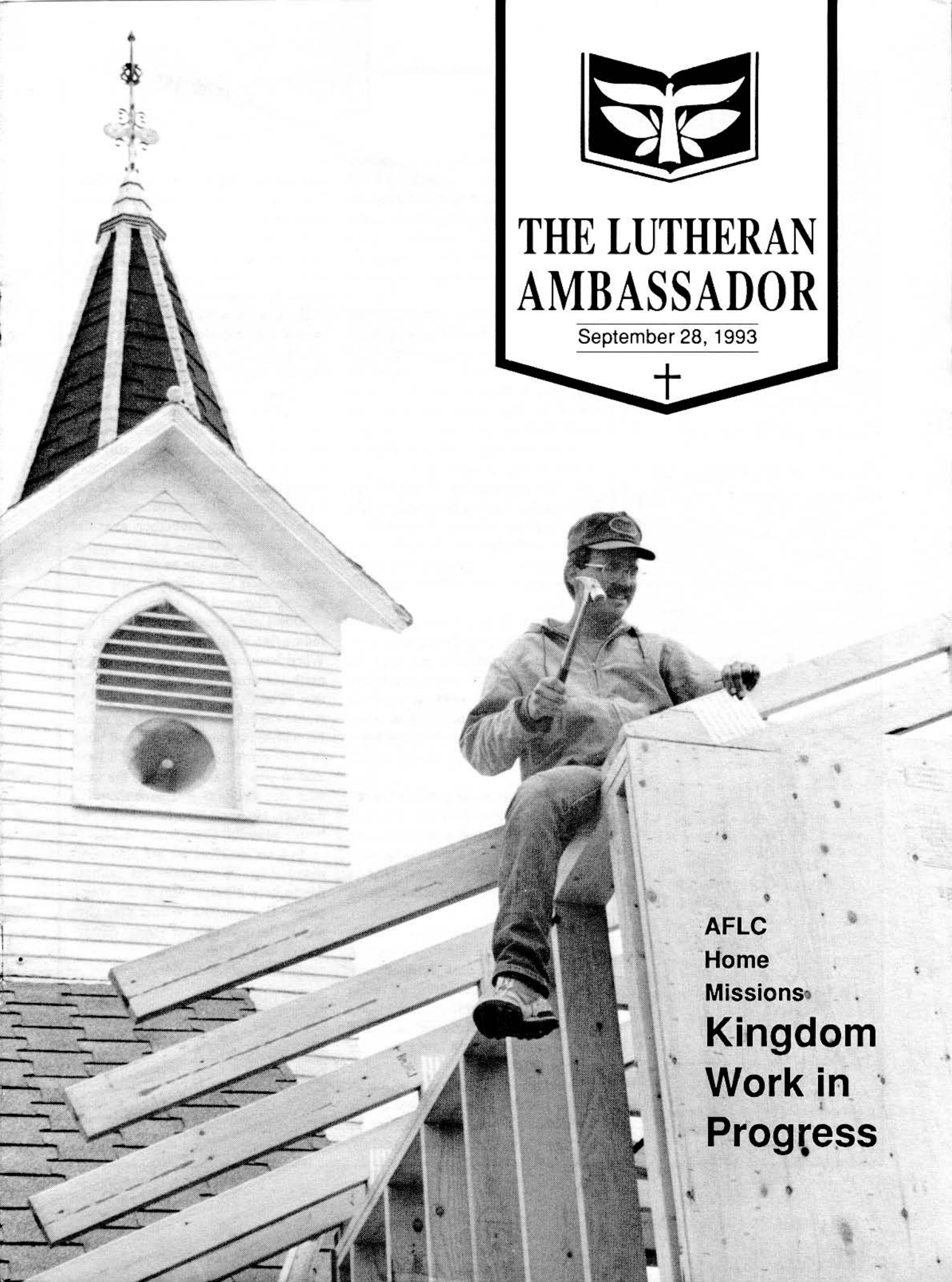




THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

September 28, 1993



AFLC
Home
Missions
**Kingdom
Work in
Progress**

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

September 28, 1993 • Vol. 31, No. 18

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photo by Solveig Hjermstad

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Memory

I am repeatedly amazed at the memory capability of my computer. I keep stuffing more and more information into it and it keeps giving it back to me when I ask for it. I wonder if I will ever be able to tell my computer so much that it will no longer be able to remember it all?

What an amazing and marvelous invention! And then I begin to compare that with the human mind. The capability of the human mind to remember is phenomenal. Memory is one of the most wonderful gifts with which God has endowed us. And yet, when did you last thank your Creator for that wonderful blessing?

At the conclusion of one of our Bible studies I asked the group to talk with me about memory. I asked them to share with me some thoughts about the importance of memory in our lives. Let me share some of their thoughts with you.

"Memory is like a scrapbook that you keep filling up throughout your lifetime and periodically you open the book and look back and enjoy where you have been. This scrapbook becomes especially meaningful when your activities begin to slow down and you have more time to sit and reflect on the past.

"Memory serves as a safety feature if we are willing to learn from the past. When I have touched a hot stove, my memory helps me to recall the incident and becomes my teachers. One is indeed fortunate whose memory serves as a tutor.

"Memory allows us to be of greater service to our Lord and to our society. Throughout our lifetime, from our earliest years to our later years, we are in the process of accumulating and filing knowledge in our memory bank. All of that knowledge should make us more capable for service.

"Memory stimulates us to be thankful and grateful. As we have the ability to remember the past blessings of our Lord, the love of family and friends,

Light on the Way

and the privileges of a nation 'under God,' our hearts should be moved to thanksgiving."

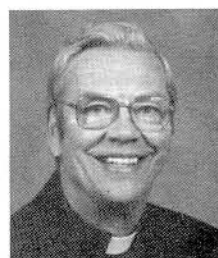
But there is a condition here that all of us must deal with; that is the condition of sin. Every person reading this know that there are things in our past that we wish would never have happened. Our memories of those things could torment us until we could not stand it. But God has promised to deal with those memories in His own way.

What peace comes with these promises in Acts 3:19: "Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord," Isaiah 1:18 guarantees: "Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool."

Our Lord would have us fill our memories with things of the Lord. When Jesus was preparing to leave this earth He promised us in John 14:26, that "The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." When He sat at the table with His disciples and gave them his Supper, He said: "Do this in remembrance of me" (I Corinthians 11:24).

In Exodus 20:8, we are also commanded to: "Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy." And to our young people He says: "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth" (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

Thank God for memory.



— by Rev.
Walter Johnson

THE STARTING POINT

You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem (at home), Judea (state), Samaria (nation) and unto the uttermost parts of the earth (world) Acts 1:8.

This command of the Lord is a picture of expansion. The Gospel is to spread. It describes the ever widening circles as proclamation takes place. It spreads from Jerusalem outward to the embracing of the entire world.

But it must have a starting point. Where does God's work really begin? Its origin is within our own hearts and in the transformation of our lives. I am sure you have heard the statement: "As the heart and home goes, so goes the nation and world." Has that loving message of Jesus touched your family members and your circle of relatives? What about your workplace, school and community? Jesus often began His work by personally ministering to the individuals He would meet. From there He went out into the crowds and multitudes of the villages and cities. The starting point is our own "Jerusalem."

This is the pulse of Home Missions. Its vital ministry must begin right where we **are**, for we are the "you" who Jesus speaks of in Acts 1:8. Within our Association we are to see the ripening harvest in our own neighborhoods and towns. The chal-

lenge of Home Missions in the AFLC is to continuously reach out where we **are** and establish and develop new work for the Kingdom. There must be expansion and widening circles. New congregations need to be established and developed and our Association has the joy to facilitate and build needed churches. Home Missions desires to send out pastors and help to subsidize their financial support. The buildings are constructed with the help of loans from our Church Extension Fund.

Have we caught the vision to touch our Jerusalems? It constrains us to pray fervently, give sacrificially and work faithfully. Allow God to finely tune our focus on home harvest fields. This is the starting point. May the Lord of the harvest fan the flame of love in our hearts to reach out where we **are**. Yes, even in our own family and next door and the town and county we live in. We can have an active part in loving them into the Kingdom!

The promise given that makes this all possible is the supreme starting point; allowing the Holy Spirit access to our hearts. We cannot begin this staggering task until equipped with the power of the Spirit. Only in His strength and empowering will we be given boldness, wisdom, love, ability and the authority to reach out in His Name. Then, and only then, can we fulfill our mission. Let's get on the starting line. Get on your mark. Get set and go!

**Where does
God's work
really begin?**



— Rev. John Skeie
New Hope, Minnesota



FOUR MONTHS 'TIL HARVEST?

**They
are white
for harvest.
It calls
for action.**

Some farmers in the Midwest will not harvest as many acres as they had planned to this year. Unusual rainfall has interfered. Some have crops that drowned out while others were not even able to get the crops planted. Thus, no harvest. We certainly cannot blame the farmer for that which is beyond his control. But what about the farmer who has a crop which was planted on time, had timely and adequate rainfall, grew and developed into a beautiful crop which increased a hundred fold or more and is now ready for the granary: however, he says, "We have plenty of time." Perhaps he goes on vacation or begins to rebuild his granary or overhauls the combine. Bright sunny days pass and the standing crop is not harvested. Then comes the wind, the rain and the cool days of fall, and soon the crop is lost.

There are some things that can be put off or postponed, but harvest is not one of them. In John 4:35 Jesus said: "Do you not say there are yet four months and then comes the harvest? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest." Note, Jesus does not say that the fields are becoming white, but that they are white for harvest.

We live in a country where the seed of the Word has been freely sown for well over 200 years. It is time to harvest and in many places that harvest is taking place. This command to lift our eyes and see the fields white for harvest not only calls for a vision check, but it also calls us to action. We must see the vastness of this field which we call the "homeland," the U.S.A. of America, and employ every Christian and every congregation to work in this in-gathering which our Lord commands.

Over the past months we have seen new opportunities in several areas. Sunday worship services have recently begun in Beulah, North Dakota and Superior and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Beulah is a small town of about 3,000, Superior is a town of about 27,000 and Milwaukee, a city of over 600,000. All three are a part of this field white for harvest. Inquiries have also come from Houston, San Antonio, Belleville, and Brenham, Texas. Inquiries received are usually from folks who have heard about the AFLC and want a church in their area so that, under the preaching and teaching of the Word, their spiritual needs can be met and that they might reach out to those who make up that field white for harvest.

As we look at the vastness of the field and the tremendous number of people that need the

Services Begin In

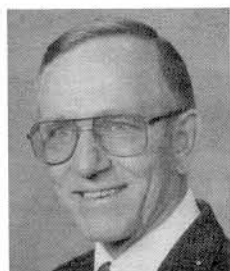
The first morning worship services for two new mission congregations were held on Sunday, September 12, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and Beulah, North Dakota.

Mr. Dale Radke, a lay pastor who was recently approved by both the Co-ordinating and Home Mission Committees, will serve the Milwaukee congregation, which begins with a special focus on reaching Lutheran "dropouts." Services are held in a cemetery chapel, located in a central area of the city.

Pastors and laymen from the Western North Dakota — Eastern Montana

Lord, perhaps we are tempted to say, "It is too much and we are too small; there are not funds or personnel enough to do the job." But, what if every district of the AFLC were to mother a new congregation this next year, using their pastors and laymen to focus on an area of that white field and, under the Lordship of Christ, prayed and worked to develop a new congregation? What if every congregation, all 215, were to focus on those lost souls in their community and pray for a mighty moving of God's spirit in their midst? Not only would new congregations be developed but, more importantly, lost neighbors would be saved and established congregations would be greatly encouraged and strengthened. The Home Missions Department would be pleased to work with congregations and districts accepting the challenge to begin reaping in new fields.

Seed time and harvest are both important. Neither can be half-hearted efforts. They are God's plan for saving the lost. Thanks be to God for every true believer, every pastor and every lay person. May He sharpen our vision, make each of us active participants in the sowing and reaping. Jesus said: "We must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is still day; night is coming when no man can work."



— Rev. Elden Nelson,
Director
AFLC Home Missions

Three Communities

District are providing pulpit supply and financial support for the new congregation in Beulah, which meets in the local Seventh Day Adventist Church.

A third potential new congregation is forming in Superior, Wisconsin, where Rev. Harris Van Someren of nearby Mason is leading Sunday evening services.

Readers of *The Lutheran Ambassador* are asked to contact the Home Mission office with names of family or friends who might be interested in the AFLC congregations in these areas.

It's Like Coming Home

After being away from the Lutheran church for 12 years, experiencing worship within the AFLC was somewhat like "coming home." Even though we had been attending a Bible-preaching church, we missed the emphasis on "grace alone, faith alone, the Word alone." It has been such a blessing to be under good, solid preaching here at Redeemer.

Experiencing fellowship with Christians of like mind has meant much to me. I've appreciated each person more because of our small number — the verse in Romans 12:15 comes to mind when I think of our fellowship: "We rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep."

The most important part of being in a close fellowship of believers is the love and support that is given during the crisis times in one's life. I've experienced breast cancer surgery and recuperation the past few months and the support of love and prayer from our congregation was so wonderful. God answered prayers in that I truly experienced His peace and strength. Both Pastor Phil Haugen and Pastor Jim Haga were sources of comfort and encouragement during that time.

We all struggle with discouragement for one reason or another as we face the challenges before us in the life and growth of our fellowship, but God's faithfulness will continue to uphold us as we commit our efforts to His will. "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is Thy faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22, 23).

— by Lori Larson
Cambridge, Minnesota

Editor's note: Lori is a charter member of Redeemer Lutheran Church at Cambridge, Minnesota. Her husband, Merlyn, is the chairman of the congregation.

My Heart Has Been Stirred

A New Committee Member Reflects

America is fast becoming a pagan nation. Years ago we thought of the foreign fields as the primary thrust of evangelistic endeavors. Perhaps in our zeal to spread the Gospel to other countries, we have neglected to nourish the faith on our own shores.

America is displaying a loss of morality, a loss of hope and a need to return to the Christ of our forefathers. Yet, in this void there is hope. If you know the Lord as Saviour, you know what communion with God has done in your life. Jesus Christ certainly can do the same for your neighbors!

The AFLC realizes that the hope for the nation is to show Jesus through the sharing of the pure Word of God and to let the Holy Spirit work its way in people's lives.

A year ago I was elected to serve on the Home Missions Committee. Since I had been involved in the AFLC for a relatively short time, I was not sure what to expect. As a new committee member, I have been enlightened and my heart has been greatly stirred. The need is incredible. People all over the nation are searching for a fellowship where the inerrant and infallible Word of God is preached and lived. There is definite hunger! It is interesting to see the response, as time and time again, new members exclaim their joy in hearing the unadulterated Word.

A revitalization is taking place in the nation as inquiries come from many communities regarding help in starting new congregations. I wish each AFLC member could feel the anticipation and joy as a new congregation gathers. It is akin to celebrating a new birth. With a heavy reliance

on prayer and a lot of work, these new fellowships are growing into established, respected churches; meeting the needs of their communities. When I watch the Holy Spirit working in a new community of believers, I am so thankful to God and excited for these new congregations.

The Home Mission pastors have greatly impressed me as well. Pastors of our established congregations have tremendous responsibilities. Added to these normal concerns, a Home Mission pastor must shepherd a congregation from varied backgrounds into a vibrant, cohesive AFLC congregation.

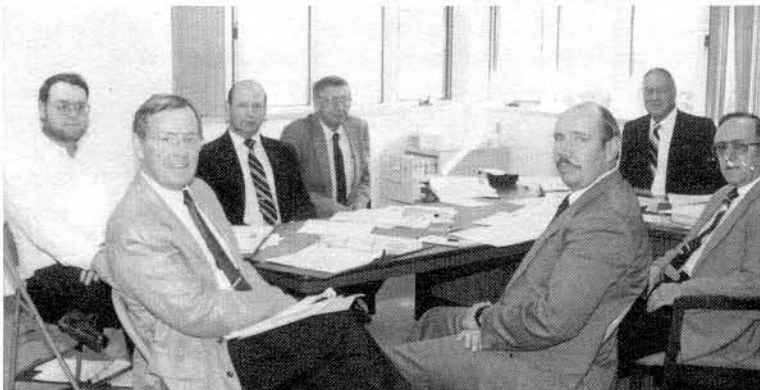
I wish each *Ambassador* reader could sit in on a committee meeting. I was thrilled with the way each meeting is bathed with prayer. It requires much study and consultation to arrive at a decision. The heartfelt concern for the pastors, the congregations and the spreading of the Gospel is very evident. Each decision needs great input from the congregations. Often decisions are painstakingly difficult and not always popular.

Unfortunately all too often, the zeal that is felt by all is tempered by the lack of funds to implement the plans that we have whole heartedly agreed upon. We rejoice to see sister churches of the districts helping the fledgling groups. Not only is the expertise and monetary help necessary; but along with the aid comes increased prayer for the new fellowship. Pray that God will show you how you can be involved in your area.

Monthly, each Home Mission pastor shares with Pastor Nelson and the committee the joys and sorrows of their congregations. In this way we become more a part of the individual congregation and know how to better pray with and for them.

God is moving in the AFLC! It's fun to see His hand at work! As we become more available to let the Holy Spirit move through us, God's work is being done. Even more could be accomplished. Clusters of believers throughout the nation desire to be involved with a church fellowship group who unashamedly let the Bible stand as the sole (soul) map for its faith. The possibilities are endless. The God we serve is anxious to have His creation back in communion with Him. Thank you for your prayers to advance the cause of Christ!

— Mr. Bob Christian
Newark, Illinois



Home Missions Committee (L. to R.) Mr. Bob Christian, Rev. John Skeie, Pastor Henry Mohagen, Mr. Robert Dietsche, Rev. Tony Stockman, Rev. Alvin Grothe and Rev. Elden Nelson.

THE STRANGE CASE OF GEORGE WILSON

The unbelievable, strange story of George Wilson has been told and re-told, but it still bears repeating because it can be so aptly applied spiritually where knowledge or giving an accent to a fact is one thing; to act on that knowledge is another matter! -

The recorded facts in the annals of the United States Supreme Court are as follows:

Two men, Wilson and Porter, were convicted and sentenced to be hanged for robbing the U.S. mail in 1829. Porter was executed on July 2, 1830.

About three weeks before the time set for Wilson's execution, he was granted a full pardon by President Andrew Jackson. It's quite a long story. The simple recorded facts are that when the pardon was brought to Wilson, he refused the pardon!

This raised a point of law. When he refused the pardon, what could (or should) be done? This case finally ended up before the U.S. Supreme Court where the following decision was handed down: (U.S. vs. George Wilson, Peters Reports. P. 150).

"A pardon is an act of grace proceeding from the power entrusted with the execution of the laws, which exempts the individual on whom it is bestowed from the punishment the law inflicts for a crime he has committed. A pardon is a deed, to the validity of which delivery is essential, and delivery is not complete without acceptance. It may then be rejected by the person to whom it is

tendered; and if it is rejected we have discovered no power in a court to force it upon him."

Let us consider some facts:

Wilson heard the message; indeed he saw the pardon, with the president's signature — there was no doubt in his mind that it was "for real." Yes, he had this head knowledge, and could even tell others about this fact. But he did not receive or appropriate this to become a personal experiential reality! It was all abstract!

For over six decades I've been engaged in "personal work;" talking to people about their soul salvation. Having conducted series of Evangelistic meetings in ten different Lutheran synods, in half of the States in the Union and in all of the Western Provinces of Canada; my specified "calling" has been to reach nice, faithful, religious members in our Lutheran churches. I would estimate that of the large number with whom I've counseled and led to the Lord, 85% have been leaders in Lutheran churches; deacons, trustees, Sunday school superintendents, ladies aid presidents and other faithful supporters and workers in their congregations.

My point in relating all the above:

Let's face it! Lutheran Synods have lost ten's of thousands of members the last years! Thank God for the thousands who have affiliated with Evangelical congregations after having found peace with God there; thousands more, "used to be Lutheran," but now are washed up on the shores of confusion and hopelessness!

Could it be — that the indictment for this sad situation must fall on the preaching? There is a frightful mixing of Law and Gospel that does not produce conviction of sin, repentance and conversion. Nothing happens! People are living in an "I hope so" uncertain — false hope built on sinking sand!

It is my further conviction that the vast number of these nice, religious, faithful church members (not a few having leadership positions) are like George Wilson (in making a spiritual application). They have heard, and are convinced of the historical facts of the Bible; they have a considerable amount of Orthodox, Evangelical head knowledge; they "say" the Creeds; go through the Sunday A.M. rituals; they have "been to church!"

But these more recent "George Wilsons" have never really personally appropriated, received, Jesus Christ as their Savior, and entered in to a joyful assurance; an experiential knowledge of sins forgiven; purpose in life and living hope for eternity!

Certainly "our hearts desire is that they would be saved!" And to quote the old Lutheran catechism in it's answer to question No. 1, "Our chief concern in this life (now) is that we might be saved!"

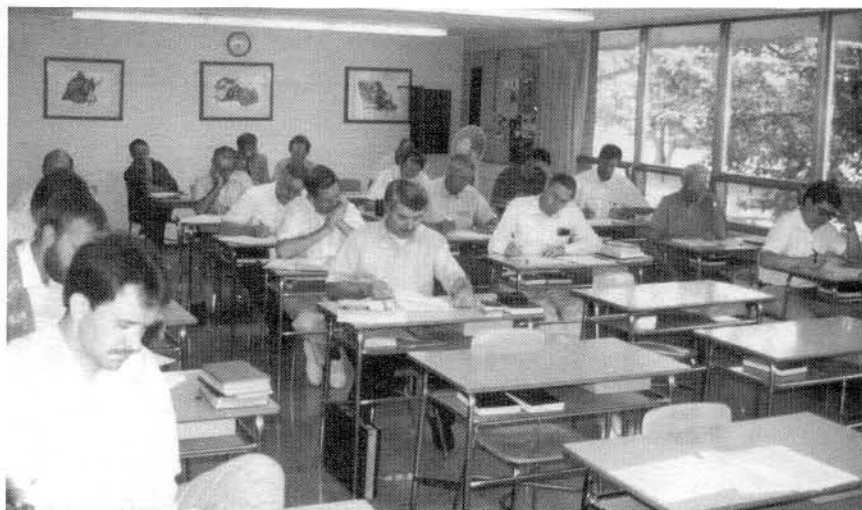
— Clifford R. Anderson
Buffalo, Minnesota

(Rev. Anderson, a retired Lutheran evangelist, is a member of Good Shepherd Church, Cokato, Minnesota.)

Consider the Summer Institute of Theology

I strongly recommend that every Christian who "craves pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation," (I Peter 2:2) should attend the AFLTS Summer Institute. My classes at the Institute are always one of the highlights of the year for me!

There certainly isn't anything wrong with studying books, but some kinds of spiritual growth occur better in fellowship with other believers. (Imagine if your pastor mailed his ser-



mon to your home, and asked you to stay there and read it!) Nothing can help you "grow up in your salvation" as effectively as a brilliant instructor

and the give-and-take of a classroom full of responsive students.

This is what one experiences at the Summer Institute: the same talented and dedicated staff of Spirit-filled professors who teach at the seminary, instructing several dozen laymen, lay pastors and pastors who hunger for practical Christian wisdom.

The Summer Institute really should be more widely publicized to our lay people. Among the AFLC laymen that are aware of its existence, there seems to be the perception that it is only for lay ministers who are formally registered in the 12-year ordination program. This is not the case. Many of us laymen who attend are not able to devote the time necessary to complete the tests and homework, but are there just for the "pure spiritual milk."

The classes are held only in the mornings, so some of us who live in the Twin Cities go to our jobs in the afternoons. That way, we can attend both weeks of classes, and only use five (or less) days of our limited vacation time.

If you can arrange to have at least your mornings off for the last two weeks of July, I can assure you that your life in Christ will be blessed and enriched.

— John Dahlof,
Richfield, Minnesota

My Experience With Clinical Depression

Purged (Revised)

This is a true story of a Lutheran parish pastor who, in his own words, tells of his experience with depression, spending most of a year, first in a psychiatric ward, and later in a mental hospital.

He tells of how God was with him in this very trying experience and turned it all into a blessing. He looks upon it as a great purging or schooling experience, through which he learned

much about spiritual things.

This book also contains some helpful, practical suggestions for regaining and maintaining mental health, and for helping a depressed loved one. Retail cost is \$7.50. Please add \$1.05 for postage.

Write to Mercy and Truth Publishers, 312 — 235th Street, Osceola, WI 54020-5943.

— by Gerald F. Mundfrom

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences — February 1 - August 31, 1993

FUND	TOTAL BUDGET	REC'D IN AUGUST	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$261,657.00	\$11,862.14	\$118,463.95	45
Seminary	148,620.00	5,178.37	50,311.94	34
Bible School	214,230.00	5,919.13	70,533.72	33
Home Missions	292,593.00	9,234.31	128,525.40	44
World Missions	310,000.00	22,784.59	180,696.23	58
Capital Investment	50,300.00	1,010.46	16,442.71	33
Parish Education	53,147.00	1,974.19	31,686.37	60
ARC	13,200.00	1,069.92	3,902.27	30
Chrism. Acad. Bd.	4,000.00	239.56	736.65	18
TOTALS	\$1,347,747.00	\$58,793.82	\$601,299.24	45
1992 - 1993	\$1,631,326.00	\$56,825.54	\$570,513.19	35
Goal 58%				

Praise be to God for places of solitude where we can be in His Spirit when He speaks in a still, small voice. For Elijah it was the refuge of a

cave on his fleeing journey. For me it was the seminary campus as I attended Summer Institute. What a blessing to receive God's Word through instruction and witness by people devoted to teaching the purity of God's truth. How great it is with Him nearby, in the quietness of the AFLC campus He has established in the hectic surroundings of Minneapolis! What a joy to hear the testimony and enjoy the fellowship of my brothers in Christ and the privilege to be able to share the gift of salvation with them.

In our studies, we reflected on our Lutheran heritage and the lives of men God has used in the past. As I think back on the week of Summer Institute, I am mindful to thank God for those faithful people who were stirred to establish the AFLC and its schools. We all need to praise Him for the heritage we have in the AFLC and the richness of knowing Christ Jesus as Lord.

—Peter Ward
Zumbrota, Minnesota

Do you have that same desire to know Christ as the Apostle Paul? "I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death," (Philippians 3:10).

This year's Summer Institute of Theology was truly a very special time to examine God's Word, getting to know Christ in a deeper way and fellowshiping with the brothers in Christ.

The Association of Free Lutheran Congregations is extremely blessed to have such a Word and Christ-centered faculty. This year's courses included studies in *Galatians* with instructor Rev. Ralph Tjelta which focused on the theme "The Gospel of God's Grace in Christ Jesus." *The Lord's Supper* was a Biblical study of its nature in regards to the terms of the "Real Presence" of Christ, the pledge and assurance of the forgiveness of sins and the truly "worthy" recipients of this sacrament, taught by Dr. Fran Monseth. Dr. Steven Lombardo taught the course *Mentors for Ministry* in which spiritual leaders are to be disciplined godly people. During the course, we examined

Seminary Grants Received

Free Lutheran Theological Seminary, Minneapolis, has received three grants totaling \$5,700 from Aid Association for Lutherans (AAL).

biblical principles of evangelical ministry along with insights from the ministries of people God used in the past. *Highlights in American Lutheran History* was taught by Dr. Craig Jennings. This class dealt with the Lutheran experience in America from immigration and colonization, including the development of synods, identity struggles and theological differences.

The Summer Institute is a time for spiritual renewal and refreshing. I would encourage all pastors and lay people to consider spending a week at next year's institute. Not only will you benefit spiritually and physically, but your congregation will also receive added spiritual benefits.

Thank you, faculty and staff of the AFLTS, for a great two weeks.

—Pastor Dale Finstrom
Glyndon, Minnesota

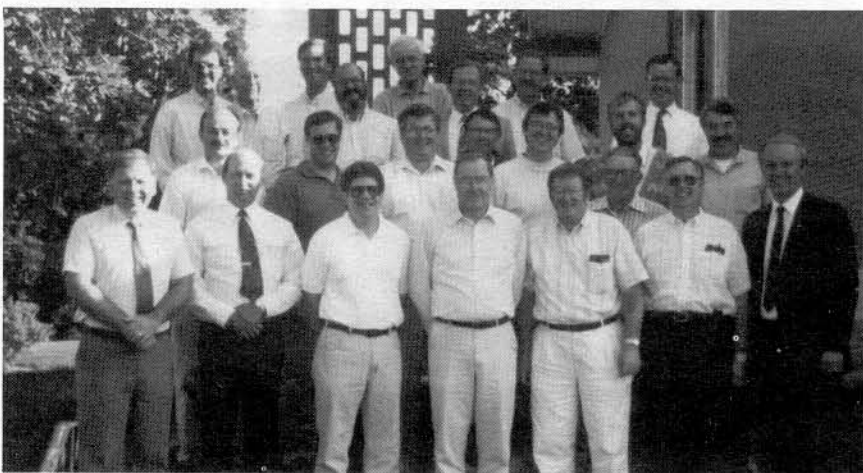
One grant will provide scholarship assistance to pastors and lay pastors attending continuing education programs this past summer or in January of 1994. Seminary faculty will conduct courses from each of the main theological disciplines as part of the programs. A study seminar of Israel also will be part of the offered courses.

A grant will also provide faculty development support for Dr. Francis Monseth, seminary dean. He will spend the 1993-94 academic year teaching at a Lutheran seminary in Europe. The grant will assist with some on-site expenses.

Financial assistance also will be offered to selected seminary students as they pursue their first theological degree during the 1993-94 academic year.

Sabbatical Grant Awarded

Dr. Francis Monseth, Dean of Free Lutheran Theological Seminary, recently was awarded a grant from Lutheran Brotherhood as part of its Seminary Sabbatical Fellowship. The grant will be applied to expenses incurred during Dr. Monseth's sabbatical leave in eastern Europe.



The 1993 AFLTS Summer Institute of Theology was held July 26-August 6. Twenty-nine students registered for the annual summer courses. Pictured, left to right, front row: S. Lombardo, H. Mohagen, G. Simons, D. Norr, L. Twite, R. Rasmussen, F. Monseth. Middle row: P. Ward, D. Finstrom, J. Dahlof, A. Fiskness, M. Olson, D. Hansen, P. Pillman, J. Ptacek. Back row: G. Bownik, M. Fagerberg, R. Koepp, J. Baker, E. Anderson, J. Skeie, R. Stueland, C. Jennings. Not pictured: K. Thoreson, S. Papillon, M. Meyer, P. Rairdon, W. Goodman, D. Sollie and R. Lawson.

WOMEN



Minneapolis, Minnesota — Morgan Avenue Lutheran Church WMF honored Hannah Pertla with an Honorary Member pin for her faithful service. She has been a member of the congregation for 63 years and is currently serving her 30th consecutive year as treasurer of their Ruth Guild. Hannah's sister, Helen Kangas, presented the pin.

I Missed Church, But God Understands!

Quite often, when people are encouraged to put aside whatever is preventing them from attending services regularly, they will say: "Well, I really should be there, but I think God understands!"

God has gone on record in Hebrews 10:25 as saying, "Not forsaking the assembly..." He **does not** understand why some of His people willfully and stubbornly hold to habits of forsaking the assembly! God **does** understand that others need the encouragement of our presence, we are a family that He put together. He **does** understand group fellowship the power of people meeting together for mutual strengthening. He **does** understand that when we start missing a service now and then, we are being set up by Satan to become a dropout!

But, do we understand those things? Many times we do not — and that is why so many allow Satan to bring on little excuses after another into our lives until we are separated from our God and His assembly.

Let us pray that God will help us to understand the need, the purpose, and the power of attendance to Bible classes and worship services — whenever the doors are open. And let us pray for the courage to do our part in making the gathering of the saints a time of love, praise, and spiritual growth! It is a matter of spiritual life and death, really, not only for us, but also for others whom we are influencing. Think about it!

—from *First Lutheran Church Newsletter*
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma



Minot, North Dakota — Pictured are the Cradle Roll graduates of 1993 at Bethel Free Lutheran Church.



Grafton, North Dakota — Bethel Free Lutheran Church Cradle Roll graduated ten three-year-olds and added three new babies to their program. Pictured are some of the graduates and new enrollees with their mothers.



The WMF's new national president, Delores Berkas, Wallace, South Dakota.

WMF Fall Rallies

Southwest Central Minnesota — October 2, Ortonville, Minnesota.

Minneapolis — October 16, Emmaus, Bloomington, Minnesota. Speakers: Linda Korhonen and Rev. Robert Lee.

LUMPS

Soft,
Indistinct
Piles of clay,
Comfortable in our inertia —
No demands on a lump!
No expectations,
No pressure.
A lump
Just is
Until ...
We are purchased!
A new possession,
Set apart for a purpose.
Now nurtured,
Softly kneaded,
Carefully moistened —
No demands yet!
Just gentle preparation
For a violent transformation.
Forceful molding
Under strong, sure hands.
Reshaped, thinned, stretched,
Beyond what we thought possible.
Tested, and tempered
Through the fire,
Until at last
We are vessels
Suitable for use
By the King.

— by Bob Hutchinson
Camarillo, California

ANNOUNCING!

THE NEW AMBASSADOR HYMNAL

The new *Ambassador Hymnal* will be available by June 30, 1994. Those of you who have been patiently awaiting this event will be encouraged to know that your wait is nearly over. The music is being engraved and the text material is being typeset on or ahead of the schedule we have with A-R Editions, our publisher.

We continue to need the financial support of our AFLC churches and individuals. Any shortfall of monies will mean a delay in the typesetting, since we have continually affirmed our conviction that this must be a "pay as you go" proposition. Please continue to promote the hymnal in your congregations as a project worthy of their assistance.

Thanks to the fact that we now have a publishing deadline, we are able to offer to your congregation the opportunity to purchase hymnals in advance of the publishing date. These pre-sales will also help us to keep the payment schedule for typesetting current and avoid delays. Since it is in our best interest to have the money now, rather than later, we are offering a substantial discount to those congregations which pre-purchase hymnals. Those congregations which purchase the hymnal **before** January 31, 1994 will be able to purchase it for \$12 per hymnal, plus shipping and handling. The price after that date will be \$14 per hymnal.

A sampler of the hymnal is being prepared to help you decide whether the *Ambassador Hymnal* will be the right hymnal for your congregation. This sample contains five well-known hymns, one of the orders of worship (Concordia p. 108), the hymnal's table of contents, and a list of the hymns as they will appear in the hymnal. The sampler, together with order forms, will be sent to each congregation at the beginning of October.

— Brian L. Davidson, Editor, and Thomas C. Olson, Chairman

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 God for the safe and encouraging summer ministries by each of the Bible School teams. Wonderful responses have been reported on the teams' outreach throughout the U.S. **Pray** that the Lord would continue to bring fruit from the seeds of the Word that was sown.

Pray for a safe return of the Paul Abel family to Brazil. They leave on October 12, after a four-month furlough in the U.S.

Praise God for the 51 men and 47 women students registered at AFLBS this fall. **Pray** that the Lord would be allowed to have the victory in the lives of the students as they face spiritual

warfare. **Pray** for the faculty in their additional responsibilities covering for Dr. Monseth's sabbatical, as well as for him and his family.

Praise God for the free home medical clinics being conducted in the Indian villages where there is a congregation. This has opened many doors to share the Word to nonbelievers.

Pray for the two Home Mission congregations calling a pastor — Canton, South Dakota and Topeka, Kansas.

Pray for the Lord's supply in each department that budget goals might be met by the end of the year.

Praise God for the Canadian AFLC and their willingness to take on the

support of the matron in the Miriam Infant Home.

Pray for the national workers, evangelists and pastors in Brazil, Mexico and India.

Praise God for the recent inquiries in several new Texas communities regarding starting new AFLC congregations.

Praise God for the faithful teaching of God's Word in each congregation in confirmation classes, Sunday School and Bible studies. **Pray** that teachers will be encouraged and students hungry to learn.

Pray for AFLC President Robert Lee and his family.

Pray for the new *Lutheran Ambassador* editor Rev. Craig Johnson as he begins this new aspect of his ministry.

Introducing Good Shepherd Lutheran, Pleasanton, Texas

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, located on Highway 97 east of Pleasanton, Texas (about 40 miles south of San Antonio), recently amended their constitution to include affiliation with the AFLC.

The congregation began five to six years ago when a small fellowship of conservative Lutherans withdrew from the ALC church in a nearby community, in response to strong concerns about the upcoming merger.

They had been alerted to these issues through the ministry of their former pastor, Dr. Albert A. Petrich, and by Clyde Grier, a son of the congregation whom they were assisting to attend Faith Evangelical Lutheran Seminary (Lutherans Alert), Tacoma, Washington. Other informative resources during this time were such publications as *Christian News* and *Evangel*.

Monthly meetings at the home of Eva Fischer (see "In Memoriam") were the first organized gatherings of the group, and it was not long until these were scheduled every Sunday.

When Clyde Grier graduated from seminary, he was called to be the first pastor of the newly formed Faith Lutheran Church, El Campo, Texas. Some of his Pleasanton friends attended his installation, where they met Rev. Allen Hastings, Austin, Texas, who represented the World Confessional Lutheran Association (WCLA).

Rev. Hastings began to travel the 150-mile journey from Austin to Pleasanton and provided pastoral leadership for the fledgling congregation as the first organizational steps were taken. A small office building was rented, a sign was erected, and ads were placed in the local newspaper. A constitution was adopted, and a new "independent conservative Lutheran congregation" was incorporated in June, 1988.

It was not possible for Rev. Hastings to come every Sunday due to other commitments, so the men of the congregation learned to lead the worship services, and sometimes a written



Good Shepherd Lutheran Church.

or taped sermon was the message for the day. In spite of these problems, as well as the failure at first to secure a pastor, the congregation survived by the grace of God.

Finally, Rev. Don Voorhees, who had been serving a WCLA congregation in Bozeman, Montana, accepted their call and was installed in December, 1988, as the first pastor. He continues to serve the congregation, and lives with his wife, Heidi, and their two children in a mobile home near the church.

Good Shepherd congregation moved into their current church home on Ash Wednesday, 1990, after purchasing a former commercial building located on four acres with prime highway frontage. The members continue to work on remodeling and repairing this facility, and at present are finishing the Fellowship Hall, with plans to dedicate it later in the fall.

Several other church bodies were studied before a decision was made to affiliate with the AFLC, which was chosen because it shares the congregation's conviction that "God has ordained the local congregation as the highest ecclesiastical authority on earth," and that the Bible is the Word of God without error. Also, they shared with the AFLC a strong emphasis on the Christian family, Bible study,

meaningful worship and evangelism.

It is the prayer of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church that this new affiliation will support and help them to uphold and promote these convictions.

— Rev. Don Voorhees

In Memoriam

Funeral services for **Eva Jones Fischer**, 77, a charter member of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Pleasanton, Texas, were held on July 3, 1993, with Rev. Don Voorhees and Rev. Clyde Grier officiating.

She served as secretary of the Steering Committee for a new Lutheran Church in Pleasanton, opened her home for the first meetings, and was the first organist for the new congregation.

Faithful in worship and adult classes, she also hosted various women's Bible study groups, and a generous gift to Good Shepherd Church made possible the purchase of the present facility.

Blessed be her memory!

Thief River Falls, Minnesota — A 90th birthday open house was held on August 21 in honor of Mrs. Myrtle Hove, hosted by her granddaughters. Mrs. Hove, a member of Our Saviour's Free Lutheran Church, is the mother of Mrs. Connely (Carolyn) Dyrud, AFLC missionary in Brazil.

The gospel is not something only to go *to* church to hear - but to go *from* church to tell.

— Grace Trumpet
Bruce, South Dakota

PEOPLE and PLACES



Oceanside, California — The AFLBS Summer Ambassadors sang in a local park. The concert was sponsored by Neighborhood Bible Church.

Fosston, Minnesota — Calvary Free Lutheran Church held special meetings during September 26-29, with Rev. Don Richman, Bloomington, Minnesota, as speaker.

Minneapolis, Minnesota — Faith Lutheran Church has scheduled their annual Reformation Rally for October 30-31, with Rev. Terry Olson, Valley City, North Dakota, as the speaker.

Dickinson, North Dakota — Our Saviour's Lutheran Church held their special fall meetings on September 17-21, with Rev. James L. Johnson, Fosston, Minnesota, bringing the messages.

Bloomington, Minnesota — Emmaus Lutheran Church expects to begin a third Sunday morning worship service soon. This new worship time would begin at 9:45 a.m. and run concurrently with the Sunday School hour.



Oceanside, California — Neighborhood Bible Church knows no summer let up in programs. Rather, summer serves as a recruitment time. The **Praise Singers** (17 member adult choir) is joined by a seven member instrumental ensemble. The latter has recently decided to play twice a month rather than once. Children sing in the **Melody Makers** and join the adult choir in singing every Sunday throughout the year. VBS is scheduled for a daily two-session program to accommodate the year-around public school students. The congregation rents a school building for Sunday mornings only so the VBS will be held in a nearby park.



Faith, South Dakota — Bethel Lutheran Church sponsored a climb to the 7,242-foot Harney Peak in the Black Hills on August 8. Pictured are a few of the 40 people, ages 2-74, who reached the top of the four-mile spectacular climb. An informal worship service was held at the peak. Two weeks later, a group from Bethel enjoyed the Passion Play in Spearfish, South Dakota.

PEOPLE AND PLACES

The AFLC is currently experiencing a flurry of church building, and at least 12 congregations are involved in construction programs or dedicating new facilities.

Abiding Faith congregation, Ortonville, Minnesota, dedicated their new sanctuary and Sunday School addition on July 11, and a new church home was dedicated August 1 on a site east of the northern Minnesota community by the **Roseau** Free Lutheran congregation. **Resurrection** congregation, Beltrami, Minnesota, organized in 1989, dedicated their first church home on August 8.

September 19 was the date for the dedication of the new **Zion** Lutheran Church, Dexter, Minnesota, replacing the original structure which was destroyed by fire in June, 1992. **Rose** congregation, rural Roseau, Minnesota has scheduled the dedication of a new addition to their church on October 3, and on the same day **Faith** Free Lutheran Church, Detroit Lakes, Minnesota, will dedicate a new home for the congregation which was established in 1991.

Good Shepherd congregation, Cokato, Minnesota, is planning a ded-

ication service on October 10 for the new church building that replaces the one destroyed by a tornado last year, and **Christ the King** Lutheran Church, Pipestone, Minnesota, will dedicate a new addition during their tenth anniversary celebration on October 31.

On November 14, **Word of Life**, Mankato, Minnesota, will dedicate their new facility. **St. John's**, Duluth, Minnesota, is constructing their new church. New additions are also under way at **Oiland** Church, rural Greenbush, Minnesota, and **Bethel** Church, Faith, South Dakota.

Newark, Illinois — On Sunday evening, August 1, Helmar Lutheran Church held a praise and testimony gospel service. The time of singing and testimonies concluded with holy communion.

Cokato, Minnesota — Good Shepherd Lutheran Church welcomes everyone to their dedication services on October 10. Morning worship begins at 10:30 a.m. followed by a noon meal. At 2 p.m. the dedication service will feature the AFLBS Choir and AFLC President Robert Lee will be the speaker.

Pukwana, South Dakota — On August 22, the Pukwana and St. Olaf Lutheran congregations enjoyed a parish worship service and picnic at the Chamberlain Park. A special part of the picnic was an auction held to raise funds for flood relief via Lutheran Brotherhood matching funds program. Some of the items auctioned were oil changes, homemade pasta, a pheasant dinner for up to ten, babysitting and numerous other goods and services. A total of \$534.50 was raised while having a good time. The Pukwana parish also joined forces with other churches and sponsored a full page ad in the Chamberlain paper. The ad, provided by Focus on the Family was titled: "In Defense of a Little Virginity."

Norway, Illinois — The Fox Valley School of Ministry began classes on September 2, with over 20 students registering for the first six-week class. The class, "Ministry of Teaching" will be held for three hours on Thursday evenings. Rev. Mel Meyer is the instructor. Organizers and students alike are excited about the turnout and enthusiasm for this adult Bible school designed to meet the needs of lay people in this northern Illinois area.



Mentor, Minnesota — On June 27, Maple Bay Free Lutheran Church dedicated a new Rogers organ and new altar cloths. For many years Ona Broden served as the organist and at the same time prayed that God would supply more organists for the congregation. Pictured are the answers to her prayer: Bonnie Skanson, Karen Floan and Ede Lee, standing by the newly dedicated organ. The altar cloths were given by Myrl Moland in memory of her husband, Harold. Her daughter, Marjorie Flom, made the new cloths.

AFLC - Holy Land Study Program

Dec. 28, 1993 through Jan. 14, 1994

Cost: \$1975 from Minneapolis or Atlanta

(Cost is 100% inclusive)

There is still space to join us on this exciting study program. However, availability is on a first come first served basis and there is limited space. Please write or call Pastor Todd Olson, Christ the King Free Lutheran Church, Box 682, Pipestone, MN 56164. Phone (507) 825-2071 or 825-5958.



Wheatland, Iowa — Christian Free Lutheran congregation recently welcomed three new families into membership, bringing the total baptized membership of this Home Mission congregation to 139. Pictured are the new families with their pastor Tim Carlson.

PASSING A PLATEAU

It was our Home Missions director who first mentioned the word "plateau" in his 1991 report to the annual conference. My dictionary defines the term as "a relatively stable level, period, or condition," and this was an appropriate description for AFLC Home Missions at that time. After a decade of rapid expansion, our resources were stretched to the limit, and the period of planting numerous new congregations seemed to have passed.

The pause was only a temporary one. Instead of a calm plateau on which to rest, Home Missions has a new mountain to climb. This issue of *The Lutheran Ambassador* includes reports of services starting in several new communities, as well as indications of strong interest in others. Encouraging contacts from coast to coast point to an exciting surge of opportunity for this vital expression of our vision and commitment to building free and living Lutheran congregations.

This new era of Home Mission expansion is possible not because of increased financial subsidies, but rather to creative approaches primarily originating in our congregations and districts instead of the national offices. Churches planting churches ... surely an association of free congregations has a special affinity for such a plan.

There will still be plenty to do for our Home Missions department, as counsel and direction are provided for new congregations whether a subsidy is received or not. Funds will be available as current Home Mission congregations become self-supporting, and Church Extension loans will continue to be needed for new construction.

Yet these resources are not sufficient for the open door that is before our fellowship. Each congregation and district should be challenged to leave the plateau of "business-as-usual" behind, and to establish a personal Home Mission program.

Look around you. The open door of opportunity may be close at hand. "Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest," (John 4:35).

DOCTRINE MAKES A DIFFERENCE

The day of the denomination is dead, announce the church growth authorities. People are concerned about the life of a congregation, not its label. Multitudes fill the auditoriums of generic churches that specialize in ministering to the needs of their generation, usually by means of music and a worship style that are tuned to contemporary tastes.

What about doctrine? Divisive doctrines are not emphasized, one is informed, but the focus is placed instead on the fundamentals of the faith. There can be an agreement to disagree on controversial doctrines that have divided Christians over the centuries, and to concentrate on the basic beliefs that unite us. After all, does it really make a difference what doctrines we believe when salvation is a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ?

Yes, doctrine does make a difference! "The pastor always preaches the Word at my new church." But what is his doctrine of the Word? Does he (and the often unnamed denomination to which he belongs) stand on the inerrancy and infallibility of Holy Scriptures? Does he believe in the Word Alone? Are Law and Gospel clearly divided? Are sin and grace boldly proclaimed? If you are not sure, then sharpen your sense of discernment by studying a solid scriptural doctrinal handbook.

It does not require a degree in theology to discover what a church teaches about original sin or the Christian's old nature. If your new pastor does not believe in the need for daily dying to self, subscribing instead to the "holiness" doctrines that deny this central element in spiritual development, then all the contemporary worship styles in the world will not make a difference.

What does a church believe concerning the means of grace? Many of these successful new congregations especially attract young adults, who look forward to establishing homes and families in the future. How do we bring our little ones to Christ? By a prayer of dedication that accomplishes nothing in the sinful heart of a child, or by means of Holy Baptism, the "washing of water with the Word"? Is the celebration of Holy Communion merely a memorial, or do we really meet our Saviour there?

Doctrine makes a difference. Our own souls are the losers, as well as generations to come, if we settle for the thin soup of style in exchange for the substance of an evangelical Lutheran doctrinal legacy.

The Last Word

Is It Me, Lord?

Evangelizing God's people must be the first priority in our generation. Unless this is our focus and consistent goal, there is little hope for our lost and needy world. Christians must relearn via the work of the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the Law and the Gospel that we are sin and exceedingly sinful. We must become so lost that Jesus is the only hope. This realization must be so graphic that we daily plead to be under the blood and to be totally immersed in grace through Jesus Christ. This will not be a pleasant experience or process as playing church with our assortment of religious games will have to go. Priorities in many areas of our life will likely take an about face. Gods of various stripes will no doubt hit the ash can and the first that God will likely touch in North America is our love of material things.

Over the past months I have asked myself: "How much would God have to take before I was down to the necessities that He has promised?" Want and necessity have become so merged and blurred that only God would know the answer to that. The next question I have asked myself: "How would I respond if God took away all but the necessities?" One cannot know for sure because God does not give grace until it is required. Grace cannot be stored or banked. But the bottom line is: would my eyes be fixed on Jesus (grace) or would it be on that which was lost? If my focus (God forbid) would be on that which was lost I would be at that point a useless pillar of salt like Lot's wife. No, that is only partially true. The truth would be I had been a useless pillar of salt for sometime but now it would be revealed for all to see.

Hopefully the above example illustrates how far we could be from a right relationship to God and how desperately the people of God need to be re-evangelized. Generally we don't make an explicit decision to walk away from God. No, as a rule, it is a casual drifting which soon results in a subtle longing for the fleshpots of this world. Do

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you see yourself in the above illustration and, like me, wonder just how you would react? If so, I think we may have begun to see there is a problem and perhaps we could then find the path to a solution. One thing is for sure, we, the people of God, need to be re-evangelized because there is so much sham and hypocrisy in our lives!

Once the Lord gets past our material gods there are numerous other areas of similar searching of the Spirit of God. So often we think of sin as only being an overt act like murder, adultery or stealing. In other words, anything which obviously steps out of the parameters of the Ten Commandments. However, Jesus made it very clear that our thoughts and intents are constantly out of bounds and this is often true when we and others think we are doing good. (See Matthew 5:27-28; Matthew 23:1-36; and John 8:1-11.)

No wonder Jeremiah says our heart is desperately wicked and who can know it? Certainly we will never fully realize in this life how desperately sinful we are but it is vitally important that God be allowed to show us what we can bear because only then will we experience humility. Humility is the first step in God's prescription for spiritual health. II Chronicles 7:14 says: "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves..."

Humility will never be realized until we see ourselves in the mirror of God's image. Originally we were made in that image but humility can come only when we see how desperately far we have fallen and then realize afresh just how completely helpless we are to remedy the situation. Humility will also teach us that there are no brownie points accumulated on the grace road. There will never be a time when we can say, "I have done." If it is done it has been done by grace alone. Everything else that is done will be burned away at the judgment, (I Corinthians 3:10-15). There, at last, we will fully understand humility and consequently our song throughout the endless ages will be saved by grace.

Dear Lord, through the quickening preaching of your Word, bring true humility to the lives of your people by revealing our sin and above all our sinful condition. Then lead us to the next step which is the sinners' prayer. Amen.



—Pastor
Gene R. Sundby