


**Education Choices
For Christian Parents**

Public Schools
Christian Schools
Home Schools



**THE LUTHERAN
AMBASSADOR**

September 1, 1992



Hear instruction,
and be wise,
and refuse it not.

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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Study To Show Thyself Approved Unto God

II Timothy 2:15

The story is told that John Wesley had a conflict with a pious fellow who didn't have much time for education. The man wrote a letter to Wesley saying: "The Lord has directed me to write to you that, while you know Greek and Hebrew, he can do without your book learning." Wesley wrote back: "Your letter was received. I wish to say that while the Lord does not direct me to tell you, yet I wish to say to you on my own responsibility that the Lord does not need your ignorance either."

We smile at this dialogue between two Christian men who had differences concerning education. It has been humorously suggested that three things make up a good life. They are learning, yearning and earning. Whether we are young or old we are increasingly learning to appreciate the value of a good education.

I read about a man in his 70's who had just begun to study geometry. A friend commented: "What a time in your life to be learning such a thing." He responded by saying: "Anytime is the right time to learn anything."

It would appear people in our society have more respect for an education these days than for religion or ethics. A teacher of college freshmen drilled her students with a phrase that went something like this: "The royal road to learning is hard work, discipline, faith and humility."

As I think back that is a refreshing challenge in a world where the humanistic approach to life is so prevalent. For the Christian education must include wisdom as well as knowledge and learning. Education should first honor God and then help mankind. The latter should naturally flow from the former.

In our society many seem to have their minds and hearts set on seeking happiness through pleasure or material

possessions. For the Christian happiness and possessions are not the goal of life. Rather we seek the cultivation of our intellectual and spiritual capacities God has given to each one of us.

Proverbs 3:13 says: "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding ..."

Then too, we ought not learn simply for the sake of getting an education. Again Proverbs advises: "Get wisdom, get understanding forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth" (4:5). A well educated person knows how to apply learning in a practical way. A chapel speaker at college once spoke of the Christian's life as "Christianity in overalls." While stressing the need for practical daily application of all that we were learning, he emphasized the value of mature judgment and spiritual insight. This should be the result of education from a Christian perspective.

For the Christian at whatever age in life, there is a need to put knowledge in its rightful place for a balanced life. That is to say, it should take second place to "faith" and "virtue" as Peter tells us: "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge."

As we think of fall start-up time in our churches and schools, we need to be reminded of the value of education in our world. We need to focus on a truly Christ-centered education. This can be accomplished in our congregations, schools and colleges as we invite Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour into our learning experiences.



— by Rev.
Larry Severson

EDUCATION CHOICES FOR CHRISTIAN PARENTS



Where should I send my children to school? This seems to be a concern for thousands of Christian parents today. Christian school? Public school? Homeschool? What is a responsible and Biblical choice in this matter?

I have been involved in the public school as a student, teacher, and coach. In our small, rural community over the past year or so, the question of public versus Christian school has been a major issue. Several families in our community made the decision to send their children to a Christian school when certain personnel problems arose in the public school. The decision was extremely controversial because four of the transfer students were very good athletes and all the students were above average academically. Other families who had to contend with the same personnel problems chose to stay in the public school and work to better the situation. The issue divided the entire community and many of the families who had been friends found themselves unwilling to speak to one another anymore.

What is the right decision in this situation? After all, I want to protect my children from harmful influences and I want their teachers to be godly people who love the Lord and seek to do His will. I don't want my children to come under the teaching of an atheist who believes man came from monkeys and teaches that the separation of church and state was meant for the protection of the state. I certainly do not want my children to be subjected to perhaps the wrong kind of peer pressure and be taken into drinking, drugs, etc. Are these not legitimate concerns that parents have concerning sending their children to public schools? My answer is yes! Let's talk about public schools and list out some good and bad points.

Bad Points:

1. **Atheistic Curriculum:** From science to history to English, the public school's curriculum

is based on an anti-God philosophy. In science, God is replaced by random chance; in history, God is replaced by man's quest for meaning; in English, God is replaced by moral relativism.

2. **Anti-God Faculty:** In the public schools I have been associated with, Christian teachers are hard to find. You may certainly find church-going people who say yes on Sunday but find Monday through Saturday the "real world" where God doesn't exist. You might also find the "I believe in God" sort to whom God is the "old man upstairs." But I found there to be very few, if any, committed Christians, and is there such a thing as a non-committed Christian? As a matter of fact, a couple of the teachers I once worked with were devout anti-God and anti-church spokesmen who found it necessary to make disciples out of their students and did so with amazing success.

3. **Anti-God student body:** Most students in public schools, from my experience, saw Christianity as something far less than "cool." Hot on cars, hot on music, hot on girls, hot on boys, hot on sports but very cold on Christ. Sex, drugs, and rock n' roll was the religion I witnessed. Teenage pregnancy, drug abuse, moral depravity, selfishness, greed, and violence made up the creed.

4. **Anti-God coaches:** Most of the coaches I worked with told the athletes how to play, but forgot to tell them how to live. If you are a coach, it's basketball, football, baseball, etc., first and Budweiser a close second. On Monday mornings I would overhear a coach or two boasting of the weekend's events. They had conquered a 12-pack and committed various acts as a result and all to the delight of their comrades. I often would not be the only one to overhear as students gathered outside the door to listen.

Good Points:

Now enough said about the bad, let's look at the good. This, on the other hand, may take some extra time to think about. Oh, you could say that the facilities are good and the course offerings are more extensive but I am looking strictly from the spiritual perspective.

Wait a minute, that is a pretty grim picture of the public school, isn't it? After all, not everyone is an atheist and a drunk. No, not everyone, but the pervading influence is anti-God. ☐

"What is a responsible and Biblical choice in this matter?"

"Ask your children what is by far and away the most important thing they see in your life."

Perform a survey of every teacher at your public school and I venture to guess that if you would ask them who Jesus Christ is they would not come close. The God of the universe, the God/man who came to redeem mankind, to pay the sin debt that man owes, the Savior of the world, the risen and coming again King of Kings and Lord of Lords, He who was and is and is to come, the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End? No, I think something like "a good man," "a person who lived a long time ago," or "a religious leader" would be the prevailing answer. So the question becomes how could a loving, caring and concerned parent ever send their children to a public school where spiritual darkness pervades? I would like to answer this question but I would like to approach it from a little different angle.

Let me pose a very basic and foundational question. Who is responsible to raise up a child in the way he or she should go? Is the answer school teachers (Christian or public), coaches, friends? No, the parents. The ones who hold ultimate responsibility are the parents.

Let me ask you an honest question that every parent needs to seriously consider. This question must be dealt with before the question of schooling comes into play. What is the question? A question that must be answered honestly. No rationalizing or looking at anyone else but yourself because this is of vital importance. The question is simply: Are **you** a godly parent? How can you answer that question? Ask your children what is by far and away the most important thing they see in your life? Do they see you meditating on Scripture daily (Psalm 1)? Do they see as the priority of your life the knowledge and understanding of God or the accumulating of gold (Proverbs 2)? Do they see you committed to winning others to Christ or are you a "silent Christian"? Do you pray with them and teach them spiritual truths that you have learned? Do they see you with a deep hunger for God and His Word? Do they see the Bible as the most important book in your life, or do they see newspapers piled over it? Do they see the Bible or your business as your greatest attention getter? Do they see you running the race to win? Do they see you considering all things as dung compared to the excellency of knowing Christ Jesus as Lord? Why is this question so critical? Because kids see through hypocrisy very clearly, and when they see it they are quick to react in very predictable ways. Let me give you an example.



We decided as Christian parents to educate our children at a Christian school for three basic reasons: 1) We wanted a godly environment; 2) A godly curriculum and; 3) A godly instructor for our children. Apart from our home, we looked to the Christian school to supply those needs.

When our first child neared the age of starting formal schooling, I was suddenly struck with the thought that someone else was going to

Let's take a student named, Joe. Joe is a moral teenager who attends church and is very typical for his age. He seemed to make a commitment to Christ last year at summer Bible camp. Joe is going to be a freshman. His parents are struggling with the decision of where to send Joe to school, the public school in town or the Christian school.

Let's look into the lives of Joe's parents. Joe's dad is a hard working, successful business man who has provided very adequately for his family. He attended church every Sunday and gives some money to his church. He has taught Sunday School in the past and enjoys the fellowship at his church. His spiritual life is made up of attending church and a ritual prayer at the dinner table. His children seldom see him reading the Bible or praying, or hear him talking about his and his family's relationship to Jesus Christ. He is a very moral man and at the age of 23 he accepted Christ as his Savior. There is little talk of godliness and righteousness in the home and the name of Christ is seldom spoken. Joe's mother is also a Christian and the extent of her commitment is teaching at Vacation Bible School.

Do you see the problem? Whether Joe goes to a public school or a Christian school, a vital and intimate relationship with Jesus Christ is not

be in charge of feeding the mind of my child. That was a frightening thought for me. The Bible says: "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." People are what they think. It was at that point that I knew I wanted a God-centered education. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

It was paramount for me that my child have a Christian teacher. Martin Luther summarizes my attitude toward Christian teachers in the following quote: "Christian teachers are special servants of God. There is no dearer treasure, nor any more precious thing on earth ... A diligent and pious school teacher or whoever it is that faithfully trains and teaches children can never be sufficiently rewarded ... If I could leave the preaching office ... I would not be so glad to have any other work as that of a teacher of children, for I know that it is the most useful, the greatest, and the best, next to the work of preaching." What an awesome responsibility a

teacher has to guide students into a deeper understanding of God and His universe.

In order to accomplish this task, a teacher needs a godly curriculum to work with. As God's truth is presented, His Holy Spirit will guide the hearts and minds of His children. It is essential to Christ-centered material, for truly God is the center of all learning. Every subject, every teaching method, every attitude and every action of student or teacher is a means of training character. Character training is taking place throughout the day, no matter what else is being taught. The actual study of the Bible itself is the most important area of the curriculum for character development. Children will learn to evaluate all they see in the world through the eyes of God because God is Truth. Knowledge without God and an understanding of biblical principles is most dangerous.

The combination of godly teachers and curriculum should result in academic excellence ◊

being modeled in the home. If mom and dad do not model godliness and a hunger to know God and to please Him with their life, the children certainly will see that and will rationalize: Yes, Christ is important but my relationship with Him is one of ritual and does not apply to everyday living. The decision to be a godly person is the first decision. That does not mean perfect, but deals with a person's primary motivation and attention. Is God the center of your life and is His Word your meditation? If so, then the decision of where to send your child to school becomes a secondary decision because the child will see godliness modeled before their very eyes.

Having made my point concerning the parents' commitment to Jesus Christ, I turn my attention to the choice of education. As I said before, there is little, if any, spiritual positives at a public school and there is great spiritual positives at most Christian schools where the main objective is to train children in the ways of the Lord. Why then should a parent consider a public school? For one reason and one reason only. For the reason that Jesus said to go into all the world to preach the gospel. The reason that Paul said I am all things to all men that I may win them to Christ. The public school is a mission field. It needs those who are committed to Christ to bring light into the darkness. Are there

dangers and pitfall? Absolutely, just like any other mission field, but the need is very great. That is the only perspective I believe that can work for a Christian in a public school. If a Christian student does not have this perspective he will tend to follow the crowd and may even give up on following Christ.

I have tried to make it very clear where the emphasis needs to be in this decision for parents. Make sure you are the person Christ has called you to be. Can you say to your children, "follow me as I follow Christ"? Make sure that area is taken care of and continues to be addressed. I believe there is no mandate by God that all Christians attend Christian schools.

I also believe if you make the decision to send your child to public school, or maybe that is your only option, please go in it with your eyes wide open knowing that "satan is a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour."

— Rick Tollefson
Lisbon, Illinois

Rick and his wife, Miriam, are the parents of a daughter and son, and attend Helmar Lutheran Church. He has been employed as a public school teacher and coach and recently served as a volunteer assistant to the basketball coach at Aurora Christian School.



In the summer of 1990, my husband, Dave, and I were forced into making a decision we really had not anticipated making. Our children would not be able to attend the small, quiet and

CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

within a godly environment. Love enables children to be who God intended for them to be. While always being nurtured in love, children need order and godly discipline while they learn self-control and respect for others. This positive environment encourages children to do their best.

The Lord makes no mistakes. Each child is unique and priceless in the eyes of the Creator. The worth of a child cannot be measured by how much is accomplished, but by ones relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ. As a child comes to understand this, he will be motivated to do all for the glory of God.

We have experienced that a truly Christian education assists the Bible-believing home and church. Our children are affirmed in the foundations that we have laid. Christianity begins by saying God is everything and concludes that man has eternal meaning, purpose and dignity. Our family is thankful for the opportunity and privilege to attend a Christian school. It has truly been a blessing.

— Mary Greening

The writer is married to Richard Greening and they reside in Eden Prairie, Minnesota, with their four children. Mary taught French and Spanish in the Milwaukee, Wisconsin area and also served as chairperson of the foreign language department at Arrowhead High School in Hartland, Wisconsin, for ten years. Currently she is tutoring children who are being home-schooled. The Greenings are members of King of Glory Lutheran Church and the children attend Medicine Lake Lutheran Academy.

secure Christian school we had been involved with for ten years. Our three school-aged daughters had never been in a traditional classroom before. We were overwhelmed with the decision now before us.

Both Dave and I have degrees in elementary education and are experienced teachers in a traditional classroom setting. We live only two blocks from our local community school and a reasonable driving distance from church related school. We also were aware of families who were homeschooling who had used our school as an umbrella. I had liked the idea but was always thankful that we did not have to make that choice.

With these options before us we prayed. Finally we made up our minds. I then began to mentally adjust to being a homeschooling mom. With five children I wondered how I could possibly handle this. I continued to pray and gradually God gave me the assurance and peace I needed.

There are four essential ingredients homeschooling parents need: Christ, conviction, commitment and curriculum.

First and foremost, Christ must be the head of the home and the source of strength for the task. Family prayer time is the key to a healthy homeschool. Parents who seek wisdom from God will have the needed tools.

Homeschooling definitely requires conviction! Training a child "in the way he should go" is a monumental task today on every front. We have great respect for the many Christians we know who send their children to the public schools and are raising them to be strong to withstand the negative influences and make the right choices. The decision to homeschool was our choice as parents because we felt it was right. It was not a choice we left in the hands of our children, although we did listen to their opinion. They were happy about the homeschool idea which made our decision easier.

Commitment and curriculum are closely

"No one should become a father unless he is able to instruct his children in the Ten Commandments and in the Gospel, so that he may bring up true Christians ... Children should be brought up in the fear of God. If the kingdom of God is to come in power, we must begin with children, and teach them from the cradle,..."

— Martin Luther

related. Any committed parent can homeschool! Many states have favorable homeschooling laws which grant parents much freedom in educating their children. It is vital that both parents are committed. Though the father may not spend a lot of time actually teaching, it is important that the children know he is supportive and is the spiritual head of the house. In our home, Dave also takes over the math and science lessons as they become more advanced.

We use a wonderful Christian curriculum so the burden of preparing and teaching individualized lessons is not on my shoulders for the older children who can already read. The children learn to be self-motivated and disciplined in accomplishing daily work goals.

Having pre-schoolers at home doubles the demand for mom's attention. Often I have had to wait until nap time to work with our kindergarten student. A committed and flexible parent can make the curriculum work.

There have been blessings from this experience that we did not anticipate. In some ways we actually have more time. There is no late night homework. Lessons are finished often in the morning. We enjoy the flexibility to take a long weekend trip to the grandparents' house. I have more time to teach skills in the home. Too many extra activities are not wearing out our children. They love to read and are learning to get along with each other. They have time for their own ministries, too. Our oldest daughter plays the piano one noon meal each week for the nursing home residents. We enjoy the numerous options available in our church and community which provide social experiences.

The one-to-one attention our children receive in our school is invaluable. Every teacher knows that is an ideal approach to teaching, to solving learning difficulties or to encourage gifted students.

I thought I knew my children well until I taught them myself. It is a high calling and a privilege to be a parent. It is an awesome responsibility when I think that we will be parenting our children at least 90 years when each individual life is taken into consideration! When our nest is empty, I will look back on these homeschooling years and wish for a moment that I could do it again.

— Mary Behrens

The writer resides in Winsted, Minnesota with her husband, Dave, and their five children, ages twelve to three. The Behrens are members of Good Shepherd Free Lutheran Church in nearby Kokato.

BOOK FUND

Ambassador Sunday School Series



- New and separate books for Kindergarten and First Grade
- Kindergarten - 36 New Testament Lessons
- First Grade - 36 Old Testament Lessons

Total needed: \$60,000.00

Introducing the New Book Fund

Any gift given to the Book Fund will be set aside for the production of revised books and any new teaching aids related to the Ambassador Sunday School Series.

Other gifts will be used for the on-going printing and operating expenses of the Parish Education Department. As important as adding revised books is, it is necessary that our "general fund" be met.

Because of the faithful prayer and gift support of our people to Parish Education during the 1991-92 school year, we were able to reprint all needed materials in all grade levels, complete the new fourth grade student books and add the following new materials:

1. "The Way of Life," by A.W. Knock. For youth! This is a basic study in many spiritual life problems are discussed. Study questions included.
2. "The Adult Class Manual," by Martin Anderson. For adults. An excellent adult review of the catechism. Also use for membership classes.
3. "Your Baby and Baptism," by Dr. Iver Olson. A tract for new parents.

Have you used these new materials?

1. "Pillars of Truth," by A.W. Knock.
2. "Sunday School is for You," A tract for kids. Use it as an invitation to your Sunday School, as a proof of attendance, or as a reminder to students.
3. "A Faithful Guide to Peace with God," by Rosenius.

Our sincere thanks to all who join us in reaching the world for Christ.

Recent action by the U.S. Supreme Court illustrates the reality that our society continues to depart from Christian values and norms. Even the carefully orchestrated "non-sectarian" prayers which have marked baccalaureate services for as long as there have been public schools, have now fallen under the axe. The military prohibition against homosexuality is under strong attack, and it is probable that within the year, the military services will be prohibited from expelling known homosexuals. The American Civil Liberties Union, under the guise of "liberty," again is making great inroads into the moral fabric of our land, and true liberty is subjugated to bondage to sin and license. "How long, O Lord, shall the wicked exult?" the psalmist asks.

It would be easy for the Christian community to bury its head in the sand, to pretend that these things are not happening, or to deny their importance. But that is not the call of the Christian! We are called to stand firm in His Word, to recognize that the "Lord has become my stronghold, the rock of my refuge," (Psalm 94:22). One of the ways that we can do this is through the promotion of Christian values in the lives of our children; first of all in the home, then in the congregation, and also in their education. Public schools will not teach the Word of God ... though many dedicated Christian teachers "slip it in" where they can. It is up to the Christian community to teach that Word, the Word of Life. It is my prayer that every congregation of the AFLC would take a good, hard look at ways in which they can be active in promoting the Word, more than just an hour on Sunday and maybe an hour on Wednesday, and then sit idly by the rest of the week while men's mistakes are freely taught! Maybe the time has come to consider the value of Christian schools for your community, which not only minister to Christians, but which challenge the community to re-examine the society's departure from Christian values!

Pray for those who seek to continue to have a witness for the Lord as public school teachers; pray that God would

Where Shall We Go?

continue to give them boldness to stand for Him and be a "light in the darkness!" Pray for our leaders, that they would begin to put aside political pretensions and seek the Lord! Pray for our children, that they be given opportunity to hear the Word, to be nurtured in that Word, and that they may grow up in a country that remembers its heritage, "one nation, under God."

The Christian Academic Education Board of the AFLC is a resource for you and your congregation. We ask for your help in collecting helpful information and resources for those that desire to start Christian schools, and to help those that choose to "fight" within the public schools. We also stand ready to help you, to share what has been shared with us. As was brought up at

conference, we encourage parents to look at the curriculum that is being used in the teaching of their children at **whatever** type of school they are in! Do not simply accept either the approval of society nor the opinions of others. Look at what is being taught to your children in light of God's Word! Make that your standard, make Him your guide, and you can rest assured that your children will be taught well. "He who teaches men knowledge, the Lord, knows the thoughts of man ..." (Psalm 94:10-11). May we seek Him! May we go to Him!

— Chaplain Michael Crowell
Fort Hood, Texas

Rev. Crowell is the chairman of the Christian Academic Education Board.

Thank You From The Parish Education Department

Almost \$20,000 worth of materials were sold through our office during the 1991-92 school year. What does this mean? It means that sound, Biblical, Lutheran teaching is taking place in many of our AFLC churches at every age level.

Some comments regarding our materials, both revised and unrevised, tell it best:

"Our teachers and children love the AFLC material — it is the best."

"I have taught Sunday School for 17 years and these are the best books I have ever used."

"It is a great honor to have the opportunity of teaching this material to the children. Everything has been so detailed and has been a **great help** for teaching."



"Build boys and girls — and we won't have to mend men and women."

— Hortense Storvick

A 14-year-old writes

Back to Mexico After Furlough

Hello, I'm Ingrid Giles. I've been in the United States (Minneapolis to be exact) for this past furlough year. This year has helped me grow in many ways. For one thing, I was really shy when I got here, but being around other people my age has encouraged me to say "Hi" and want to make new friends.

I've been living in Mexico these past several years where my family and I are missionaries. There are so many reasons why it's a lot of fun being a missionary! I would have a hard time narrowing it down to just a few good reasons why I love being a missionary in Mexico.

In Mexico there are a couple of American kids my age whose parents are missionaries. We have a club that meets about once a week to pray and pass out tracts, and witness in other ways.

Another thing that I really love to do, that we have to do a lot is travel around in our car. We completely load up our car the day before a trip. Then we get up at 5 a.m. and try to leave by 6 a.m. We stop in the late afternoon, having driven for about 12 hours. Motel 6 is our favorite place to spend the night. The next day we do the same thing again, until we get to wherever we're going. It's so much fun! When we go for too many months without having to travel to some place, I just about can't stand it!

One other thing we did was have school at home. We used the Calvert curriculum, although next year I'll be using A Beka. I loved homeschooling and I can't wait to get back to it. But I loved this past year at Medicine Lake Lutheran Academy, too, and it has been a wonderful experience for me. I am thankful to my teachers who have thought of all kinds of fun things for us to do. But I would like to thank Mrs. Unverzagt for Grammar Court, Mr. Swisher for going on trail, Mr. Baker for fun homework assignments like coming up with our own attack or

World Missions

Missions Corner

Declare His glory among the nations, His marvelous deeds among the peoples (Psalm 96:3).

Dear Friends of AFLC World Missions — Missions Corner is designed to keep us informed and challenged regarding the movement of God's Spirit in our world today as related to missions.

Because there have been so many reasons to be disappointed on the political scene, discouraged about our economic state, and distressed about the spiritual decay in our nation, even Christians can become disheartened in the great task of sending forth the Gospel and trusting that it will bear fruit.

We need to ask: "Is it working? Are we really reaching the lost for Christ? Is the world going 'all wrong' or is there reason to rejoice?"

The great news is that God's Spirit is moving and great advances are being made in missions and evangelism.

We often read statistics which alarm us. Have you heard that "population growth is exceeding Christian growth" and our hopes for evangelizing the world are ebbing away with each passing year? This simply is not true. According to the U.S. Center for World Mission, Christians represent 33% of the world population today. That means that there are only two other people in the world today for each person who calls himself Christian. **We are not going backward.** "The global percentage of Christians has risen steadily in every century beginning with just 12 disciples," (Missions Frontiers publication).

Friends, what does this mean to AFLC World Missions? What does this mean to you and me? Our hearts can be greatly encouraged. God wants us to rejoice! He calls upon us to "pull out all the stops" and urgently get out the saving news of Jesus Christ. In fact, special mission publications are sounding out the trumpet call: "Catch the Vision 2000." Is it really possible that God's Word can be proclaimed to every people group by the year 2000? Yes. If Christians purpose in their hearts to make missions their priority, **it can be done** through willing workers, preaching and teaching, radio broadcasts, video proclamations, the printed word, etc.

God has blessed our AFLC with a wonderful mission family and faithful supporters. He is honoring His Word wherever it is proclaimed. We have His promise that His Word will not return void, but **it will prosper** and bring forth life. Please **pray** for our mission family and fellow believers in Brazil, Mexico and India. Please pray about what God would have you do to support our outreach of evangelism, preaching and teaching on the foreign fields. We need each one of you. Join us as we go forward as a team!

—Rev. Eugene W. Enderlein,
World Mission Director

defense strategy for a medieval castle, and Mrs. Berge for letting us design (our own) bulletin boards and so on.

Please pray for us as we return to Mexico that God will protect us from Satan and bless efforts in the mission field.

—Ingrid Giles
Apartado Postal 1515-C
Aguascalientes, Afs, Mexico

The annual AFLC All-Boards Workshop will be held on Tuesday, September 29, at the Association Retreat Center (ARC), Osceola, Wisconsin, beginning at 9 a.m. The theme will be "A Vision for the 90s," and reports will be presented by the various boards and departments of our church.

Letters to the Editor

To the Editor:

I would like to appeal to the AFLC people for help with a burden that has been on my heart for the last two years.

Many of you may realize that the Luther League Federation put out a lovely Scripture Song and Chorus book a few years ago. What you may not realize is that the bulk of the work for this book was done free of charge by Pastor Tim Carlson. You also may not realize that Pastor Carlson borrowed the money to get the 500 extra music books printed and sold at cost price. His burden was to get this book to the people as inexpensively as possible.

The problem is that he ordered 1,000 music editions of the book at \$12 per book but only 500 of them sold. The words only edition sold out quickly, but this leaves Pastor Carlson with 500 songbooks piled up in his house and a \$6,000 debt at the bank which he is paying off himself.

As one who works with music in the AFLC, I feel an obligation to help Tim. I was one of many who encouraged him to produce this book. Our church, like many others, has found many good uses for these songbooks.

The music editions that remain are beautifully produced and bound editions of the songbook. These books would make excellent gifts for young piano and guitar players in our churches. If we all rally together and buy about two of these books per congregation and give them to our young musicians, this burden can be lifted from Pastor Tim and our young people can get some good music into their hands.

I have not told Tim I am writing this letter and I apologize if he is embarrassed by it. However, I believe that if the AFLC people know about this burden they would be glad to help.

Let's show Pastor Carlson how much we appreciate his work on this book by buying the last 500 copies soon. Then he can be free from this burden and released to work on more projects for our AFLC youth.

I believe that if you send the reduced rate of \$10 per book, plus \$2

Partners In Prayer



"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God" (Philippians 4:6).

Praise the Lord for safe travel and fruitful ministry of the summer Gospel teams.

Pray for the seminary and Bible school faculty and students as they begin a new year.

Pray for the congregations at Cokato and Dexter, Minnesota, as they plan to rebuild after their churches were destroyed earlier this summer. **Praise** God that the Church is people!

Pray for Home Mission congregations in Canton, South Dakota; Spokane, Washington; and Warroad, Minnesota, who are calling pastors; and for building projects at Ortonville, Detroit Lakes, and Pine City, Minnesota; and Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

Praise God for the return of the FLY team from their summer ministry in Brazil. **Pray** for Arnie Anderson, Cokato, Minnesota, a member of last summer's FLY team, who has returned to Brazil for two months to work on the ARCA construction project with missionary Paul Abel.

Pray for fellowship groups meeting in Tucson, Arizona; Topeka, Kansas; and Cambridge, Minnesota.

Pray for the officers and board members of the AFLC.

Pray for Rev. Terry Wold, moving to Murrieta, California; and Rev. John Mundfrom and family, moving to Bismarck, North Dakota, where they will be serving Home Mission congregations.

To the Editor:

It was really a joy to be at the 30th Annual Conference of our AFLC. When the beautiful hymns were sung, it must have rung loud and clear in the courts of heaven.

Here are some of my thoughts on the conference:

1. God be praised for the devotions and Prayer Hours as it seemed to bring unity in spirit. Very few left until the prayer time was over.

2. I was pleased with the election of officers. Now the call to all of us is to pray for them as Paul did in Colossians 1:9-14.

3. There was freedom to speak on issues that were of deep concern for our AFLC, even though it was time consuming.

postage, you will receive the music edition.

For orders, contact Pastor Tim Carlson at P.O. Box 337, Wheatland, IA 52777; phone 319-374-1434.

Rev. Tom Olson
Cumberland, Wisconsin

4. I have some concerns about our finances. If we keep spending and borrowing money, we will continue to fall short of our budget goals. There are many good projects to give to such as the new hymnal, Sunday School material, and missions. Do we really know what it is to give sacrificially? Are we living above our means so there is nothing left to give?

5. Would we feel more free to give if the financial records of the AFLC were audited each year?

6. Thirty years ago I believe it was a layman's movement that prompted the beginnings of the Lutheran Free Church (Not Merged), now our AFLC. It has been a blessing to see how God has watched over us. Yes, Satan has attacked many times, in many ways. But Christ is the victory. Our glory is in the cross of Christ.

May we do as Mae Swanson from Arizona admonished us to do: "Resist the devil and he will flee."

Thanks to all who made the 1992 Annual Conference possible.

Mrs. Herbert Presteng
Grafton, North Dakota

Women of Wisdom and The Word

RUTH

Study Verses: The Book of Ruth

"There is no book in the Bible which shows more clearly the providence of God directing and controlling the apparently trivial incidents of daily life in order to bring blessing to many lives and lasting glory to the name of God." Stanley Collins

The book of Ruth is a love story. It's about the love of a woman for her mother-in-law. It's also a love story between a man and a woman. But the overriding love found in the pages of this short but beautiful book, is seen in God's love for His people. God is sovereign. When things go wrong, you can, like Ruth, trust God to be your help. The key is to trust God no matter what happens. Observe also the rich meaning of Boaz as kinsman-redeemer. Jesus Christ is our "kinsman-redeemer." All praise and glory belong to God!

Ruth's Decision — Ruth 1:16

1. Ruth and Orpah had an important decision to make. What were their choices? 1:6-13
2. What made this decision so difficult? verse 11-13
3. Orpah stood at a crossroad. She made a decision. What was that decision? verse 14, 15

Tntreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my god: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried.

Ruth 1:16

4. Orpah's decision reminds us of the decisions many make today. State the decision. Mark 4:16, 17

5. What was Ruth's decision? 1:16-18

6. What did that decision cost? Matthew 8:19-22

Life Response

Both Ruth and Orpah had to make important decisions that affected their entire lives. You, too, have decisions to make. Ask yourself: Have I surrendered myself to Jesus and His plan for my life?

Ruth's Determination and God's Provision — Ruth 2:3

In Chapter 2 we found Naomi and Ruth destitute, returning to Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.

7. How did God provide for their needs? Ruth 2:3, Leviticus 19:9-10

Ruth's determination to trust the Lord took her, seemingly by chance, to the field of Boaz. Had it been some other field, history would perhaps have been different. Great events turn upon the hinges of little happenings.

8. Do you think it was an accident that Ruth gleaned in the field of Boaz? Why or why not? Jeremiah 29:11

9. What was the result of Ruth's gleanings? What significance did Naomi see from Ruth's day of work? 2:14-23

Ruth's is the true life of trust and faith, submission and obedience. She certainly couldn't understand all of the events that had happened to her and yet she trusted God.

"God reveals Himself but He rarely explains Himself. Christians do not live on explanations, they live on promises, and on deepening relationships." Warren W. Wiersbe

Life Response

Has God promised us a life free from trials? I Peter 1:6, 7. Do you think it is possible that Christians may have to suffer? II Corinthians 1:4-6

Has God promised us that we will understand every difficult situation? What was Paul's response to his affliction? II Corinthians 12:7-10

When is God's grace given?

Is it possible to experience joy in the midst of suffering? I Peter 4:12, 13, 16

It has been said that God uses trials as a way to exercise His saints. Do you think that's true? Why or why not?

Just as God proved Himself sovereign in Ruth's life, so, too, He is in control of the circumstances that touch our lives. Romans 8:28, 29 "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren." (NASB)

Rev. Jay Erickson
1922-1992

The Rev. Jay G. Erickson, 70, of Plymouth, Minnesota, died from heart and kidney failure at North Memorial Hospital in Robbinsdale, July 21, 1992.

He was the son of Joseph and Gladys Erickson, born in LaCrosse, Wisconsin, on June 25, 1922. At Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Viroqua, Wisconsin, he was both baptized and confirmed.

From 1947 until 1956 he served as a full-time evangelist for the Hauge Lutheran Innermission. In 1956, the Home Mission Department of the LFC called him to be the pastor of Bethel Lutheran Church in Faith, South Dakota, and also to organize Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Eagle Butte, South Dakota. From 1964 to 1968 he served Salem Lutheran Church of Radcliffe, Iowa, and also Stavanger Lutheran Church in Garden City, Iowa.

From 1968 to 1974 he served Triumph Lutheran Church in Ferndale, Washington. From 1974 to 1983 he served Medicine Lake Lutheran Church, Plymouth, Minnesota, from there moving to Fosston, Minnesota, where he served Calvary Free Lutheran Church until 1987.

In semi-retirement, he served as Field Representative for the Hauge Innermission from 1988 until the present time.

Rev. Erickson was also one of the founders of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations in 1962 and served on both the Co-ordinating Committee and the Board of Trustees.

In 1948 he married the former Harriett Syverson of Kasson, Minnesota. To this union were born two sons, Rev. James Erickson (and wife, Lisa) of Alpena, Michigan, and attorney Joel Erickson of St. Paul, Minnesota.

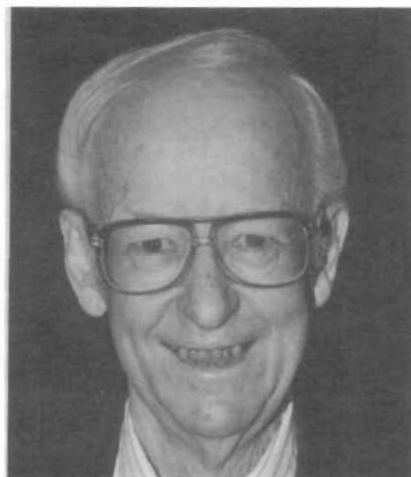
Other survivors include two sisters, Pearl Peterson of Bella Vista, Arkansas, and Dorothy Een of Newark, Illinois; and one brother, Delbert Erickson of Rochester, Minnesota.

Services were held on Friday, July 24, 1992 at Medicine Lake Lutheran Church of Plymouth. Interment was at Maple Grove Cemetery in Kasson.

McVie, North Dakota — New Luther Valley Lutheran Church will celebrate its 110th anniversary on Sunday, September 27. The occasion will be marked with a special worship service recognizing sons and daughters of the congregation who are serving in some area of Christian ministry. The worship will be followed by a fellowship dinner. The theme is "Great is Thy Faithfulness," from Lamentations 3:23. Members and friends of the congregation are cordially invited to attend the anniversary observance.

Everett, Washington — Calvary Free Lutheran Church voted at their July Quarterly meeting to release their pastor, Rev. David Hinrichs, to temporarily serve as organizing pastor of Monroe Free Lutheran Church on a part-time basis. The first worship service for the new congregation will be at 9 a.m. on September 20, 1992, at the French Creek Grange, on the corner of 167th SE and 100th.

Pastor David Keippala, Plymouth, Minnesota, accepted a call from Sunnyside Free Lutheran Church, Stacey, Minnesota, where he has been serving on an interim basis for the past few months. Upon acceptance of the call, he was placed on the AFLC Fellowship Roster, coming through colloquy from the Apostolic Lutheran Church of America. His most recent parish was the Franklin Street Apostolic Lutheran Church, Hancock, Michigan.



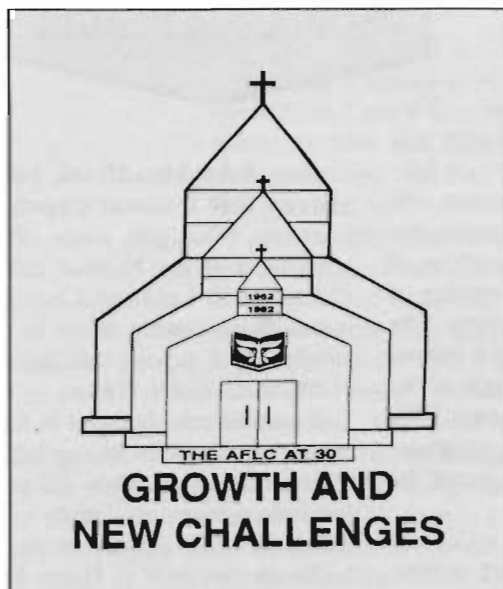
Rev. Jay G. Erickson

Rev. John Mundfrom, pastor of Calvary Free Lutheran Church, Eben Junction, Michigan, since 1985 has accepted a Home Mission call from Calvary Free Lutheran Church, Bismarck, North Dakota, where he and his family will be moving later this fall.

Wichita Falls, Texas — Christ Lutheran Church continues to sell their banners and banner kits to interested individuals and churches. All proceeds from this ministry go directly to AFLC Missions, AFLC projects and/or Christ Lutheran Outreach (a Home Mission church). Their new catalog of 54 banners includes banners for: baptism, communion, advent, lent, missions and holidays. Custom designs are available upon request. For more information or a copy of the catalog, please write to Christ Lutheran Church, Route 6 4300 FM 1954, Wichita Falls, TX 76301; phone 817-766-6757. Note this corrected phone number from the one given in the June 7 issue.

Topeka, Kansas — A fellowship of concerned Lutherans held their first worship service on Sunday evening, August 16, led by Seminarian Tim Hinrichs, who is interning at Deshler and Fairbury, Nebraska. The Deshler congregation, Abiding Word Lutheran Church, is responsible for the initial contacts in this city of over 122,000 people, and various lay leaders will be assisting Hinrichs with these first services.

Cambridge, Minnesota — The AFLC Home Missions Committee decided at their August meeting to begin worship services in this growing community in September, assisted at first by faculty and students from the seminary. An informational meeting conducted by Home Mission Director Elden Nelson several months ago indicated considerable interest, prompting the board to take action. If any readers of *The Lutheran Ambassador* know of someone in the area who might be interested in an AFLC congregation, please contact the Minneapolis office.



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152 pages of story and pictures. The book includes:

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Guest Editorial

A MEMORIAL TRIBUTE TO REV. JAY G. ERICKSON

It is difficult to write a tribute to a man whom God used in such a special way in my life. Perhaps it is like trying to describe a delicious entree or dessert, it is wonderful, but how do I explain the ingredients and method that made it so good? What really made Jay Erickson special?

Jay was first of all an evangelist. My initial acquaintance with him was as a friend. As I came to know and trust him as a friend, I came to hear and understand his message. His life reflected the love of Christ. He was at peace with the world because he was at peace with his Lord and his very being glowed. I desired that for my own life and soon came to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Pastor Erickson exhibited the joy of the Lord. The community knew that with him there were no special people, but all who he met were special. He had the gift of presenting the real joy of the Gospel, of knowing we have forgiveness through the blood of Christ. All troubles and concerns of earth became insignificant in light of the glory of heaven being prepared for us.

This spirit permeated every aspect of the congregational life. We were a small, struggling parish. He projected confidence in the Lord at our church council meetings. We were challenged to set goals. Seemingly impossible financial needs were met. Numerous prayers were visibly answered and our church prospered.

As the 1960s arrived, Pastor Erickson became concerned with the pending merger. He was a fundamentalist and knew there could be no dilution of the Word of God. He was an optimistic warrior who refused to back away from the battle. The early days of the AFLC were not easy. He encouraged our congregation not only to join the infant church body but also to strongly support it. We did so as a parish and prayed and gave believing that God would bless.

You are invited
to attend a
Service of Installation
for
Rev. Robert Lloyd Lee
as
President of the
Association of Free Lutheran Congregations
Sunday, September 27, 1992
7:30 p.m.
AFLC Schools Chapel
3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard
Plymouth, Minnesota

The thrust of Jay Erickson's life and work was to draw people into the wonderful fellowship with Jesus that he and his family had. He desired more than anything else to help his fellow travelers on earth to enjoy heaven now and in the future. We are all blessed because God saw fit to have Jay Erickson pass our way.

—Bob Samuelson
Faith, South Dakota

DOES THE SYSTEM STILL WORK?

Is the system of polity under which the AFLC has operated for 30 years still in good working order? The last issue (August 4, 1992) of this magazine was devoted to a conference review, but you will have to pardon this editor for putting in his two cents worth, too. The above question is a fair one to ask, however, not only in relationship to the recent annual conference, but also in light of the rapid expansion of the past few years. A system of polity, or church organization, that has operated effectively for a smaller fellowship of congregations, must be examined periodically to see if changes are in order to meet the new challenges of a growing denomination.

Our polity is strictly congregational, not synodical, the clearest expression of which is an annual conference without a delegate system. Although some of our congregations do elect delegates to represent them at the conference, usually providing some financial aid to attend and expecting a report afterwards, it is important to insist that each member of every AFLC congregation is invited to be a voting delegate. This will always be seen as downright dangerous by some and even a few of the "old guard" (who should know better) were wondering out loud for a while if the influx of new member congregations didn't mean that it was time for a change in order to prevent a "take-over." The possibility, though, that delegates from the new congregations could outvote them soon dampened their zeal for reform.

One of the less obvious pitfalls of our polity, however, is that everybody's conference is nobody's conference. Some of our congregations remain unrepresented year after year, except for the pastor and his wife. Certainly this can be explained in some cases by the difficulties of distance and expense, but there was a problem finding a replacement Nominating Committee member for our recent annual conference from a nearby district, whose pastors declared that they did not know of any of their laymen who were planning to attend! Apathy is surely one of the greatest enemies of free church polity.

Another growing problem is that people do not know one another so well anymore. When we were a fellowship of 100 or so congregations, it was much easier to get acquainted with the folks who attended the conferences and were nominated to serve in various positions. Now many feel that they are forced to vote for strangers, and complaints were voiced this year when it was announced that blank ballots were discarded instead of counted with the

totals. Some effort was made to introduce candidates to the conference, but it was neither consistent nor complete.

Are there any solutions that can be proposed to solve this problem? One possibility suggested is a pre-conference meeting of the Nominating Committee, perhaps as early as January or February. A full slate of nominees could be selected, with each one contacted for his or her permission, and a sample ballot could be printed in *The Lutheran Ambassador* a month or so prior to the conference. A brief paragraph could also be included, listing pertinent information about the individuals that might help those attending the conference to vote more intelligently, as well as remember them in prayer. The potential for politicizing our voting process, however, would be much greater with such a system, and so we must consider it carefully before any change is made.

There seems to be some concern, also, about streamlining our conference business sessions. The directors and board chairmen have been encouraged to limit their reports to a length that certain portions of the human anatomy can endure, but the question has been asked whether or not these reports even have to be read when they are printed in the conference workbook. And do we really need to read and approve dozens of resolutions of thanks and praise to God when they might be more meaningfully consolidated into one or two?

Another longstanding concern is the conference exodus that commences on Friday afternoon and climaxes on Saturday. Some of the vital issues facing our fellowship in the areas of parish education, youth ministry, stewardship, etc., do not receive the attention they deserve due to the fact that so many have already departed for home and that those who remain are anxious to complete the agenda and adjourn. Are we implying by our order of business that some areas of ministry are not as important as others? This would seem to be the case if attendance priorities are an accurate measurement.

One positive suggestion is to change the order of business every year, scheduling the various ministry reports and resolutions in a system of rotation that would give each one a chance to receive "prime time" coverage. But the better solution is for all of us who attend to participate in all of the sessions, Thursday through Saturday. (Pastors, do you really have to agree to conduct weddings on conference weekend? Couldn't you simply say that you will have to be out of town at that time and encourage the couple to reschedule the happy event?)

New growth means new challenges, and we must not be afraid to consider changes in our system of church organization in order to meet them. But it is good to see that the congregational polity which we established 30 years ago is still in good working order, and that any alterations can be made in the context of our commitment to building an association of free congregations.

The Last Word

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

Second-Class

Practice Makes Perfect ... Or Does It?

You would be more than amazed if I were to sit down before you and try to play the piano. In fact, you would be greatly amused! That is not true of someone who has some musical talent and has been practicing playing the piano. Yet even such a one needed and needs correction in order to improve, for that person could continue to practice the same errors if not corrected (Proverbs 27:6).

In Matthew 7, our Lord tells the parable of two individuals who **both hear** the Word of God, and yet Jesus calls one a wise person and the other a fool! What is the clear difference? I believe the key word is that one "practiced" what he heard while the other did not.

In just plain layman's language a fool is one who does not make good use of the knowledge that he has; while a wise person applies his knowledge.

Notice the concern of Martin Luther: "I am much afraid that schools will prove to be the great gates of hell unless they diligently labor in explaining the Holy Scriptures, engraving them in the hearts of youth." Luther goes on: "Every institution in which men are not unceasingly occupied with the Word of God must become corrupt." Thus your pastor's first calling as your pastor is to **preach** the Word! God says in James 1:22: "Do not merely listen to the Word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says."

Psychologists tell that it's possible to know a subject thoroughly in your head but not practice it. Such a gap between knowing and doing can even cause you to think you are doing it when you are really not.

This is certainly true when it comes to the Word of God!

In Proverbs 22:6 we read: "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it." Or: "Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the Word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives ... Husbands, in the same way be considerate

as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the **weaker** partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that **nothing** will hinder your prayers" (I Peter 3:1, 7).

Frankly, if we want the best things in this life and in eternity, then we must let God's Word not only be the plumb line in our individual lives, but we must practice it!

To practice means: "To do or perform often or habitually; to do **repeated** exercises, to teach by repeating, to **train**; actual performance or application of knowledge, use; as to put into **practice**."

Yes, it is most certainly necessary to read, listen to, memorize and practice the Word of God. However, the real **joy** comes as we experience the Word in our lives. As we become doers of the Word it becomes easier to memorize the same.

When we get away from the Light of the Word, we begin to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. It is when we are nearest to the Light that we get the truest meaning of ourselves.

You see, just head knowledge is not enough. You need a heart experience. "You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that — and shudder" (James 2:19).

"In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead," (James 2:17). **Who** had the courage to say that? **God!** Remember, we do not work to earn salvation, but if we know

People and Places

Rev. Todd Olson, Pipestone, Minnesota, was placed on the regular Clergy Roster of the AFLC by action of the Co-ordinating Committee on July 20, after serving one year on the Fellowship Roster.

Pine City, Minnesota — the application of Abiding in the Vine Free Lutheran Fellowship Church for membership in the AFLC was approved by the Co-ordinating Committee at their July 20 meeting. The new congregation, which has been meeting for over a year, called Rev. Ted Hansen in March to be their first resident pastor, and is in the process of building a parsonage for him and his family.

Jesus as our personal Saviour, the practice should show fruit as a result of a living relationship with Him.

God says: "But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, **but doing it** — **he will be blessed** in what he does" (James 1:25). **Practice = Obedience!**

How seriously you take the Word of God depends upon the value you place upon the eternal soul that you are and how much you **love Jesus!**

— *Pastor Rodney Stueland*