



THE LUTHERAN

AMBASSADOR

April 9, 2002

FORGIVEN

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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AN ENCOURAGING WORD

Coming to our senses

I'm very near-sighted. Without my glasses, anything outside of 12 inches is blurry. If you really want to disable me, take away my glasses and I am rendered helpless. I remember falling asleep once on a couch in a living room of a home I had never been in before. Upon awakening, I squinted and could barely make out a figure on the other side of the room. He was saying my name. I couldn't see the person well enough to know who it was. So I painstakingly and embarrassingly fumbled and stumbled trying to remember where I had set my glasses. After knocking a few magazines and assorted knick-knacks on the floor and nearly shattering my spectacles with my foot, I found my glasses and placed them on my face. What a relief! At last I could see. I could see the mess I made. I could see the other person standing in the room. I could see the one who was speaking my name. I could see.

Judging by the brainpower devoted to it, sight would be the most vital human sense. The real work of vision is not done in the eyes but in the brain, which interprets the information the eye receives. Every moment your eyes are open they are receiving an unbelievable amount of data. Colors, shadings, shapes and the finest of details are absorbed through the eyes where more than 70 percent of our body's neuro-receptors are located. What a fabulous blessing we've received in the gift of sight.

The Bible is full of passages referring to sight:

- Elisha prayed that the Lord would open the eyes of his servant so he could see in the spirit realm.
- Zacchaeus climbed a sycamore tree because he wanted to see Jesus.
- Saul, later Paul, was struck with blindness for three days after seeing a bright light from heaven as

he neared Damascus.

- On the island of Patmos, John saw Jesus and was instructed to write on a scroll everything that he saw.

We, too, are invited to look closely and see the works of God. Psalm 66:5 says, "Come and see what God has done, how awesome His works in man's behalf." I've heard it said that as we view a picture or painting, our eyes are drawn to the spot where the darkest dark meets the lightest light. The same thing happens as we view the extraordinary work of God on our behalf. The spot where our darkest sin meets the brilliant light of Jesus points us to the cross where we see God's gift of forgiveness, mercy and grace. Can you see Him? Are you drawn to this Son of Man who forgives?

On the road to Emmaus, in Luke 24, two men were walking along discussing the recent events of Christ's sentencing, crucifixion, death and resurrection when Jesus Himself came up and walked along with them. But they didn't recognize Him. It was as if they didn't have their glasses on. Not until later that evening when Jesus took bread, broke it and began to give it to them, were their eyes opened and they finally recognized Him. At last they could see. They could see who was in the room with them. They could see who was speaking their name. They could see Jesus. Can you?



— Paul Kneeland
Youth pastor
Faith & Stillwater
Free Lutheran
Kalispell, Mont.

SOUND BITES

My burden is to see spiritual communities develop, where spiritual friendships connect people. I long to see communities where people feel safe enough to be broken.

— *Larry Crabb*

Now the greater our knowledge of our own misery, the more profound will be our confidence in the goodness and mercy of God.

— *Francis de Sales*

Since, therefore, sin is now atoned for, and the Law satisfied, the believer has no longer any reason to fear the wrath of God; on the contrary, the whole Divine love and Fatherly favor is upon him, and no human reason can comprehend or believe the love wherewith God embraces and cares for such a child.

— *C. O. Rosenius*

Forgiveness is an act of the will, and the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart.

— *Corrie Ten Boom*

We won't get very far in the development of holiness if we are defensive about our flaws. That is why truly holy people are so easy to be with. They have been around God too long to try to pretend they are perfect. They are the first to acknowledge their pride and their faults.

— *Rebecca Manley Pippert*



A forgiving heart

Have you felt this sweet spirit?

“I Can’t Forgive Them!” It has been almost 30 years now since I thought those awful words. As a pastor on the staff of a larger church, I found myself forced to take a medical leave of absence after being diagnosed with probable infectious hepatitis. But that wasn’t the worst of it. The church staff accused me of knowingly endangering the entire congregation. “You are no Christian,” one member said. That hurt! I was outraged! There was no way I could picture myself forgiving people who hurt me so much. I was angry and wanted them to pay.

As a precaution, I was homebound for a month until my medical condition improved. During that long month, I paced the floor and stewed about the injustice done to me. I found no peace. Nothing was going to change the way I felt. I could not, would not forgive them, nor could I imagine going back to the church to work.

Eventually my heart began to break as I sought the peace of the Lord. He did not justify my anger. Instead, He humbled me, showing me my sin and how truly needy I was. I prayed that God would show me the truth about what I was experiencing. Almost immediately, He pointed me to Jesus, hanging on the cross, and His words: “Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.” He said to my heart, “Do you think that you are the only one who’s had to endure the mistreatment of others? Look at my Son, Jesus, and what He endured on the cross. See His pain and what He endured for you.”

With this reality, I was truly broken and began praying that the Lord would show me how to do in my heart what I knew I couldn’t do on my own: forgive those who hurt me so deeply. Day after day I prayed that God would show me how to forgive them. The date for my return back to work was just a few days away. “Lord, how can I go back to work when my sin is so great toward them?” I began pray-

ing that God would work a miracle inside me, turning my bitter spirit into a sweet spirit. I prayed that when I returned to work, the staff would know without me saying a word that I had forgiven them.

That day came, and I remember praying that no one would experience bitterness from me. I continued that prayer day by day, week after week, until one day God gave me wonderful confirmation of His grace.

One of the staff members stopped me in the hall and said, "Pastor Dave, it seems like you no longer have anything against us."

"No, I certainly don't," I was able to say truthfully. In my heart, I was rejoicing in God my Savior for richly answering my prayer.

What I learned during those dark days I've carried with me wherever I have gone. Yes, there have been times when I've forgotten and let bitterness take over when falsely accused or attacked for one reason or another. But I thank God for speaking to my heart each time, bringing me back to His lesson of forgiveness.

We are never able on our own to forgive those who hurt us. Our sin is too great. It is by God's grace that He enables us to experience His transforming power, which gives us a "sweet spirit" in the place of bitterness and anger. When you experience that power, it is possible to forgive even the worst of offenders. Even if there is no indication of repentance, you can, by the grace of God, let the offense go. The peace of God will flood into your soul and you will have a new love for those who have hurt you. The miracle of the cross will enable you to pray with our Savior, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing."

— **Pastor David Hinrichs**
Abiding Faith Free Lutheran
Ortonville, Minn.



A wife's P.S.: Watching my husband go through this experience was one of the most difficult times in my life. I would like to be able to tell you a story of spiritual victory. Isn't that what you would expect — especially from a pastor's wife — that I sought the Lord, forgave these people who hurt my husband, and harbor no bitterness? Yes, I sought the Lord. Yes, I forgave the offenders. Yes, I have had peace. And yet, outrage and bitterness have returned again and again. This has been an ongoing spiritual struggle for me. I have experienced more defeat than victory. I can tell you that today I am free of bitterness toward anyone who has hurt my husband. But tomorrow? All I know is that the love and forgiveness is God's. I simply can't do it.

— **Claire Hinrichs**

FORGIVENESS

Keys to a forgiving heart



A Broken Heart:

What is it that breaks one's heart?

Meditating on the Cross of Christ and seeing the depth of our Savior's love and forgiveness for those who crucified Him (Psalm 51:17; Luke 23:34). It is seeing that it is your own sin that put Him there. There is no room for blaming others. The effect of meditating on the cross will turn your thoughts away from the person who has offended you, focusing instead on your own offense (Romans 5:9-11). A broken heart is a humble heart, ready for the miracle of God's reconciling work.

A Praying Heart:

What is it that changes one's heart toward a person who has offended you? God, of course, but through the desperate cries of the sinner in prayer. The hard work is to combat one's own sinful nature in order to find the power of God to forgive someone who has offended you (Acts 7:54-60). It often takes persistent prayer before finding the emergence of the sweet spirit God puts in your heart (Matthew 5:43-48). I am convinced that the delay is in our own readiness to receive and believe what God has already given.

A Loving Heart:

What is it that helps heal the broken relationship with your brother or sister? The willingness to once again be with this person, trusting that God will work His miracle of love and reconciliation. Yes, sometimes hearts remain unchanged and bitterness is nurtured because of Satan's foothold. But when hearts are broken and seeking, bitterness and bondage are wonderfully overcome by the grace of God (1 John 4:7-21).

FINDING M

It's one thing to have a good reason to do something, and another to have the motivation to do it. When I was in seminary, one fellow seminarian amazed his comrades consistently by writing all his research papers within the first month of the semester and having it "easy" for the rest of the semester (he will recognize himself, and so will his classmates). I fell into the much larger group of students who lacked his type of inner motivation and were much more motivated by looming deadlines.

In the Bible we are given many excellent reasons to forgive others, and yet in our fallen, sinful nature we lack the inner motivation to do so. So what does it take to have the inner motivation to forgive?

First, we must realize that we have been forgiven much by God. In Matthew 18:23-35, Jesus tells the parable of the unmerciful servant who was not able to pay his master a debt of 10,000 talents (it would take us many years to save the equivalent amount). In verses 26 and 27, "The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go." But that same servant was not willing to forgive his fellow servant a debt of 100 denarii (pocket money). When the master found out, he said, "Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?" (verse 33). So the unmerciful servant was thrown back into prison.

We are in the same spot as that servant. On the cross, Jesus paid our debt, which was more than 10,000 times 10,000 talents, and yet the measly little debts or offenses we may hold against our neighbor may easily seem bigger in our eyes. Because we've been forgiven much, we have an excellent reason to forgive others any amount, any number of times, even

more than "seventy times seven" (Matthew 18:22).

Second, if we don't forgive others, God won't forgive us. Every Sunday we pray the Lord's Prayer, which Jesus taught us in Matthew 6:9-13. Some of us pray that prayer every day, and in that prayer we're actually telling God in verse 12 that He may forgive us in the measure that we forgive others. "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." It's amazing that we don't tremble more when we come to that part. This is the one petition of the prayer that Jesus actually explained, in verses 14 and 15: "For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins." It's an eternally crucial reason to forgive others.

Third, forgiving means that we are not guilty of murder. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus makes it clear that obeying the commandments is a matter of inner attitudes as well as outward actions, as in the case of adultery (Matthew 5:27-28). In verses 21 and 22, Jesus says, "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment." The harboring of anger and bitterness goes hand-in-hand with an unforgiving heart. And so we learn that in God's eyes this is the same sin as committing a murder, subject to the same judgment.

Fourth, forgiving helps us put away anger and bitterness. Ephesians 4:26-27 tell us, "In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you're still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold." Even anger that was justified in the beginning can quickly become unrighteous anger and bitterness if we hold on to our anger and are not willing to for-

MOTIVATION

give. When we do that the devil has an opportunity to set up a beachhead in our hearts and lead us further astray. One of his footholds is when we say in pride, "I'm in the right and my neighbor is in the wrong, so I have a right to hold this grudge." But like venom that quickly spreads out from a puncture wound, this will quickly make us sick with sin.

Fifth, an unforgiving heart will consume us physically and spiritually. Psalm 32:3 says, "When I kept silent [about my sin], my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer." An unwillingness to forgive is sin. When we hold on to that sin, it eats away at us inside. Many doctors have observed that the root causes behind the ailments they see in their offices are anger, bitterness, hurt and an unwillingness to forgive. It is a lie of the devil to think that it's to our advantage to hold something against our neighbor, when in fact it is our ruin, physically as well as spiritually and eternally.

Sixth, we don't want to grieve the Holy Spirit. It's possible to be a believer and yet in the old nature to be unforgiving. That's why, in the words of the catechism, we must "drown our sins in daily sorrow and repentance." Ephesians 4:30-32 says, "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."

These are six excellent reasons from the Bible to forgive our neighbor, and there are probably many more. But these reasons in themselves will never motivate us. In our old nature we can have all these reasons memorized and still only be hardened

against them. We will be like those in Romans 1:32: "Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them."

The inner motivation to forgive comes only from being a new creation in Christ. As II Corinthians 5:17 says, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come." Ezekiel 36:26-27 says, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws."

When we believe in Christ by His grace, we say with Paul in Galatians 2:20, "I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." When Christ lives in our hearts, we have His inner motivation in our hearts. And what is His inner motivation for forgiveness? Love. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

It is only through being made new in Christ that we have the inner motivation of Christ's love, which gives us the desire to follow God's command to forgive others just as He has forgiven us. It is my prayer that we not only see the many excellent reasons to forgive, but that we all seek in Christ alone the inner motivation to forgive others.

— *Pastor Michael Peterson*
Ortley Free Lutheran
Ortley, S.D.



Clean me up

Like David, we can be restored to the joy of salvation

Does it make a difference to know that God forgives us? A simple, quick answer to that question is, yes, of course. As I thought about that question in preparation for this article, I was immediately drawn to the book of Psalms to dig a little deeper as to why it is important to *know* that we are forgiven by God. As you read this article, follow along with me from Psalm 51:1-17.

In this psalm David pleads for forgiveness and cleansing (verses 1-2), confesses his guilt (verses 3-6), prays for pardon and restoration (verses 7-12) and resolves to praise God (verses 12-17). The key verse that jumped out from that passage of Scripture is Psalm 51:12, “Restore to me again the joy of your salvation, and make me willing to obey you” (New Living Translation).

As sinners, we can appreciate how heavy David’s heart was and his desire to approach the Heavenly Father to ask for forgiveness and to be restored in his daily walk with God. It is important to ask for

the Father’s forgiveness so we can restore the *joy* of our salvation to our hearts and souls. Coming before the Father, acknowledging our weakness and confessing our sins and inadequacies before Him restore our fellowship with Him. God wants a broken spirit and a broken and repentant heart. You can never please God by outward actions — no matter how good — if your heart attitude is not right. Are you sorry for your sin? Do you intend to stop? God is pleased by this kind of repentance.

Psalm 51 is a confession to meditate over. As you examine this confession, you see a man who has been broken and begs for restoration. I have never been to the depths of David’s despair, but my sins have brought me to the point of crying out to God, “Please forgive me, for the things I have done. I am a helpless sinner.” Certain words and phrases from David’s confession in Psalm 51 touch my heart with the hope of what asking for forgiveness brings. They are as follows:

I Have mercy on me

- Blot out the stains of my sins
- Against you, and you alone I have sinned
- For I was born a sinner
- Wash me, and I will be whiter than snow
- Oh, give me back my joy again
- Create in me a clean heart
- Renew a right spirit within me
- Do not banish me from your presence
- Don't take your Holy Spirit from me
- Make me willing to obey you
- Then will I teach your ways to sinners
- Unseal my lips that I may praise you
- You would not be pleased with burnt

sacrifices

• The sacrifice you want is a broken spirit. A broken and repentant heart, O God.

Do you ever feel stagnant in your faith, as though you were just going through the motions? Has sin ever driven a wedge between you and God, making Him seem distant? David felt this way. He had sinned with Bathsheba. In his prayer he cried, "Restore to me the joy of your salvation." God wants us to be close to Him and experience a full and complete life. That is what we long for, is it not? A full life, a life of completeness. That is what asking for forgiveness is all about. We can experience true joy when we take the time to ask God to forgive and help us in the areas of our lives where we are weak or have fallen to temptation. God knows our human weakness; He knows our hearts. He longs for us to

come to Him daily. He wants to put His arms around us and say, "No matter what, I forgive you, and I love you!"

I John 1:9 is a great restoration promise for us. It reads, "But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong." Don't let the sun set on any unconfessed sin. Don't delay to confess because it will build a wall around your heart and make repentance harder to deal with.

Does it matter that God forgives our sins? You bet it does! Confession is good for the soul. Forgiveness frees us to live the life that God has planned for us. It equips us to be bold in the expression of our faith and what God can do for others. David realized that after confession there would be joy again. If you are burdened down with a heavy heart because of sin in your life, claim I John 1:9 and be restored to the joy of your salvation. God will create a pure heart within you. That is what forgiveness is all about.

— **Beth Bergren**
Hope Lutheran
Minneapolis, Minn.



Beth Bergren, a mother of two teenage daughters, is a speaker for women's conferences and retreats. She writes for the Lutherans for Evangelism newsletter, LifeLines.

From tragedy to triumph

It was Communion Sunday. The friendly hellos, the uplifting music, the sunlight streaming through the great colored glass cross seemed to mask the sadness and disappointment I was feeling in my soul. Besides feeling hurt and upset by the attitudes of others, I wrestled with my own inadequacy to put Christ-like forgiveness into action. The battle raged.

Thoughts raced through my mind: “How can

people I love so much continue to disappoint me? Why this? Why that? They really don’t *deserve* my love and attention and forgiveness. But then, Lord, do I deserve Your love and forgiveness? O Lord, my measure of forgiveness is so small, so incomplete, so conditional. I long to be more like You, Lord. Forgive me, Jesus, and empower me by Your Spirit to forgive again.”

Although life on the mission field is exciting

and fulfilling, our ministry and personal lives are also marked by deep disappointments. Many times, those in whom we’ve invested the most end up being our greatest disappointments. When we love much, we open ourselves up to being hurt deeply as well. However, we’ve learned some spiritual principles that have helped us and others let God transform tragedy into triumph.

First of all, we’ve learned that forgiveness is a choice. Satan binds peoples’ hearts and minds through refusal to forgive. He wants to ruin our lives by keeping us chained with bitterness, blaming other people and situations for our unhappiness.

Someone else’s sin against us can lead to sin in our own lives if we choose *not* to forgive. How thankful we are that Jesus chose the way of the cross — the way of suffering, self-sacrifice and undeserving love. Jesus triumphed over self, sin and death to offer us an abundant life (John 10:10). It is paramount that we learn to claim the victory of the blood of Jesus in all of our relationships so that we might be blessed and be a blessing. The choice is ours.

Second, forgiveness does not depend on the repentance of the one who has hurt us. Forgiveness is a gift we can freely give as Christ freely gave to us (Matthew 10:8). Jesus died on the cross for us before we were even born. He forgave us long before we repented (Romans 5:8). His forgiveness opened the door for us to be in a personal relationship with Him. As we learn to liberate forgiveness to those who offend us, we, too, open the door for restoration and relationship. This does not guarantee that a relationship will be restored, just as God’s forgiveness of our sins does not guarantee that we will repent and seek a living relationship with Him. But, it does guarantee that we can be in a right relationship with our Heavenly Father and enjoy the blessings of living in peace and fellowship with Him.

Third, God’s rich mercy enables us to participate in His forgiving, merciful nature (II Peter 1:3-4). In and of ourselves, we don’t have the desire or the power to forgive over and over again. But, by His grace we can forgive and love as He has forgiven us (Ephesians 4:32). We can be certain of His forgiveness as we approach the throne of grace. Can others approach us with that same certainty?

That Sunday morning I decided to forgive again. As I approached the altar, I was overwhelmed by the certainty of Jesus’ love for me, and I asked the Lord to give me a heart of forgiveness and a commitment to love, regardless the cost. I accepted Jesus’ invitation, “Drink from it, all of you. This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sin,” (Matthew 26:28). The battle was over. The precious blood of Jesus cleansed my heart again. Alleluia!

— **Becky Abel**
Missionary
Curitiba, Brazil



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Lutheran Church of the Cross, Laguna Woods, Calif., started in 1964 as a mission congregation to Leisure World — a planned, retirement community that has grown to 22,000 residents. Since then, the southern California population sprawl, in search of more affordable housing, has brought a full spectrum of people of all ages and ethnic and economic backgrounds. In obedience to the Gospel mandate, LCC is attempting to reach all people in our service area.

In 1990, the average age of LCC members was more than 70, there were less than five children in Sunday school and the baptized membership was 260. We now have 1,700 members, 700 in weekly worship, 500 children enrolled with 300 in weekly Christian education, and 300 adults enrolled in weekly Bible study.

We strive to celebrate our intergenerational make-up rather than cater to separate age groups within our family. Therefore, our six worship services every weekend use the same bulletin — with minor variations from service to service and campus to campus. We strive to be a true “family of and in Christ.”

We operate a Christian preschool for 155 children, out of which 50-70 members join the church each year. In 1999, we opened a satellite campus three miles away in a new and growing community called Aliso Viejo. This campus also houses a Christian school for kindergarten through eighth-grade students, which has grown from 110 in the first year to 240 enrolled for the 2002-2003 academic year. Weekend worship services and midweek min-

istry programs are offered at both campuses.

We have a staff that includes two ordained pastors (Leland Lantz and Bill Bartlett), one graduating seminarian who is our youth pastor and who will, God willing, be ordained through the AFLC, and an intern who will arrive in June from the AFLC seminary (Wade Mobley).

Lutheran Church of the Cross recently affiliated with the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, initiating a unique model of “dual-affiliation” with the AFLC and the ELCA. Its members love Jesus Christ and His Word. They are grateful for the love of Christ and encouragement in His Word that the AFLC has already offered them. They strive to be faithful, uncompromising to God’s Word, and expectant of Christ’s power to transform witnesses in their work, in their community, in their larger-Church relations and in world missions.

Our core values:

- Christ-centered, Bible-based in everything.
- Christ-centered, biblically-based worship using the same basic service at all services, but varying the style from week to week (to avoid a split that can often occur).
- Bible study, presently enrolling more than 300 adults in midweek and Sunday morning settings.
- Evangelism — pursued, lifted up, prayed for, encouraged, practiced and seen as part and parcel of



TOP: Lutheran Church of the Cross, Laguna Woods, Calif.

MIDDLE: Aliso Viejo Church of the Cross and Christian School, a satellite ministry of the Laguna Woods church.

BOTTOM: Pastor Bill and Cindy Bartlett.

the Christian lifestyle, expressed in everything from Sunday morning hospitality, to verbal witness and invitation.

• Service to others in the name of Jesus Christ. Faith active in love for the sake of and in obedience to Christ (homeless shelter, missionaries, mission partner congregation, local food-assistance outlet, etc.).



FLS internships announced

Internship assignments for 2002-'03 have been announced for four FLS students. They include:

- Richard (Brenda) Carr, who will work with the congregation at Hope Lutheran, Minneapolis, under Pastor Tom Brock.

- Matthew (Christine) Steendahl, who will work with the congregation at Elim Lutheran in Lake Stevens, Wash.,



Carr



Steendahl



Logeman



Mobley

under Pastor Mark Molstre.

- Brent Logeman, who will work with his home congregation at Faith Lutheran in Metropolis, Ill., where he has been serving as interim pastor.

- Wade (Michele) Mobley, who will work with a new AFLC congregation, Lutheran Church of the Cross, at Laguna Woods, Calif., under Pastor Bill Bartlett.

Make housing reservations for annual conference

Making plans for the 2002 Annual Conference in El Campo, Texas? Those plans should include housing reservations. This year, rooms will not be blocked for conference attendees. Reservations should be made early to secure a room. The conference will be from June 12 to 16 at the El Campo Civic Center, and is hosted by Faith Lutheran.

Housing information:

Moonlight Bay Bed & Breakfast, Palacios, Texas, 1-877-461-7070.

White Lodge Inn, El Campo, Texas, (979) 543-3358.

Shoney's Inn & Suites, El Campo, 1-800-222-2222.

El Campo Inn, El Campo, 1-888-593-7660.

Best Western Executive Inn, El Campo, (979) 543-7033.

Bay Prairie Lodge, Midfield, Texas, (512) 588-6565.

RV Park:

United Enterprises, El Campo, (979) 543-1941.

For more information, visit www.aflc.org or call Faith Lutheran at (979) 543-1842, or AFLC headquarters at (763) 545-5631.

Pastor Tonnes Pollestad has accepted a position as regional director of development for The Bible League, an interdenominational ministry based in South Holland, Ill. Pollestad is also serving as interim pastor at Word of Life Lutheran in Mankato, Minn. He most recently worked as director of Vision 2004.

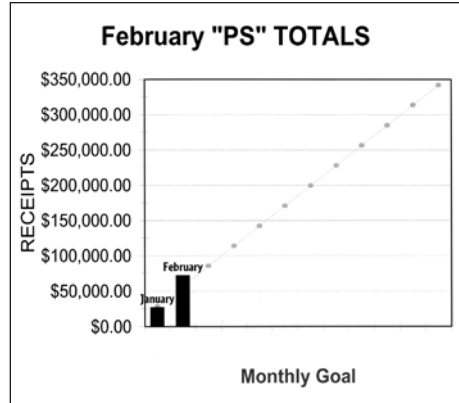
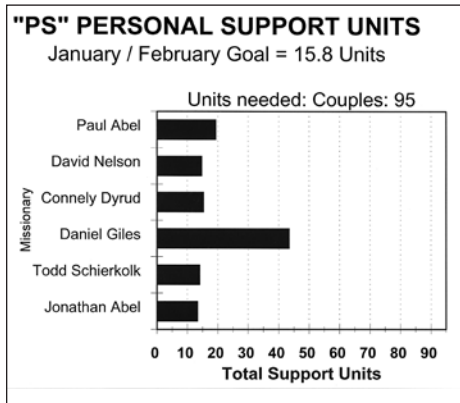
Pastor Alex Lissow, Culbertson, Mont., has accepted a position as director of Lifetime Adoption Ministries, a Christian adoption and counseling agency in Grass Valley, Calif. He resigned March 31 as pastor of Bethel Free Lutheran in Culbertson and Faith Free Lutheran in Brockton, Mont. Lissow said his goal is to begin a home missions church.

Members of **Living Hope**, a new congregation forming out of Emmaus Lutheran, Bloomington, Minn., have been granted permission by the city of St. Michael, Minn., to rent a middle school for worship services.

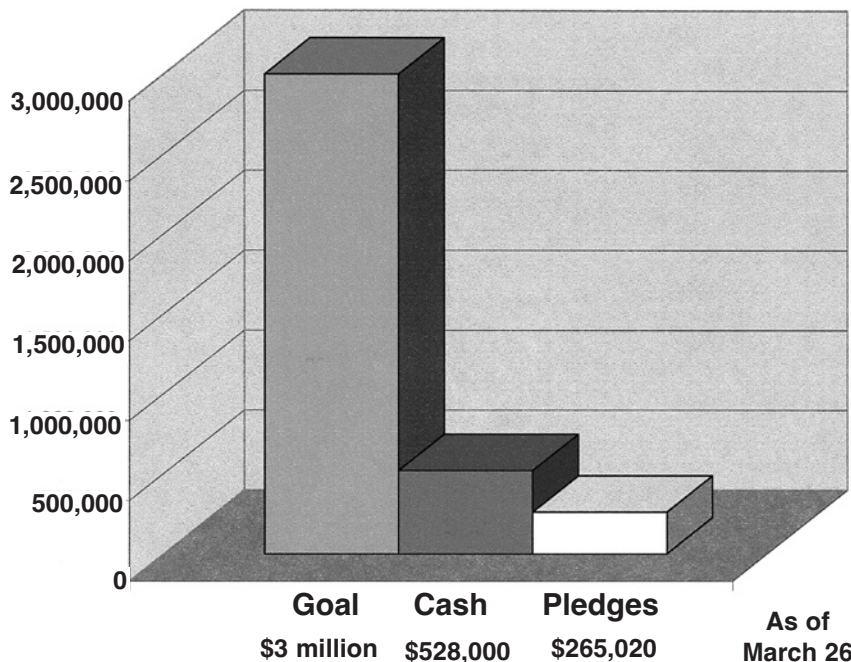
Pastor Gary Skramstad, St. Cloud, Minn., has accepted a position as chaplain at Country Manor, a long-term care facility in Sartell, Minn. He leaves his position as pastor of Redeeming Love Lutheran, St. Joseph, Minn.

'Breakaway 2002' at ARC

Lutherans for Evangelism will host Breakaway 2002 July 7-13 at the ARC, Osceola, Wis. Evening speakers include Pastor Jack Aamot, former director of Lutheran Evangelistic Movement, and Pastor Chuck Lindquist, director of World Mission Prayer League. Elective sessions include "Characters from History," "What Was I Thinking?," "Meet the Missionary" and "Women in Rural Asia — A New Resource for Witness Strategies." Brochures are available by calling (763) 535-3309.



Vision 2004 Campaign



Vision of Glory to host prayer breakfast

Vision of Glory Lutheran Church, the newest AFLC congregation located in Plymouth, Minn., will host the Twin Cities area National Day of Prayer Breakfast from 6 to 8 a.m. May 2. With the theme "Game Plan for Prayer," the event will focus on praying for the country's leaders on a national, state and local level. The breakfast will feature speaker John Campbell, a former Minnesota Viking, soloist Purita Edson and MC Joyce Harley, KKMS Radio.

Tickets cost \$13 for general seating and \$104 for a table of eight. Registrations must be made by April 20. For more information and for a registration form, contact Dar Sjostrom, Chair of VOG NDOP, 13200 Highway 55, Plymouth, MN 55441, or call (763) 473-3730.

Make plans for summer camp at the ARC

How can we send our kids to camp on a limited budget? Here are some ideas that churches have done to insure that all kids have an opportunity to go to camp.

Basket auction: Medicine Lake Lutheran, Plymouth, Minn., has asked the church members to assemble baskets that would have whatever the assembler might find desirable by another. The ARC is donating some goods to include in the baskets. Eric Westlake, ARC director, will be the "auctioneer" to bring in top dollar for each basket. Medicine Lake's AAL Branch will match up to \$800.

Recycling cans: Members of Faith Lutheran, Shakopee, Minn., have a trailer parked outside the back of the church where members can drop aluminum cans throughout the year. The money collected from the recycling center goes into a camp fund for kids.

Civic leadership endorsement: Minnewaska Lutheran Church of Starbuck, Minn., applied for a grant through the Jaycees Outdoor Scholarship Fund and was able to send a large group of campers. Contact your local Jaycees chapter. Monies are available for youth to attend outdoor experiences like camp.

Upcoming Retreats at the ARC, where the theme this year is "PUSH: Pray Until Something Happens" — Ephesians 6:18.

Men's Retreat, April 26-27: This is an overnigher where you can bring a man you want to leave a fingerprint on. Bring your Bible study group, board of elders, guys from work. The messages will be on the "Prayer of a Godly Man: Jabez." Speakers include: Pastors Michael Brandt, Tom Brock, Al Monson, Elden Nelson and Don Richman. There will be time to golf, skeet shoot and play basketball or volleyball. Cost is \$40. Add \$5 after April 15.

Summer Retreat Dates:

- Teen Retreat for students in grades 8-12: June 21-23
- Jr. Camp for students in grades 4-7: June 23-28
- Kid's Kamp for students in grades 1-3: June 28-30
- Family Retreat, June 26-28
- Family Camp, July 28-August 3
- Prayer Retreat, August 30-31

For more information, access ARC brochures and retreat info at www.aflc.org.

Eric Manus remembered for ministries with youth, community

Eric Manus, 27, the youth director at Christ the King Lutheran Church, Pipestone, Minn., died March 18 at Pipestone County Medical Center.



He graduated from Riggs High School, Pierre, S.D., in 1992, and South Dakota State University, Brookings, S.D., where he was active in various music groups as well as the Navigators and a Christian band called The Living Stones. He trained for youth work with Tentmakers and began working with Christ the King Lutheran in 1997. He worked with the music ministry team and helped form the Youth Praise Team at Christ the King. He also began the Sunday evening BASIC (Brothers and Sisters in Christ) Program. He was active in the local community, and was instrumental in starting the Freedom Fest Music Festival in Pipestone. He had a deep love for music, but above all, he had a passion for Christ. His Bible was found opened to Matthew 9:35-10:1.

"His simple lifestyle made it obvious that the lives he touched were God's work through him," said Pastor Kevin Olson, AFLC's Youth Ministries director.

He is survived by his parents, Louis and Pauline Manus, Rapid City, S.D.; his sister, Tanya Lynn Manus, Rapid City; his grandparents, Helen Prather, Poulsville, Wash., Louis and Frances Manus, Marysville, Wash.; aunts, uncles and cousins.

His funeral was March 22 at Christ the King Lutheran.

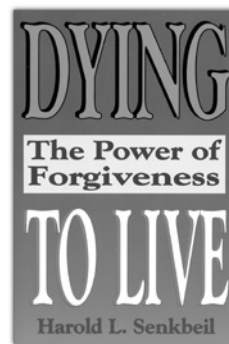
Senkbeil's book offers a biblical approach to sanctification

Harold Senkbeil's book, *Dying to Live*, describes the life of sanctification, not in terms of "how to," but in the biblical terms of death to self and resurrection to new life in Christ.

The author, a Lutheran pastor serving in Elm Grove, Wis., explains the importance of the means of grace, prayer and divine worship in the ongoing life of the child of God. The Christian life is described not as the product of self-effort and/or self-discipline, but as the fruit produced in one who has died and is buried with Christ, and who abides in Christ as the branch abides in the vine.

An excellent read, *Dying to Live* also has a study guide available.

— **Pastor Phil Haugen**



Note: In 1989, long-time Lutheran pastor Harold Senkbeil wrote his original study on Christian growth, "Sanctification: Christ in Action." Four years later, he wrote "Dying to Live," an easier-reading version on the same theme, "but without the academic language," as he explained it. AFLC Parish Education offers the book for \$12.75. The study guide, written by John T. Pless, is available for \$2.50. Call Parish Education at (763) 545-5631 for more information.

Dynneson honored at service

Pastor Lawrence Dynneson, 88, of Nogales, Ariz., died March 4.

Born Sept. 27, 1913, in Sidney, Mont., he was the son of Niels and Laurine Dynneson. He attended Bible school and later, at the age of 42, attended college and Northwestern Seminary, Minneapolis. After serving a church in Louisville, Miss., in 1964 he returned to his vision of starting a church in Nogales, where he helped build Triumph Lutheran Church. He retired in 1979 and was instrumental in starting Living Faith Lutheran Church, Tucson, Ariz. He continued to serve the Lord in Nogales.

"Lawrence was always there," said Pastor Richard Gunderson, who officiated at the funeral service. "He was a steady, steady guy. He was an honorable man and was rec-



ognized as that in the community and church."

Many people touched by Dynneson's work as a child returned for his funeral service.

Surviving are his wife of 54 years, Gola; four daughters, Karla (Pastor Ted) Kennedy, Miriam (Dave) Ramse, Pauline (Bill) Eardensohn, Lois (Steve) Haag; one brother, Hans Dynneson of Colorado; nine grandchildren, David, Matthew, Kayla, Jonathan, Chris, Paul, Mark, Ben and Andy, and two great-grandchildren, Luke and Ellie.

The service was March 10 at Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Nogales.

What are we known for?

A friend of the AFLC and a graduate of the Free Lutheran Seminary, Wayne Pederson has been in the news lately. Last fall, Pederson was selected as the new president and chief operating officer of the National Religious Broadcasters. He had served in various positions in the organization over the past 25 years, most recently as its elected chairman. He has also worked for many years at Northwestern Radio in St. Paul, Minn.

The NRB is an association of more than 1,490 Christian communicators across the country that exists to foster electronic media access for the gospel, promote standards of excellence, integrity and accountability and provide networking and fellowship opportunities for its members. Evangelical Christians from a wide range of denominations and ministry groups make up the NRB membership. The challenge of keeping such a diverse group united has once again become apparent.

In a Jan. 5 Minneapolis *Star Tribune* interview, Pederson was quoted as saying that the NRB should emphasize gospel ministry. "We get associated with the far Christian right and marginalized." In the interview he spoke of his belief that the NRB should be known more for its evangelical theology than its conservative stance on political and public policy issues. In a later attempt to clarify what he said in the interview, Pederson stated: "I wasn't saying that Christian broadcasters shouldn't be speaking to the moral issues of the day. What I was trying to say [was that] our theology, evangelism and discipleship should always take priority over our political positions, and we ought to be more known for our gospel than for our politics. But in no way was I trying to distance NRB from religious conservatives or saying that they shouldn't use their broadcasts to speak to the moral and cultural issues of the day."

Pederson's comments sparked a controversy that led to his resignation from the presidency before he was installed at the NRB's annual convention in February. His resignation was called for by Donald Wildmon of the American Family Association. Author Tim LaHaye, co-author of the *Left Behind* series, suggested that the NRB board members "reappraise" whether Pederson should remain in the position. Dr. James Dobson of Focus on the Family indicated he might leave the NRB if Pederson remained in office and implied he would withdraw as the keynote speaker at the February convention. He chided those who believe that "if you just preach the gospel, everything else will fall into place."

Others have risen up in defense of Pederson. Moody Broadcasting Network Vice President Robert Neff is demanding Pederson's reinstatement. Dr. Tony Evans wrote, "President Pederson's statement is, in fact, a divine wakeup call for NRB. ... Those who call for Mr. Pederson's resignation have missed the point."

Char Binkley, executive director of the WBCL radio network, defended Pederson: "Since Christian broadcasters became involved in political issues several years ago, there has been a tension between those who believe we should use the airwaves to force change in the culture and those who believe that changing hearts is the primary way the culture will really change. I believe Wayne was simply trying to say that we want NRB to be known first and foremost for changing the culture the way Jesus would."

In commenting on Pederson's statement, "We do have a political orientation ... but that should not be what we're known for," *Christianity Today* said in a recent editorial: "He's right. Whether we speak as individual Christians, churches, ministries or organizations that promote biblical values, we represent Jesus Christ. But we're often seen as indignantly condemning the sins of the world more than proclaiming the good news of

salvation from those sins. When that happens, we have only ourselves to blame."

The events we recently celebrated on Easter and Good Friday are what Christians are to be known for. The Apostle Paul said, "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Galatians 6:14, NIV). He "resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (I Corinthians 2:2). He said what is "of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (I Corinthians 15:3, 4).

Too many Christians are known primarily for what they are against. Scripture is against numerous things, and we need to lovingly and fearlessly issue those warnings without compromise. But we must also share good news and the core of Scripture, which is Christ crucified and risen again. I give thanks for Pederson's call to the NRB to emphasize the sharing of the gospel. May that always be the emphasis of our congregations and the AFLC. We can be confident that God will work and lives will be changed when the gospel is proclaimed. May people hear us share and see us live out the good news of Christ, and may we be known for our love for Jesus.

— Pastor Craig Johnson

**We can be confident
that God will work and
lives will be changed
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SOMETHING TO SHARE

A log in my own eye

Last Mother's Day, I found myself in the hospital emergency room violently ill. The doctor's eyes widened as he told me the CT scan indicated that I had huge lesions on my liver. He didn't know if it was cancer or an infection; he and his colleagues had never seen anything like it before. Various specialists were called in including an interventional radiology team to do a biopsy that night. I could see in their faces that my condition was very serious.

As I lay there sick and so very weak, I asked the Lord to prepare me. If I were to die, I wanted to be clean. I asked Jesus to forgive me of every sin I could remember and bring to my mind any person whom I had offended, so that I could make it right. Immediately my mind's eye saw Roxanne. Roxanne was a co-worker from a few years back that still worked in our organization, but had transferred to another department. I hadn't thought of her in quite some time. I questioned, "Why her?" Yes, I was inwardly critical of her, but we hadn't had an argument or any big blowup when we worked together. Fact is, we'd hardly said a word to each other in the past two years. So, why Roxanne?

The biopsy reported that I had a severe strep infection in my liver that would require a two-week hospitalization, seven weeks of IV antibiotics at home and up to a year for total recovery. Many times when I went to pray, Roxanne's face kept coming to my mind. The Lord impressed upon me that I had to talk with her. Doubts surfaced. "Ah, she probably won't even know what I'm talking about," I told myself. "She'll think I'm weird, I haven't spoken with her in a long time. She'll say, 'Oh, everything's fine, just forget about it.'"

After two months, I returned to work part-time, exhausted with a portable IV connection in my arm. I went to see Roxanne. It was awkward as I explained my emergency room prayer and how her face kept coming to my mind throughout my recovery. I asked her that if I had ever offended her, could she please forgive me? I thought I'd hear a that's-all-right, water-under-the-bridge type of cliché. But I didn't. Roxanne let me have it. She spewed what seemed to be a well-rehearsed litany of accusations of how I had been critical of her, unsupportive, not understanding, harsh and judgmental. It stung me.

As she detailed her list of simmering offenses, I found myself sob-

bing and agreeing with her. "Yes, you're right, I can be that way. That's true about me; I can be so critical. I hear what you're saying. I'm so very sorry." Yet she didn't relent. Her last blow hit hard, "And you claim to be a Christian!" I moaned, "Yes, I do, Roxanne, and to be honest, I'm not very good at it. But Jesus is and forgives me, and I hope that you somehow can forgive me, too." Then she softened and said, "Well, I'm a Christian too, and have been holding a grudge all this time, so I guess I'm sorry also." We embraced, and I felt a load lift.

It was a good lesson for me. Jesus said, "And why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye" (Matthew 7:4-5). Roxanne was right, I had been judgmental, harsh and overly critical in my attitude toward her but failed to see how sinful it was for me to be that way. Even though it seemed to take drastic measures to get me to see with log-free eyes, I'm thankful that Jesus allowed me to go through it.

— *Cheri Carter Russum*
Elim Lutheran
Lake Stevens, Wash.