to the carrying out of Christ's first and last command — "... be fishers of men ... go into all the world and preach the Gospel ..."

Ray has gone to his heavenly reward, but his vision lives on in the form of 14 national churches in Brazil, also a Bible school and seminary, 11 national pastors, four missionary couples, plus the work in Mexico. Our AFLC World Missions and Missionaries are going through some stressful times now. So little came into our World Mission General Budget that all missionaries and home personnel were cut

ten percent this past March. This came at a time in Brazil when inflation is over 30% a month and the dollar value is not keeping up. According to government statistics, the dollar has lost over 20% of its purchasing power during the last year; and this has been going on for a few years. Our missionaries are asking how many of our people at home are living on 35% of what they made a few years ago? It seems to me that giving to projects should be held off and each congregation should find creative ways to promote our AFLC General Mission Budget or pick up a portion of the support of a missionary family through designated giving.

Creative giving and faith promises would soon enable our World Missions Committee to meet the monthly needs of each family and clear up the mission debt. You are important: your church — little or great — is important. In the hands of a sovereign God, who sent His Son to a lost world, you and I can make a difference. **What could you do this fall that would be a special help to world missions?** Think about it, talk about it, pray about it. By faith plan for it and **be creative.**



— Rev. John Abel Hitterdahl, Minnesota

Fall Classes Begin

On September 14th the Bible School registered 108 students. With a record fifty-five students in the men's dormitory, every possible space is occupied.

The Seminary classes began on September 11th. Three new students join the four middlers and four seniors along with two colloquy students. AFLTS has four interns this year.

Campus faculty and staff and their families enjoyed a two-day retreat at the ARC on September 3-4. This first annual event encouraged unified goals and spiritual refreshment as the new school year began.

Senior seminarian **James Molstre**, is back on the AFLBS campus where he will again serve as Dean of Men. He and his wife, Kristen, and two children, returned from their year of seminary internship in Thief River Falls, Minnesota.

Kari Lane, Minneapolis, Minnesota, is the new Bible School Dean of Women. A 1987 graduate of AFLBS, Kari was previously employed as a secretary at ITT Consumer Financial Corporation. The Moorhead State University graduate has also served as the AFLBS Alumni Executive Director since August of 1991. Kari began her campus duties on August 15.

Mr. Jerry Nelson, Minneapolis, will begin the new school year as the music director on a permanent basis. His responsibilities will include directing the choir, instrumental ensembles, Gospel teams and the Seminary Chorus. **Mrs. Marian Christopherson** will continue to direct the Choral Club.

Mr. David Hover, Shakopee, Minnesota, is the new Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds on the campus. Hover was previously employed by Control Data Corporation.

Seminary Receives Money

Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary, Minneapolis, has recently received \$3,035 from Lutheran Brotherhood's IMPACT/IMPACT PLUS Programs, Inviting Member Participation in Aiding Lutheran Colleges and Theological Seminaries. The latest payment covers 31 gifts of Lutheran Brotherhood members made during the second quarter of 1992.

The IMPACT/IMPACT PLUS Programs match Lutheran Brotherhood members' gifts of \$25 to \$100 per year to Lutheran institutions of higher education nationwide.

AFLBS Homecoming

October 16-18, 1992

Honoring classes of:

'72, '77, '82, '87

Since the beginning of the IMPACT matching gift program in 1979, \$67,223 in IMPACT/IMPACT PLUS funds has been received by AFLTS. During that same period Lutheran Brotherhood has allocated more than \$16.7 million on behalf of the 69 participating Lutheran colleges and seminaries.

Now That I Am Confirmed

Confirmation: is it an end or a beginning? That is a question that is very important for all to think about. To me, confirmation is definitely a beginning. It is the beginning of my work as a Christian. I think that a very important part of being a Christian is working for the Lord to bring others to Him to be saved. Throughout my two years of confirmation instruction, I have learned a great deal of things about how God loves me and what He expects of me as a Christian ... I feel that God has brought all of us here to be messengers and in the end receive the reward of eternal life. And I pray that any unbelievers would change their ways and turn to the Lord. That way they will be able to receive the gift of eternal life instead of eternal death. ...

—Steven Skadsem

Being confirmed is a very important part in everyone's life. It will help you decide what way in life you are going to go. Hopefully everyone will take the way God wants them to take. Confirmation classes helped me to examine my heart and my life, to know my relationship with Jesus Christ and to rightly partake of the Lord's Supper. Being done with classes doesn't mean I just stop studying the Word. I have to keep on studying the Word so I can keep my faith. The Holy Spirit will help me and give guidance so that I might receive God's grace forever. Then He will fill my heart with joy and peace.

—Paula Larson

... Once we as a sinner receive the forgiveness of sins as a free gift of God, we have eternal life and can begin to grow and become better Christians. We are commanded by God to grow (II Peter 3:18) in grace and in knowledge. ... When we as Christians sense the temptations of the devil to sin, we should turn quickly to Jesus Christ in faith, seeking to win the battle. We also should avoid whatever may threaten, injure or destroy the life we have in the Holy Spirit. In obedience I should maintain my union with Christ and exercise and develop the spiritual gifts I have received. I will then grow in grace, serve the Lord in ministering to others and glorify my Savior in conversation and conduct ...

—Elizabeth Pederson

I have learned that I have to take it seriously. If we sin, he will forgive us of our sin. But only if we ask Him to (I John 1:9) ... We are spiritually helpless, unable to serve God by our own natural powers. If we are to be saved, it must be by God's grace alone. This grace is offered to all people, although a lot of people do not take it. I have also learned that God's eternal purpose is that all people should live in fellowship with Him. It is a free act of His divine grace. There is nothing in us to deserve such treatment. Jesus died for all the world.

—Peter Larson

These five young people were confirmed on May 17, 1992, at Maple Bay Free Lutheran Church, Fertile, Minnesota. Rev. Lynn Kinneberg is the pastor. Testimonies, article ideas and news items from your youth are always welcome. Please send them to Rev. Dennis Gray, Box M, Greenbush, MN 56726.

There is more to being a Christian than just being confirmed. A Christian must deny himself; strive against the devil, the world and his own flesh. A Christian grows in love toward God and man and seeks to do the will of God in all things. There are three Bible verses that relate to this: I Corinthians 16:13; Matthew 16:24; and I Timothy 6:12 ...

—Mandy Pino

GUIDANCE

Guidance, guidance, what a word.
Is it really God I heard?
Is that you, Lord? Are You there?
I tend to box and just hit air.

I want to hit the mark each time.
No matter what the site or clime.
Direct me always. I wait for
Your quiet voice. Open the door
to Understanding. Wisdom, too.
Teach me exactly what to do.
In times past I strove willingly.
In hopes that at last I'd be free
from wondering if what I did
was really Your will. Lord, just rid
my mind of all You don't want there.
I tend to box and just hit air.

I want each day to count for You.
Just tell me what I now should do.
Put up a strong angelic wall
around me, lest I slip and fall.

O're rule me, when I'm stubborn, please.
I cry hot tears from trembling knees.
Forgive me, and forget my faults.
I give You all within my vaults
of dreams. Some shattered. Others soiled.
Give me a prayer life that's well oiled.
Anointed from Your Father's heart.
Let me begin now, let me start.

And lead me with the words You say
so I'll stay on Your narrow way.
Be my Shepherd. Comfort me
with Your tools ... then willingly
I'll come towards you. hear your voice.
May each decision be Your first choice
for me.

Amen.

Dale M. Stone, 6231 Eagle Lake Drive, Maple Grove,
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Picture yourself here.

The Association Free Lutheran Bible School
3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.
Plymouth, Minnesota 55441 (612) 544-9501

WOMEN



Fergus Falls, Minnesota — Three ladies received their honorary membership pins from the Calvary/Stiklestad Parish WMF at the July meeting. They are Mrs. Irene Swenson, Mrs. Jan Pretauer and Mrs. Judy Torkelson.

The Eastern North Dakota District WMF Fall Rally will be held at Zoar Free Lutheran Church, Hatton, on Saturday, October 10, 1992.

Registration and coffee hour begin at 9:30 a.m.

District pastors Larry Haagenon and Phil Rokke are the speakers.

*Blessed are
those who die
in the Lord*



Kenneth Krogh, Argyle, Minnesota
Fay Houska, Pukwana, South Dakota
Mildred Gunderson, Sunburg, Minnesota
Clara Pearson, Chamberlain, South Dakota
Sophia Egeberg, Estelline, South Dakota
Elmer Miller, McVillie, North Dakota
Arla Rinegar, Pukwana, South Dakota
Audree Bartlett, Pukwana, South Dakota
Edward Keller, Wallace, South Dakota
Myron Larson, Wallace, South Dakota
Hulda Hermunslie, Wahpeton, North Dakota
Edna Kari, Milford, Illinois
Ellen Johnson, Milford, Illinois
Leone Snipstead, Minneapolis, Minnesota
Theodore Blikre, Jr., Tioga, North Dakota

**Women's Missionary
Federation**
In memoriam gifts



Minot, North Dakota — 1992 Cradle Roll graduates at Bethel Free Lutheran Church were Nicholas Olson, Shawn Storseth, Stefanie Engstrom, Jesse Moan and Bethany Marschner.



Fergus Falls, Minnesota — Calvary/Stiklestad cradle roll members were recognized at the July meeting with Kim Christenson as secretary. The children in the picture are Sarah Dorsey, Sindon Christenson, Matthew Haugen, Aaron Haugen and Keri Dorsey.

What Will Most Effectively Meet The Needs Of Our Women?

This is the question we must ask in order for each WMF to be the vital ministry (spiritual and physical support to local and missionary women) that God intends for us to be. Perhaps we need to make changes, try new ideas, involve new women. Officers must make more decisions so business meetings are shorter.

What time is best for your ladies? Would splitting one large group into two smaller ones make it possible for more women to come to offer a choice of time? Is there an outreach your women could begin in your community, such as Moms In Touch, Mothers of Pre-Schoolers (MOPS), etc.? There aren't easy solutions, but prayerfully seeking the Lord's wisdom will help us to grow in the right direction (James 1:5).

—Linda Korhonen
from: the September WMF Newsletter

Churches Under Construction



Roseau, Minnesota — Roseau Free Lutheran Church is building a new facility just east of Roseau on the main highway.

Praise God that Elaine (Mrs. Ray) Klug returned home to Fairbury, Nebraska, after receiving a successful liver transplant at the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha, and over 80 days in the hospital.



Beltrami, Minnesota — Resurrection Free Lutheran Church recently broke ground for a new church facility. Plans are to build the 3,200 square foot facility using as much volunteer work as possible. The congregation was organized in 1988 and has been meeting at the Beltrami Community Center. Pictured are Steve Hamre (center) president of the congregation, and the co-chairmen of the Building Committee, Ray Tollefson and Dwain Tollefson.

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences — February 1 - July 31, 1992

FUND	TOTAL BUDGET	REC'D IN JULY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	%* TOTAL
General Fund	\$295,450.00	\$17,950.74	\$89,995.88	30
Schools - (AFLTS) . .	149,535.00	5,596.71	37,661.35	25
(AFLBS)	208,625.00	8,446.43	57,286.01	27
Home Missions	433,616.00	25,163.12	127,794.07	29
World Missions	409,715.00	25,857.96	151,861.27	37
Capital Investment . .	30,000.00	878.62	11,993.77	40
Parish Education . . .	84,385.00	4,277.57	32,947.93	39
ARC	20,000.00	1,542.45	4,146.77	21
TOTALS	\$1,631,326.00	*\$89,713.60	\$513,687.65	31
1991 - 1992	\$1,537,681.00	\$82,762.88	\$467,765.27	30

Goal 50%

*The above figures include the offerings taken at conference, and the 30th Anniversary offerings.



Rev. Rodger and Helene Olson, Fergus Falls, Minnesota, were honored at the Calvary Church on June 28 to recognize their 25th Wedding Anniversary. After the morning worship service the WMF ladies provided an anniversary lunch followed by a program. In the picture, Rodger and Helene give closing comments to their congregation which they have served for seven years.

1992 Conference Report

Conference Expenses (Approx.)	11,764.95
(Used last year's invoice for approximate cost of printing the Annual Report.)	
Conference Registration	7,660.00
Conference Offerings (undesignated)	<u>4,274.00</u>
	11,934.00
Difference to be divided by budget to the different departments.	169.05

For Sale: Advance commercial carpet cleaner. Three years old. Cost \$1400 new. Includes 7 gallons of shampoo plus attachments to clean furniture. Contact David Hover at AFLBS (612) 544-9501.

PEOPLE and PLACES

Osceola, Wisconsin — One of the families that plan a reunion during the ARC Bible camps is Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Wall, Comfrey, Minnesota, and their children, all of whom were present during several days of the first family camp week in July. Pictured are the following: Mr. and Mrs. Wall; Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Wall, Peter and Andrew, Springfield, Massachusetts; Mr. and Mrs. Don Berge, Elizabeth and Paul, Fargo, North Dakota; Rev. and Mrs. Jerry Moan, Jesse and Jonathan, Minot, North Dakota; Mr. and Mrs. Mark Norell, Luke and Louis, Butterfield, Minnesota; and Margaret Wall, a sister of Clarence, also from Comfrey.



Rev. Jeff Swanson, Kalispell, Montana, who has served Stillwater Lutheran Church since his graduation from the AFLC Seminary in 1986, has accepted a call from the Helmar Lutheran Church, Newark, Illinois.

Rev. Don Richman, senior pastor of Emmaus Lutheran Church, Bloomington, Minnesota, has resigned effective September 30 in order to establish a ministry to Lutherans in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. He has served Emmaus since 1978. An article in a future issue will acquaint our readers in more detail with his plans.

Rev. Steven Olinger, Salmon Arm, British Columbia, has accepted a call to serve Solid Rock Free Lutheran Church, Camrose, Alberta, a new mission congregation of the AFLC-Canada. He has been the pastor of Emmanuel Free Lutheran Church, Salmon Arm, where he also served his internship, since graduation from seminary in 1990.

Oregon, Illinois — The Illinois District pastors met for a picnic at the White Pines State Park on July 21, and "a great time was had by all," with hiking and softball, as well as time for sharing and getting better acquainted. Seminarian Randy Nelson, who has been serving in DeKalb for the summer, reported that the highlight of the day was the Frisbee Golf Tournament. Pictured are the Nelsons; Pastor and Mrs. Mel Meyer; Pastor and Mrs. Rob Lewis and family; Pastor and Mrs. Mark Olson and family; Pastor and Mrs. Scott Gray and family; and Pastor and Mrs. Todd Schierkolk and family.

Church furnishings for sale — The St. Peter Lutheran Cemetery Association is selling, on bids, the contents of St. Peter Lutheran Church, Park River, North Dakota. Bids will be opened on October 1, 1992.

The furnishings include: 24 pews, 12 ft. long (need refinishing and some repair — they are not hardwood); black leather pastor's chair; pulpit; altar and altar painting; communion rail; baptismal fount with silver dish; antique pump organ and stand (needs some repair); 270,000 BTU oil furnace — used very little as church closed shortly after it was installed; and three folding tables in good condition.

For more information, call Fred at 701-284-6384 or Grant at 701-944-2231.

Kenyon, Minnesota — Emmanuel Lutheran Church had 38 children attend their VBS during August 10-14. The week concluded on Friday evening with a program followed by a bonfire and wiener roast in the church parking lot.

Tucson, Arizona — Members of Living Faith Free Lutheran Church in Tucson invite friends from the colder climates to spend some time in the sunny Southwest this coming winter. Please write or call, and we will do what we can to suggest living accommodations for whatever length of time you wish to stay. Telephone (602) 883-8778 or write Living Faith Free Lutheran Church, 6000 S. Cardinal, Tucson AZ 85746.



AN OLD PROJECT AND A NEW PROPOSAL

One of the few positive facets of the hours that I recently spent repacking my library was the rediscovery of some books that I had somehow forgotten. (The negative side of this coin, however, was that too often my wife would find me reading when I should have been packing.)

Among these special treasures was a little booklet on the history of the Women's Missionary Federation (WMF) of the Lutheran Free Church, our predecessor church body.

Ladies, did you realize that last year was the 75th anniversary of your organization? It was in 1916 that some concerned Christian women, inspired by the success of a similar fellowship among other Norwegian Lutherans, called for a meeting to establish such a national auxiliary to serve their congregations.

Belated anniversary best wishes!

There was something else to be learned, however, from this historical survey. The first project of the newly organized WMF was the gathering of funds to purchase a mission house in Minneapolis for workers on furlough from the foreign fields. The ambitious goal was reached by members of the various ladies aids throughout the church, and the building was home to a long succession of missionaries during their months in the United States.

Sometimes an old project deserves a new look. Returning AFLC missionaries refer to the need for housing in an area that is central to most of our congregations, where adequate schooling is convenient for their children. Some have been able to live in a duplex owned by the World

Mission Prayer League, located not too far from our headquarters in Plymouth; a few have housing provided through family connections. But these sources are not always available, and the need remains.

It is not the purpose of this editorial to suggest that the WMF plan for a new mission house project. Instead, I would propose that other avenues for meeting this need might be recommended.

Are there older individuals or couples with a heart for missions within the AFLC who should prayerfully consider making provision that their house would be dedicated as a missionary home when they no longer have need of it? If this property were located in the Twin Cities area, it could also be used by seminary families during times when no missionaries required a residence, but other communities are an option as well. Wouldn't it be wonderful to know that the place where you spent many happy years was providing shelter to some of God's servants?

You will notice that nothing is said in this editorial about designating any gifts to "Operation Mission Home" (which was neither suggested nor approved by anyone, by the way). The omission is deliberate, for your editor is persuaded that the regular budgetary needs of our missionary program too often and unfortunately are forced to go begging while special projects channel funds to our favorite areas of concern.

Please contact the World Missions Director, Rev. Eugene Enderlein, if you sense that this new proposal of an old project might be a part of God's plan for you.

Addresses for the newly ordained AFLC pastors are:

Rev. Jonathan Unverzagt

665 Adams, Box 177

Stanhope, IA 50646

H-515-826-3202; O-826-3312

Rev. Todd Schierkolk

9544 S. St. Louis Ave.

Evergreen Park, IL 60642

O-708-425-6657

Rev. James L. Johnson

407 2nd St. NE

Fosston, MN 56542

H-218-435-6779; O-435-1590

Rev. Ted Hansen

110534 Fieldstone Cr.

Chaska, MN 55318

H-612-448-4788

Rev. Scott Gray

1066 Lisbon St.

Morris, IL 60450

H-815-941-2563; O-942-1145



Wheatland, Iowa — Christian Free Lutheran Church was doubly blessed on Sunday, June 7, when ten young people were confirmed and twelve new members accepted into the young congregation.

The Last Word

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

Second-Class

Champaign, Illinois (EP) — Protestant church member giving dropped in 1990, according to a newly released study by Empty Tomb, Inc.

Giving as a percentage of income declined between 1989 and 1990 for a set of denominations whose giving patterns have been analyzed for the period 1968 through 1990.

Also in 1990, for only the fourth time in the 1968-1990 period, total contributions per member declined in constant 1982 dollars.

Of the two main categories in church budgets, the per member donation to congregational finances increased in constant dollars, while giving to benevolences decreased.

Other findings included:

- * In 1990 per member giving as a percentage of income reached a 23-year low point, down from the 1968 level of 3.05 percent to a level of 2.60 percent in 1990.

- * In current dollars, per member giving increased between 1989 and 1990 in every category.

- * In constant 1982 dollars, per member giving to total contributions declined between 1989 and 1990.

- * In constant 1982 dollars, per member giving to congregational finances went up between 1989 and 1990, while per member giving to benevolences declined.

- * The percentage change in the portion of income donated to the category of benevolences declined by 32% between 1968 and 1990, while the percentage change in the percentage of income going to congregational finances declined by ten percent.

Chicago, Illinois (EP) — The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) reported its second straight annual increase in membership. ELCA baptized membership in 1991 grew to 5,245,177 for a net increase of 4,438, according to Dr. Lowell Almen, ELCA Secretary. The gain in 1990 was just under 2,000 members. The last increase before that came in 1983, when ELCA predecessor the Lutheran Church in America had an increase of 708 members.

Austin, Minnesota (EP) — A man who had repeatedly threatened to burn down churches was charged with arson July 21 for attacks on two Lutheran churches in southeastern Minnesota in a span of three weeks.

Terry R. Allison, 39, from near Dexter, Minnesota, was charged in connection with fires that destroyed Zion Lutheran Church and St. John's Lutheran Church, both of which are near Sargeant, a small community northeast of Austin in southern Minnesota.

Zion Lutheran Church, which recently celebrated its centennial, burned down June 26. The 91-year-old St. John's Lutheran Church burned July 12. Investigators say both fires started in the church basements, and both were set during early morning hours.

According to information provided by Allison's friends and relatives, he blamed churches for a variety of personal problems, ranging from vandalism of his property to his recent separation from his wife. Investigators were told that Allison frequently complained about "Jesus freaks" and "Bible-bangers."

Allison's relatives say he vowed to "settle the score" with churches and church goers. His sister-in-law said he spoke of torching churches, or of "shooting them up."

Zion Church is served by AFLC Pastor Gordon Grage, together with Mt. Zion Church in Kasson.

Pyeongang, North Korea (EP) —

North Korean leader Kim Il Sung is willing to give his people religious freedom in return for possible reunification with South Korea and normalization of relations with the United States, according to journalist Dan Wooding, founder and international director of ASSIST (Aid to Special Saints in Strategic Times).

In an interview with Korean-born Dr. Daniel J. Cho, founder and director of the Korea International Mission, and Dr. Dale W. Kietzman, chairman of the Division of Intercultural Communications of the William Carey International University, Pasadena, California, Wooding found that doors are beginning to open in North Korea.

In a recent visit to North Korea, the two men told the government that freedom for Christians would be necessary if North Korea wants friendship with South Korea and the United States.

"We suggested that a first step would be to organize the teaching of Christianity in the schools of North Korea and to allow the import of thousands of Christian books into the country," Kietzman said. Both have now been achieved.

Cho said, "The first Protestant church is now functioning and another is being built. There is also now a Roman Catholic church open and there are some 500 house churches meeting around the country with a total of between 10,000 and 12,000 Christians now allowed to worship freely."