

THE LUTHERAN  
**AMBASSADOR**

April 4, 2000

**The Cross  
and the Resurrection**

**Nothing  
matters  
more!**



# THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

April 4, 2000  
Volume 38, Number 5



The magazine of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, 3110 East Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441. (612) 545-5631

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### The Lutheran Ambassador

(USPS 588-620 ISSN 0746-3413)

is published every three weeks except monthly in June and July (16 issues per year) by the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations.

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### For subscription changes and information:

*The Lutheran Ambassador*, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441. 612-545-5631.

### Subscriptions rates:

\$15.00 a year, Group Rate, U. S.

\$16.00 a year, Individual, U. S.

\$18.00 a year, International

Periodicals postage paid at Minneapolis, MN and additional mailing office.

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

## AN ENCOURAGING WORD

# A finished salvation

"It is finished" (John 19:31).

**T**he captain of the U.S. Olympic Hockey Team in 1980 scored the go-ahead goal against the Soviet Union team with ten minutes left in the semifinal game at Lake Placid, New York. Another member of the "Miracle on Ice" team, looking back over 20 years, said that those ten minutes seemed like ten hours as they held on to win the game by that one goal margin.

Exaggeration to be sure, but we sometimes use the same hyperbole when we speak of a struggle or time of tense waiting as seeming like an eternity.

How long must not those six hours upon the cross have seemed to our Lord as He hung between heaven and earth. He was deserted by his big-talking disciples, except for John, and there were a few loyal women who stood by Him, including His mother Mary. Jesus knew she would be there. What a precious mother He had.

There were the Roman soldiers, present because they had to be. They were a coarse lot. Crucifixions were nothing new to them. They were steeled against the cries of pain, the dripping blood, the tortured writhing of the victims. But there was one of them, a centurion; he appeared a different sort. There was a touch of compassion, a spark of faith in him.

The chief priests and scribes mocked Him, saying, "He saved others; He cannot save Himself." How true those words were. No, He would not try to save Himself. For this purpose He had come, to die for the world's sins. but those priests and scribes! What a thorn in the flesh they had been. So hard of heart and slow to believe.

Passers-by shouted catcalls and taunted Jesus. They found a ghoulish fascination in the slow deaths

which could be observed at Golgotha, the place of a skull.

And there were two men, also being crucified, one on either side of Jesus. At first both of them hurled barbed words against the man on the middle cross, "demonstrating their manhood." One went to his death profane to the end. Some people do that, or are that. But the other, sensing at last who Jesus was, called for mercy, and received paradise that very day. What a balm to the Savior's heart, to find faith in that pain-filled hour.

Seven times Jesus spoke from the cross. In what is generally believed to be the sixth word, He uttered the words, "It is finished!" Let us hear them in several other languages: "Tetelestai!" (Greek); "Consummatum est!" (Latin); "Det er fullbrakt!" (Norwegian). It is completed, fulfilled, accomplished, finished!

What was completed or ended? His suffering. The physical torment and the even greater anguish of soul as He bore our sins in His body on the tree, including separation from the Father. And His mission was completed, faithfully and effectively. He had done the work the Father had given Him to do and fellowship with Him was restored.

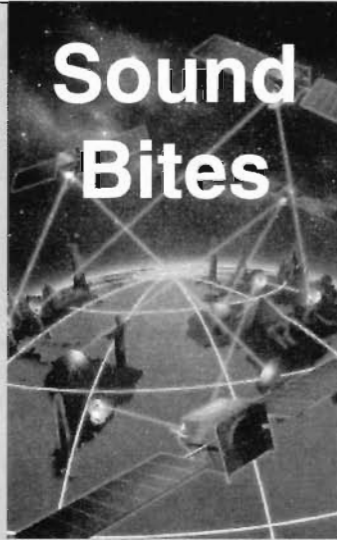
Thank God for a finished, "done" salvation, which we may lay hold of in simple faith, by God's grace.



— **Pastor Raynard Huglen**  
Newfolden, Minnesota



## Sound Bites



**1** Jesus Christ was not a martyr. He who was subjected to such gross humiliation by His contemporaries was not merely caught in the toils and terror of fickle fate. He was, rather, God deliberately setting aside His honor, prestige, and splendor. The Eternal One quietly stripped himself of His own power to take upon himself the mantle of a man in human flesh and form.

— *W. Phillip Keller*

**2** For the earliest Christians, Jesus' resurrection was an historical fact, every bit as real as his death on the cross. Without the resurrection, Christianity would have been simply false. Jesus would have been just another prophet who had met his unfortunate fate at the hands of the Jews, and faith in him as Lord, Messiah, or Son of God would have been stupid.

— *William Craig*

I have discovered only one event in history that redeemed all this evil for me and gave me hope: the

**4** resurrection of Jesus. ... I can face all the rape, pillage, war and hatred that I hear about daily, and still have hope. The resurrection reveals the ultimate nature of the universe, and the risen Christ continues to give victory over the power of evil.

— *Morton Kelsey*

**3** Love crucified arose. And the grave became a place of hope, For the heart that sin and sorrow broke Is beating once again.

— *Michael Card*

**5** We know of Christ's suffering, crucifixion, and death to procure grace for a sinful and hostile world. But when it comes to our claim of this grace we sometimes labor and pray hoping to persuade God to forgive us. How strange when he has already manifested his burning love toward us.

— *Carl Rosenius*

**6** Christ's blood is heaven's key.

— *Thomas Brooks*

# At the heart

— Pastor Tom Schierkolk  
Bethesda and Hope Lutheran Parish  
Northome, Minnesota



and teach. It is the key to understanding the Word of God. It is the source of our comfort and hope. It is the reason for living a life surrendered to God.

Everyone thought that Jesus and His followers had been finished off. His enemies appeared to be the winners. Without their leader all that foolishness that Jesus and His disciples were spouting about the kingdom of God would come to an end. His followers didn't have the training, education, or the will to continue their ministry. Jesus' death was the sign that nothing had changed on the religious landscape.

But, what appeared to be the signal of defeat to all who looked upon this event, turned out to be the triumph of God. At first, even the disciples did not believe this was a victory. They too thought everything was over. They went into hiding, afraid for their own lives. Then one day they witnessed the resurrected Christ and their dimmed hopes were fanned into flame. Only then did they truly begin to understand God's plan. Later Paul would say, "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved

**T**he Cross and the Resurrection are the heart of all that we believe.

It seems strange to think that the thousands of years of God's activity can be summed up in an event that lasted only three days. Jesus Christ was crucified on a cross, laid in a tomb, and rose again three days later. This is it, the foundation of all that we believe

"Justification, sanctification, baptism, communion, the inerrancy

of the Scriptures, evangelism, fellowship, hope, worship—





# of God's plan

it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18, NIV).

The Romans used the cross as a means of showing extreme contempt for the condemned. It was a shameful, cruel punishment used for the worst of criminals. It made Jesus and His followers look foolish to the world. Without the Resurrection the cross is a defeat. First Corinthians 15:14, 17 agrees with this, saying, "If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith ... your faith is futile; you are still in your sins."

But, the Resurrection changes everything. The Resurrection puts the cross in a new light, the light of God's wisdom. It turns the cross from the sign of a shameful defeat into the standard of a glorious triumph by our Savior. Seeing the Cross and the Resurrection together enables the believer to rejoice and triumphantly say with Paul, "But we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and

Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:23, 24).

God has revealed to us the wisdom of His plan. As we proclaim the Cross and the Resurrection, we must stick to the truth which God has revealed. Paul wrote to the Corinthians saying, "For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel — not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power" (1 Corinthians 1:17).

We have nothing more to add. The Cross has all the power it needs when it is presented, together with the Resurrection, to people who are searching for answers. We can simply rejoice that we have been united with Christ in His death and Resurrection.

In a message that he preached on 1 Corinthians 15, Martin Luther said that our faith depends on our retaining a firm hold on the doctrine of the Resurrection. If this doctrine falls every other doctrine loses its value. How true this is. What other doctrine has any importance apart from the Cross and the Resurrection? Every other

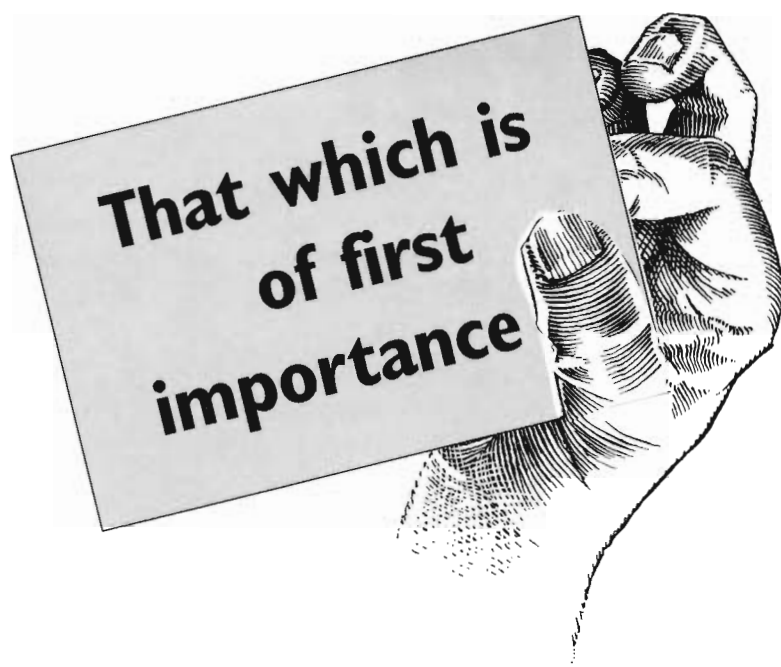
belief that we have from creation to the judgment is based on a God who loves us and wants us to know and love Him, but is separated from us by sin.

Justification, sanctification, baptism, communion, the inerrancy of the Scriptures, evangelism, fellowship, hope, worship — these are nothing more than wasted words and pointless activities unless Jesus died and rose again. They all find completion in Christ's work on the cross and His resurrection. That is why we must make the Cross and the Resurrection central to our preaching and teaching. As Vance Havner has said, "We need men of the cross, with the message of the cross, bearing the marks of the cross."



these are nothing more than wasted words and pointless, activities unless Jesus died and rose again."





— *Pastor Steven Lombardo*  
*Bethlehem Lutheran*  
*Morris, Illinois*



**S**aturday night, 9 o'clock, the phone rang. The message was brief, to the point — "Pastor, can you come? He's in bad shape, very low, it doesn't look good." I put down the receiver and picked up the car keys and headed to the local hospital.

I entered the room of a man in his forties. He was dying. He was unsaved and unchurched. But a couple family members were concerned for his soul. They wanted him to be ready for eternity. Their love wanted heaven for him. At his bedside, I looked at a man aged by suffering. His color was pale gray and his eyes were deep dark sockets. His voice was tired and weak.

Leaning over him, I touched his shoulder. I told Him of God's love for Him, that which was demonstrated in the death and resurrection of Jesus. There was no talk of the weather. The basketball season was a blur. Sports cars were worth a dime a dozen. And the economy — what? At that moment, nothing, absolutely nothing was more important than this simple, yet powerful message. He needed to hear it. He needed to receive Jesus and be born again. He listened to me — no, not me but the voice of God, His Word, His truth, His gospel.

It was the Apostle Paul's passion to make this gospel known and experienced in the lives of people. He says so in I Corinthians 15:1-2: "Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain."

But what is this gospel? What is it that provides salvation? What is to be believed and held fast? Paul answers those questions as he writes of things "of first importance" (I Corinthians 15:3-5). These essentials of the Christian faith are primary — they have priority. Notice what he says: "Christ died ... He was buried ... He was raised on the third day ... He appeared." These facts, rooted in history, are the heart of the good news or gospel which Paul preached to the Corinthians. As such, they are the focus of all our missionary and evangelistic endeavors.

## **Christ died**

At a certain point in history, Jesus the Messiah really died. He didn't simply faint, nor did He fake His death. He died "for our sins according to the Scriptures." His was not an isolated death. Rather, it was for us and, along with the Resurrection, was foretold in the Old Testament (Genesis 22:8,14; Psalm 16:8-11; Psalm 22; Isaiah 53; and Hosea 6:2). Martin Luther wrote, "Jesus Christ never died for our good works. They were not worth dying for. But he gave himself for our sins, according to the Scriptures."

## **He was buried**

Separate mention is made of His burial because, as F.F. Bruce indicates, "burial emphasizes the finality of death ... (and) the reality of the resurrection which followed, as a divine act which reversed the act of men ... The clause bespeaks belief in the empty tomb."

## He was raised on the third day

That is, Jesus has been raised and continues alive forevermore. This is the thrust of the verb translated "raised." He was raised by the power of God and death was once and for all conquered! He is alive, never to die again. If Jesus had not been raised, "the dreadful consequence is not that death ends life, but that we are still in our sins," according to G.A. Studdert Kennedy.

## He appeared

Peter saw Christ after the Resurrection. So did the "Twelve," (as the eleven disciples were still referred to even before Judas Iscariot was replaced). The five hundred plus brethren all saw Him at the same time. James, Jesus' half-brother saw Him. All the apostles, a larger company than the Twelve, were witnesses as well. He also appeared to Paul according to I Corinthians 15:8.

Paul had been convinced that Jesus was dead and that His followers were blasphemers of God. Warren Wiersbe states, "The radical change in his life — a change which brought him persecution and suffering — is certainly evidence that the Lord had indeed been raised from the dead."

These things "of first importance" are the fundamental message of the gospel, whether proclaimed by Paul, the Twelve,

Peter, the five hundred, James or anyone else. Verse eleven of I Corinthians 15, brings the conclusion of the matter — "so we preach and so you believed." The death, burial and resurrection of Christ is the good news which the Church must continue to proclaim and which sinners must come to possess. "For there is no other name" (that is Jesus, Who died, was buried, was raised from the dead, and Who appeared to many) "under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

From the saga of the sinking of the Titanic comes this true story. A woman found her place in a lifeboat that was about to be lowered into the angry North Atlantic. She suddenly thought of something she had to have with her. She asked permission to go to her stateroom before they left the ship. She was given three minutes. She raced back to the lifeboat and got in. In the time of crisis, when death was a very real possibility, her values changed. There were things of first importance. She wanted three oranges, not three hundred gems!

Every person faces death and eternity. It is the crisis! My friend in the hospital came to know that. Thanks be to God that He has given to His Church the things of first importance — that glorious gospel. Let's joyfully tell it, live it, share it, to the praise of the Lord and for the salvation of souls.



## Easter story

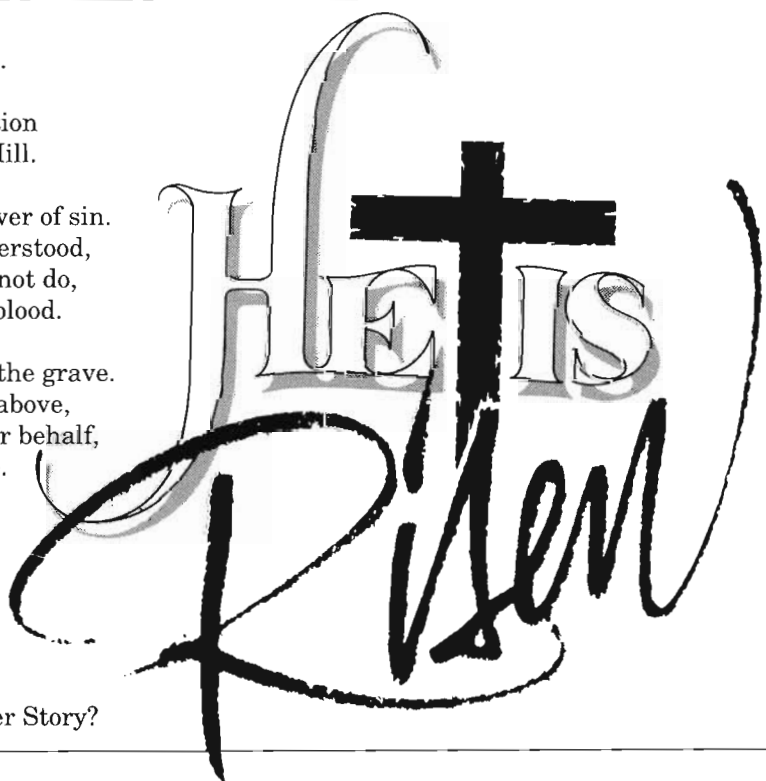
— Verna Dunrud  
Kammen  
Badger, Minnesota

Christ has defeated every foe.  
By obeying His Father's will,  
He redeemed His fallen creation  
When He died on Calvary's Hill.

Christ has conquered the power of sin.  
Though afflicted and misunderstood,  
He did what you and I could not do,  
He covered our sin with His blood.

Christ is alive, He rose from the grave.  
He's seated with His Father above,  
Where He's interceding in our behalf,  
Such is the extent of His love.

Christ is coming one of these  
days  
To take back His own to  
glory.  
Will you be ready to go with  
Him then,  
Or miss out on the real Easter Story?





## branch of love

a simple rose, of Jesse's stem,  
born guileless, empty of sin,  
rooted in David's tradition,  
created before the ages began,  
our Savior, the spotless Lamb,  
God's ordained, human likeness.

a branch, ever-growing, succulent,  
sustenance beyond electronic gizmos,  
strong, entwining, enlivening,  
source of human global existence,  
our shepherd, new bud germinating,  
our hope in dark, dreary villages.

a branch, as strong as a tree,  
yet by a tree overcome,  
ever-living, creation's power itself,  
engaging darkest cosmic events,  
the Christ, the incarnate rose,  
thorn-crowned in our stead.

the living branch, Jesus,  
the Christ, a branch stronger than tree,  
defying our musty, earthly endeavors,  
decrying our feeble, foolish gossiping,  
a royal rose, growing, eternal,  
God's long-suffering love for us.

God's branch of life, evergreen,  
ever-growing beneath our faltering egos,  
daily budding within us —  
Christ's holy blood our sustenance —  
quickenning us with tender,  
unwarranted love,  
shepherding and schooling us in  
endless hope.

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# Worship at the cross

— Mary L. Clark  
Ruthfred Lutheran  
Bethel Park, Pennsylvania

I love the Lenten season. It gives us the chance to refocus our worship around Jesus' cross and resurrection and all He accomplished for us there. Too often in the busyness of life our worship becomes routine or centered on our needs at the moment. We need this season to deliberately step back and look again at the cross and the worship to which it calls us.

First of all, we need to be reminded that Jesus' sacrifice on the cross makes it possible for us to come to God in worship. Scripture tells us that nothing sinful can enter God's presence. In order for us to be able to come to Him, God had to provide a way for our sins to be forgiven. But Romans 6:23 tells us that "the wages of sin is death." Hebrews 10:22 says, "without the shedding of blood there is not forgiveness."

In order for us to come to God something had to die. If God dealt with us in His justice, we would have to die. But God, in His love, deals with us in His mercy and so He came in the flesh — the person of Jesus Christ, to shed His own blood and die in our place. Hebrews 10 teaches we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all so that by the blood of Jesus we can draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith.

As we come to worship, we need to let the cross remind us that it is only through God's great love for us and Jesus' death and resurrection that we can come to God at all.

Not only can we come to God, but we can come to Him boldly as our Father without fear. The truly remarkable message of the Cross is that the Almighty God came to die for us so that we might be His children. Paul explains in Romans that God gave us "the Spirit of sonship and by Him we cry 'Abba, Father.'" Entering into God's presence in worship is as much-loved children running to their daddy. This does not indicate a casual or flippant way to worship. God is holy and we must not forget that. But because of the Cross, we do not have to be afraid of God's wrath or feel that He is distant and unreachable.

A friend recently described how her

granddaughters love their daddy. They can't wait for him to get home each night and excitedly run to meet him at the door. They love to hear his voice and to be with him. That is the attitude of excitement and expectation that we can experience in worship. Yes, we come to a holy God in awe and reverence, but we also come to our Father to sit at His feet, to hear His voice and to rest in His presence.

Because of the Cross, worship is the only proper response to what Jesus has done for me. The women left the empty tomb that first Easter morning and saw the resurrected Jesus. They immediately fell at His feet and worshiped Him. When Thomas realized that Jesus was indeed alive, he cried, "My Lord and my God." When the disciples saw Jesus ascend to heaven, they worshiped Him. As we gather together, our worship should be filled with awe and praise and celebration.

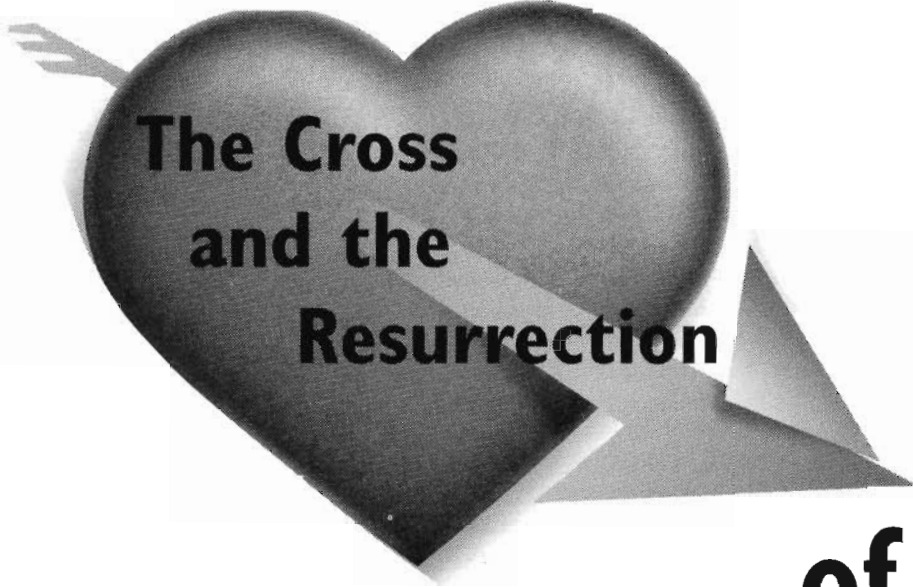
Romans 12:1 directs us to an even more fitting and personal worship in response to the cross: "Therefore, I urge you brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual (logical) act of worship." We are to lay our lives at the feet of Jesus as an act of worship. As a living sacrifice, we die to ourselves and allow Jesus to live His life in us. Phil McHugh wrote a song that says it well: "You paid much too

high a price for me, your tears, your blood, the pain to have my soul stirred at times yet never truly changed. You deserve a fiery love that won't ignore your sacrifice, because you paid much too high a price."

When we come together to worship this Lenten season, let the Cross remind us of the kind of worship that God has made possible for us. Because of the Cross, we can come directly to the holy God as His beloved children. We can worship, not in fear, but in joy and excitement and expectancy. May the depth of God's love for us as expressed on the Cross, lead us to give our lives to Him as a living sacrifice. That's real worship — living a life of fellowship with God, all because of the Cross.

**"We are to  
lay our lives at  
the feet of Jesus  
as an act of  
worship. As a  
living sacrifice,  
... and allow  
Jesus to live  
in us."**





## The Cross and the Resurrection

A source of companionship.  
A means of accomplishing  
God's purpose in our lives.

# The heart of fellowship



— **Pastor Michael Burke**  
*Hope Free  
Evangelical Lutheran  
Ishpeming, Michigan*

**W**e, as believers in Jesus, have a definite idea of what “fellowship” is, don’t we? Or, do we?

A worldly understanding of the word might include anything from attendance at a sporting event to a wild night of “partying” to a dinner engagement and many places in between. The world knows little of the purpose and meaning of fellowship, for a worldly definition is generally based on self-serving motives. Lunches, cocktail parties, even anniversary celebrations are set up to achieve a self-serving end. Oh, I know that’s not always true, but it certainly is not the exception, either.

### What is Christian fellowship?

How, then, is the fellowship of Christians different? How should it be viewed by us? We first look to the basis of our fellowship. We are adopted children and so we look to the pattern and purpose of our adoptive parent. Our adoption is based on the relationship God has established. First Corinthians 1:9 says, “God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”

God created us for fellowship. He purchased us at the Cross and through the Resurrection. We were dead and have been brought to life. The Cross makes fellowship with Him possible as we see in Philippians 3:10, “that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.”

We are by our nature social, but for fel-

lowship with others to happen as God desires, we must first be in fellowship with Him. Then our fellowship will follow the pattern He intended and can be shared in a way that will fulfill the purpose of the kingdom, that is, that we should be light and salt in the world. In Ephesians 3:9 we read “and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has

## How we know

**H**ave you ever felt unloved? Maybe you’ve heard over and over that God loves you, but you don’t really understand what that means. You think it might be true for some, but you find it hard to believe that God really loves you. But it’s true. No matter who you are or what you’ve done, God loves you.

Maybe part of our feeling of being unloved is because we know we are unworthy. How can anyone love someone like me? We deserve death, not life forever. “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

been hidden in God, who created all things." So then, our fellowship becomes not only a source of companionship, but also a means of accomplishing God's purpose in our lives.

**"If therefore there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose."**

Philippians 2:1-2:

God leaves no doubt about His purpose for us and that purpose will be carried out in fellowship.

It has been truthfully said, there are no "Lone Ranger" Christians. We encourage, strengthen and expose ourselves to teaching when we are in fellowship. We are too weak in ourselves to meet God's commission for us by ourselves, and so we need the company of

like-minded brothers and sisters, as well as the power and working of the Holy Spirit.

In the world, it is difficult and sometimes impossible to find fellowship, because of class differences, prejudice, national boundaries and petty bickering. Praise be to our God and Father that He tears down those barriers at the Cross and creates in us, new creatures. We are equally His children, born again in the Resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

During this holy season of Lent and Easter we look forward to the reminders of God's promise of eternal life. Let us also be reminded of the gain we have and of the loss which we do not miss. We have been brought into fellowship with the God of the universe, and with each other; that He might be glorified and we might be made whole. Let us show anew the joy of that fellowship, that the world will know we are Christians by the way we love another (John 13:35).

*The author has served Hope Free Evangelical Lutheran Church since 1998. He became a member of the AFLC Clergy Roster in 1999. He and his wife, Beverly, are the parents of five grown children, three grandchildren and more than two dozen foster-children. They previously served churches in Tacoma, Washington; Cooperstown, North Dakota; and Ottawa, Illinois.*



## we are loved

— Jackie Anderson  
Calvary Lutheran  
Everett, Washington

But the Bible tells us that God does love us greatly. In Romans 5:8 it says, "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." We didn't deserve that act of love. Being sinful, we are not worthy of even being near God. But still, "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16, NIV)

Jesus came to earth and lived as a man among the people. During

his ministry here he did many things showing his care for the people around him. He met their needs in many ways; feeding the multitudes, healing many, and spending time with them daily. So, you may think, He loved those people. That was a long time ago, what about the rest of us?

It was on the cross, that we were shown what love really is. That was the greatest thing that Jesus could do for us. It wasn't just for those around him, but for everyone — for you and for me. He didn't have to do that. He is God. He has all the power of God and he could have stopped what they did to him. His death on the cross took away the sin of all the world. "And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross!" (Philippians 2:8, NIV) He took on all the sin of the world in his death. God could not

look on him because of our sin while he hung on that cross.

Jesus died on the cross for us. He was buried and He rose again. His resurrection gives us hope. Someday we will be with Him in heaven. If He did not love us, He would not have gone through all He did on the cross so that we could be with him in glory! His resurrection gives us the assurance that we will live forever with the one who loves us more than any other.

We are loved, not because we deserve it. We know we are loved, not because of our feelings or our circumstances. We remember the Cross and the Resurrection. That is how we know for sure we are loved. "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us" (I John 3:16, NIV).

Receive Jesus' love and know it today!





The Lutheran Ambassador arrived at my country mailbox yesterday morning, and I thought to myself, "Oh good, now I will have something good to read this evening after my day's work." The evenings are often lonely for me, living alone in the country, and I had the hope of a pleasant evening of reading and learning of the happenings in the AFLC. Since I have missed only three AFLC annual conferences since its beginning in 1962, I expect that when I scan through the pages of the magazine, I will know many of the writers.

Now it is my turn to share thoughts of "the hope that is within me." First Peter 1:3 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Yes, there are many times a day when I, like my hope of an evening of good reading, trust or rely on a person or some thing to bring an expected fulfillment. But this "living hope" which He has given is foundational to my life.

Paul reminded Timothy that from a child he had known the Holy Scriptures which made him "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (II Timothy 3:15). As a child, my first words were Norwegian and we spoke it fluently at home. My immigrant parents gathered us four children into the Model T because it was important that we went to church. The sermons were often in Norwegian and I am not so sure how much we grasped, but we were just happy to go some place. We attended Sunday school as often as we could make it. Living 10 miles from town did not always allow us to go out in the winter, but Father would do his best to see that we got there, especially to participate in the Christmas program.

As a child, I was taught about my Creator, Jesus as Savior and

# Continuing in hope

even though I may not have fully understood the work of the Holy Spirit, that teaching came with our thorough confirmation instruction. Much of what I learned in confirmation classes is still tucked away in my mind. It was Father who sat down with us to see if we had memo-



— Grace Syverson  
Zion Lutheran  
Tioga, North Dakota



*learned them"*  
(II Timothy

3:14). After my marriage

in 1941, I became a member of Zion Lutheran. Over the years life has not always been easy, but I have grown in grace and knowledge of my Lord through the faithful teaching and preaching of the Word and the sacraments. God has given me that hope, assurance and encouragement to be "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith: who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2).

Easter is once again coming. "But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the firstfruits of them that slept" (I Corinthians 15:20). There can be no greater hope!

rized our verses. At that time we learned "Luther's Catechism" from cover to cover. We certainly were nervous when we stood before the congregation on Confirmation Sunday to answer all those questions. But it was a special day for us.

Timothy was also encouraged by Paul to *"continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast*



*Rejoice*  
HE IS RISEN

— Rachel Johnson  
Redeeming Love Lutheran  
St. Joseph, Minnesota

# Serving as a single

**T**he relationship was over and in the midst of my darkness came Jeremiah 29:11: “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’” These wonderful words were shared with me some twenty years ago after my engagement was broken. My life was changed. I was broken and confused. What did God have in mind for me? Where did he want me? What did He want me to do?

I am thankful for my prayer partner from Bible school who was there to comfort me after what I thought was the end of my life. She shared with me Philippians 4:4-7: “Rejoice in the Lord always, I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gen-

teness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” What comfort these verses gave me. There was hope! I still had the Lord as my Savior and friend. I could go to Him with my requests and know that He was with me through all circumstances.

Like most of us, I grew up expecting to marry. From childhood I began envisioning my future mate and dreaming about a future family. I expected to be married. In planning on enjoying life with a mate, to not have one creates a sense of loss and incompleteness, which leads to feel-

ings of loneliness and failure. I came to a point where I discovered my dreams may have been unrealistic.

Is it wrong to hope for marriage? No, but the Lord showed me it is not healthy to build my life around events that are not certain. As a Christian, I must be prepared for the future, and yet live fully in the present. My life belongs to God, including all my hopes, dreams and desires for a spouse. My first priority is to find identity in Christ and Him alone. I am called to live my life fully for Christ, regardless of my marital status.

Congregations can minister in special ways to its single members. Though we are often free to serve, don't take singles for granted, as even without a family to take care of, we are often busy with other aspects of our lives.

Do I continue to have times of struggle with being single? Of course, I believe all singles do. But as I keep my focus on Jesus, my Lord and Savior and read the Word daily; my life will keep shining for Him each day and will be filled with His love and joy.

*This is the second in a series of articles featured this year in the “Women In Service for Him” page of The Lutheran Ambassador. Each author writes on how the Lord has led her through a special time in her life.*

## Book Review — *Becoming a Woman of Excellence*

Look around, they are everywhere — self-help books on how to be the perfect gardener, the best beauty, or the perfect marriage partner. All offer advice on how to become the “excellent anything” you want to be! There is a study book, however, that has “the” only answer on how to become an excellent woman, that is to seek the Lord wholeheartedly for the inward changes He desires. That's it! “If we give priority attention to developing and maintaining ourselves inwardly as God desires, then our responses and actions will follow accordingly,” writes Cynthia Heald in *Becoming a Woman of Excellence* (Navpress, a ministry of the Navigators, 1986).

Each of the eleven chapters in the Bible study dig into what godly excellence means in: surrender, purity, discretion, wisdom, and a gentle and quiet spirit and many

more qualities. Each chapter is devoted to one characteristic. Insights from the author and quotes from Elizabeth Elliot, Amy Carmichael, A.W. Tozer, Oswald Chambers, Chuck Swindoll and others are paired with many verses of Scripture to make this one of the most spiritually challenging and encouraging books I have ever dug into. I realized that I had to first honestly ask the Lord to help me become “excellent” in Him before I could help anyone else or be the “somebody” that I desired.

I am excited for any woman — single, married, of any age — who will devote themselves to this study personally or in a small group. Be ready to find and apply the answers on your journey to being a woman of excellence!

— Tricia Nelson  
Marantha Free Lutheran  
Willmar, Minnesota

## WMF news notes

**Dalton, Minnesota** — On April 1, the ladies of Zion-Sarpsborg enjoyed a luncheon at the church. The program featured “Women of the Bible,” with “guest appearances” by Noah's wife, Elizabeth and others.

**Roseau, Minnesota** — Roseau Free Lutheran WMF said goodbye to one of its charter members, Helen Lindgren, who passed away on Jan-

(continued on next page)

**A**s I think back in my life I have missed countless opportunities to share my faith in Christ with others. Why, I wonder? Many times I tried to do it in my own strength or was not taught how I could share my faith without coming across in an awkward way. Can you relate?

As a sinner saved by His grace, I now realize that I cannot share my faith with others on my own strength but only in His. Knowing Christ as Lord and Savior is the primary ingredient for sharing my faith. Yet if I am not properly instructed on ways how to share my faith and let God use me, I will only find myself frustrated and an ineffective verbal witness for Him.

That is why this summer at the AFLC Youth Leadership Training Conference students in grades seven through twelve and adult youth leaders will be given opportunities to spiritually equip themselves for

## Youth Leadership Training Conference — an opportunity not to miss

sharing their faith. This year's theme is focused on evangelism and discipleship and is taken from I Peter 3:15: "In your hearts, set apart Christ as Lord. Always be ready to give an answer for the hope that is within you."

By the time the conference concludes students will have been given the chance to: learn how to study the Scriptures and how a particular text applies to their lives; be challenged with a gospel message each evening on the focus of the day's topics; participate in a concert of prayer; share an instance of how Christ is at work in their life; learn how to write out their testimony; learn one way of how to share their faith in a God-honoring way; experience putting their faith into action by going to area hospitals, nursing homes, malls, the streets, the bas-

ketball court and others.

There will be no door-to-door evangelism. They will be challenged, though, as they depart to consider if God is putting on their heart someone to possibly share their faith with and someone back home who they, as a believer, could possibly disciple.

As an AFLC Youth Board we recognize we cannot put God in a box and know for certain that when every student leaves the conference they will have had all the equipping they need to properly share their faith and disciple someone else. All we hope to do is give them the tools they need to properly be a witness for Jesus Christ. God does the rest through the working of the Holy Spirit and through His servants. That is why we need your prayers as we plan to gather at the Association Retreat Center at Osceola, Wisconsin.

## WMF CONTINUED

uary 5, 2000. Helen was a school teacher in the Roseau area for 36 years before retiring and was an active member at Roseau Free Lutheran.

**Tioga, North Dakota** — About sixty ladies enjoyed the district WMF banquet on Saturday, February 19 at Zion Lutheran. Priscilla Horn of Fosston, Minnesota spoke on developing inner beauty.

**Oceanside, California** — Renee Scheuerlein photographed sixteen couples coming down the aisle at Community Lutheran to renew their marriage vows at the altar on Sunday, February 13. As they knelt and prayed together, they asked God to cement their vows until death do they part. Lynelle Thorn and Florence Hiepler sang appropriate wedding songs. A layman from the congregation preached on the great husband/wife text from Ephesians.

**Campo Mourão, Brazil** — The Miriam Infant Home staff welcomed

Rhoda Monseth, a 1999 graduate of AFLBS and daughter of Dr. Francis and Ellen Monseth, Rogers, Minnesota. She arrived in January as a short-term missionary. Anna Matt-

son of Greenbush, Minnesota continues to serve with Missionaries Paul and Becky Abel at the ARCA near Curitiba, Brazil.

Pictured are Carol and Helen Knapp, Willmar, Minnesota, former Brazil missionaries. They attended the AFLC-Brazil annual conference at Central Church in Campo Mourão from March 5-7. This was the 30th anniversary of the Women's Missionary Federation in Brazil which Helen helped organize.





sin, July 17-22, 2000. We, as a youth board, cannot achieve what we hope for on our own, but only in His strength and leading. We covet your prayers as we approach this tremendous week of training for those teenagers in local youth groups across our AFLC who are leaders or potential leaders, as well as adult youth leaders.

Plan to attend and begin to pray as we focus on winning, building and equipping souls for Jesus Christ!

For information on participating contact AFLC Youth Ministries, 3110 East Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55441 or contact Pastor Alan Arneson at (218) 528-3247.



## Invest in youth

I was in Kansas City recently for a National Youth Networkers meeting. A man challenged us with the importance of investing in work that has lasting benefits and that has a good return on the investment. I was reminded that youth ministry is an investment in the eternal destiny of young lives and that those who come to Christ often do so early in their lives.

There are youth in your life that need to be invested in. There are young people that need the investment of hope that a word of encouragement can bring. There are students that need someone to care about them regardless of the mis-

takes they have made. There are others that need you to pray for them and hold them up before the Lord. You can be the tool the Lord uses to shape and mold their lives.

Consider also investing in the Youth Ministries Department. We have had Eddie, Brenda and Jason training churches in youth ministry full time for the past six months. Tara and I work in the office coordinating many activities, and the youth board and FLY board make up 12 volunteer staff. Pray for us and consider a financial investment in the youth ministries of the AFLC.

— **Pastor Kevin Olson**  
**AFLC Youth Ministries Director**



The Youth Ministry Training Team has had a variety of experiences. Here they are in Deshler, Nebraska with a real passion for harvest ministry.



Youth workers at the January retreat.

## Prayer and Praise update

### CONGREGATIONAL:

The Youth Ministry Training Team has helped 35 congregations with six more to go. Ed Tollefson, Ortonville, Minnesota said, "This has caused me to reconsider my own commitment to youth ministry. I want to make this my focus." Pray for Brenda, Jason and Eddie as the team's specific mission comes to a close.

### DISTRICT:

Praise the Lord for the five district youth rallies held on Presidents'

Day Weekend. Pray for the plans and for the leaders of the seven district youth camps happening this summer.

### NATIONAL:

Praise the Lord for the sense of God's presence at the youth workers' retreat in January as 30 youth workers met at Red Willow Bible Camp near Binford, North Dakota. Pray for Alan Arneson as he coordinates the leadership conference coming up this summer at the ARC. Praise the Lord that we have this

chance to grow in evangelism and discipleship.

### INTERNATIONAL:

Praise the Lord for the teams to Mexico and India in January. Both groups came back changed and with a heart to serve the Lord even more. Two of the students that went to India are considering returning for further ministry. Pray that the Lord would raise up students for the mission opportunities available this summer.

# Two mission trips offered during January inter-term

As last January approached, Bible school students began planning for the missions term. Some discussed traveling to India and others to Mexico. As for me, I was all set to stay and take the mission classes on campus. The Lord, however, had other plans. He kept working on my heart until I finally said, "Okay, Lord, I'll go."

Ten other Bible school students joined me and others from the Grand Forks, North Dakota and Greenbush, Minnesota communities on the Partners In Mission Outreach bus as we headed to Mexico.

After an unplanned stop in Nebraska for bus repair, and a night in Nogales, Arizona, we arrived at our hotel in Obregon. That Sunday evening after dinner at the hotel, we walked around the city. We quickly discovered two things: first, crossing streets there is a life-threatening activity; second, the bigger vehicle has the right-of-way. Pedestrians are always last.

The next day, as we did each day in Mexico, we traveled to the village of Agaristas where Pastor Gabriel and Virginia Mercado and their four grandchildren would work beside us whether in devotions, singing or doing our work projects. We scraped and painted the pastor's house and porch, the church and installed screens on the porch. With plenty of workers, the projects were completed rather easily.

The most enjoyable experience for me was the time spent with the children in the village. Baseball and

Where were you on January 12, 2000? For five Bible school students and Pastors Tom Turra and Phil Haugen, January 12 did not exist. We were in flight over the international date line on our way to India. We stepped out of the airport in Chennai and received our first taste of being Americans in India — everyone stared at us!

Dr. Anand Kumar and Pastor Luther easily found us and we learned quickly of the hospitality and servant hearts of the Indian people. Pastor Haugen taught Bible classes for the Indian pastors and Bible workers. The rest of us trav-

soccer games, horseback rides and bicycle races were common occurrences. A popular place to visit was the small store in the village where we could buy pop or candy.

We ate lunch in the village and dinner back in Obregon. I sampled everything from pizza to tortillas to goat meat. Someone even tried a cow head taco. During the evenings we passed out tracts to people on the street. It was common for them to read them right away. Their hearts seemed open to God's Word and we were privileged to see God working in a powerful way.

I can't begin to describe what I saw and experienced. I do know I want to return one day. The people we met are still in my prayers. Pray with me that the seeds of truth planted on this trip and others will take root in the hearts and lives of people.

— **Dani Handsaker**  
*Radcliffe, Iowa*

eled to visit about two to three village churches each day. We shared a testimony and sang. Often we received garlands as their way to show honor to us. We wore them all the time and discovered later how much that gesture meant to the people. They felt like we really wanted to be there and cared about them. It was a lesson for us to realize it is often the little things done that show genuine concern and love.

During the services, we could see how much the people truly loved God and wanted to praise Him and learn more about Him. It was as though we could see the joy of the Lord in their eyes.

After the services, we often helped with a free medical camp that was funded solely by donations from the AFLC. They receive \$100 a month to help give the people needed medicines. Dr. Kumar has a strong love for the Lord and a desire to serve Him and do His will. We dispersed medicine to children for Japanese encephalitis. Many Indian children have died from that disease and three doses of the medicine is needed to prevent it. Dr. Kumar also gives free medical exams for the adults.

We were impressed with the great physical needs of these people. In spite of their conditions, they are so grateful for what they do have. We were clearly reminded of our own blessings and how we often take them for granted. God has blessed us so that we can give to those who are in need. For every need there is in the world, there is someone God has who is able to provide for that need. We must allow God to show us where that need is and how we may respond.

As we boarded the plane for our return to the States (yes, we had to live a day twice), we were burdened for the people in India. They have no spokesman to raise awareness and money for them. Join us in praying for them that God would bless them and provide for their needs.

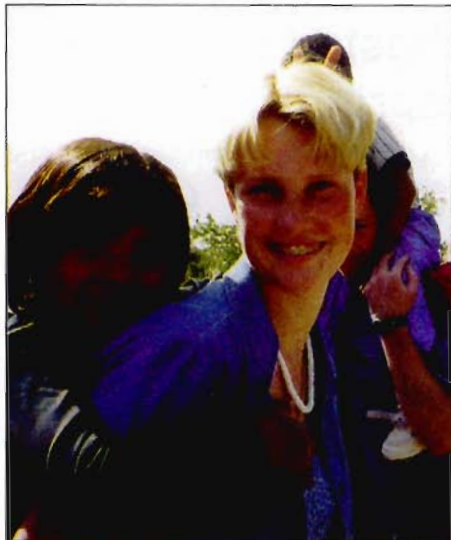
— **Amber Nelson**  
*Glyndon, Minnesota*

Students who traveled to Mexico were: (standing); Joe Lombardo, Tomasz Chmiel, MayBritt Garvik, Kimm Matt, Dani Handsaker, Paul Blom; (kneeling); Carmen Oelkers, Kim Pederson, Debbie Mozach, Krista Carter, and Paul Quam.





**"I can't begin to describe what I saw and experienced. I do know I want to return one day. The people we met are still in my prayers."**



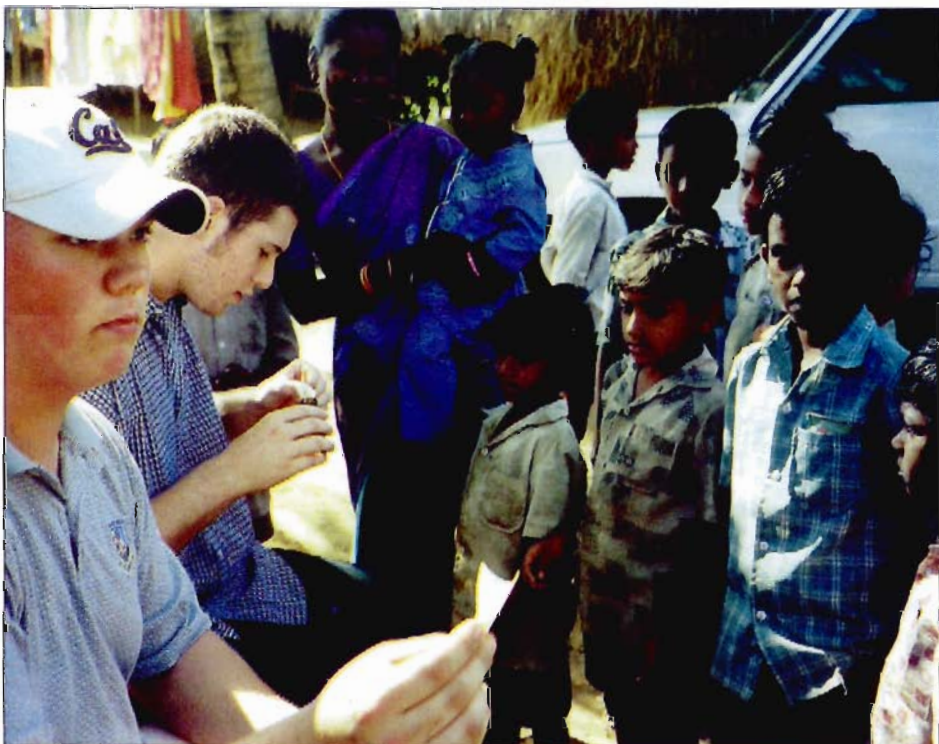
Fernanda and Dani Handsaker on the team's last day in Mexico.



One of the village churches the team visited.



Krista Carter puts up a bird screen on the pastor's house.



Gabe Moteberg and Josh Holwell passing out medicine for Japanese encephalitis at a free medical camp.

World Missions Director Eugene Enderlein and team members are available to share their story in your congregation. Call the office at 612-545-5631



## Ministry Training Institute hires part-time director

**M**inistry Training Institute, the AFLC's new training center in missions, set to open in the fall, hired its first part-time director.

AFLC Missionary Todd Schierkolk accepted a one-year call to serve from June 1, 2000 to June 1, 2001. He will oversee program development, teach several classes, and bring up to five students with him to the mission field in Mexico after January 1, 2001. AFLC World Missions Director Eugene Enderlein, an MTI committee member, felt Pastor Schierkolk was the right choice to start the ministry school. He will remain on the payroll of the AFLC World Missions Department and will continue his missionary work and travels while he serves as director. MTI will reimburse AFLC World Missions for half of Pastor Schierkolk's expenses, housing and salary.

Pastor Todd and Barb and their three daughters have been living at the ARC near Osceola, Wisconsin during their furlough. They plan to move near the AFLBS campus as soon as possible.

Pastor Schierkolk graduated from Concordia College, Moorhead, Minnesota and then from AFLBS in 1988. A veteran of the U.S. Army, he completed pastoral training at Free Lutheran Seminary in 1992, and served Ebenezer Lutheran in Evergreen Park, Illinois before beginning his mission service four years ago in Mexico. Following his duties at MTI, his family will return to Mexico where they will work with Missionaries Dan and Debbie Giles as they plant a new congregation in Zacatecas, Mexico.

With the recommendation of the world missions committee, the schools' board of trustees issued the call to Pastor Schierkolk, who has a passion to see more young missionaries in the field. The seven-member MTI planning committee was unanimous in recommending the call to him. "Todd will bring us vitality and exuberance as we start this training

program," said MTI Planning Committee Coordinator James L. Johnson, dean of AFLBS. "He knows us and has a great rapport with students."

Classes will begin on the AFLBS campus on September 6, 2000. They will include language training, Introduction to Cross Cultural Ministries, Using Your Spiritual Gifts on the Mission Field, two Bible courses, Cultural Anthropology and other courses in practical missions studies. Physical and survival training in northern Michigan and Minnesota are included in the program. Retired missionary Richard Gunderson will help with the teaching load as will Bible school faculty and other veteran missionaries. Students who complete the training will be sent to the mission field for a four-month internship in Mexico or Brazil during the spring semester. Cost for the study is about \$5,000, the same as a year at AFLBS.

## Alumni Tourney held

On March 24-25, Park Christian School hosted the annual AFLBS alumni basketball tournament. Players and other alumni met at the Royal Fork restaurant on Saturday evening for dinner and fellowship.

## Northern Illinois congregations hosted seminary spring retreat

Thirteen seminary students and several faculty members traveled to northern Illinois on the weekend of March 31-April 2 for their annual spring retreat. AFLC congregations in the area initiated the idea of coming to their district and hosted the retreat at the Cup of Cold Water Retreat Center. Included in the weekend activities were a Bible study led by one of the district pastors, a panel discussion dealing with the joys and challenges of the ministry, and a visit to the Billy Graham Evangelism Center on the campus of Wheaton College. The center features unique and extensive displays focusing on individuals and movements in the history of American evangelism. On Sunday morning, students and faculty preached and gave testimonies in at least a dozen of the area congregations before returning home to Minneapolis. "The seminary is very grateful for this special opportunity afforded by the congregations of the district," said Dr. Francis Monseth, dean of Free Lutheran Seminary.



The annual spring choir tours are underway. From April 1-16, the AFLBS concert choir will present programs in Nebraska, Missouri, Oklahoma and Texas. The Proclaim Choir (pictured above), visits congregations in Upper Michigan, Illinois and Minnesota.

## Recent hires at AFLBS

**Wayne Floan**, 48, of Fertile, Minnesota, accepted the call to become maintenance head at the AFLC Schools, beginning July 15.

A 1972 graduate of AFLBS and a long-time member of the AFLC Board of Trustees, Wayne leaves a career in farming to come to the schools. He replaces **Clyde Hendrickson** who retires July 1. "Clyde has been a valuable member of our team here since 1988 and we will miss him," said AFLBS Dean James L. Johnson. Clyde and wife, Pat purchased a house in Parker's Prairie, Minnesota, and expect to move there by early July.

Also hired this spring was **Eric Rasmussen**, a 1996 AFLBS graduate. He joined the school staff as director of food services on April 1. Eric replaces **Bill Kroll** who had served since 1997. Kroll recently accepted the call to serve as assistant director of the Association Retreat Center in Osceola, Wisconsin. "Bill was a great asset to the Bible school, but a promotion like this one only comes along once in a while," said Dean of Students Mark Johnson. Kroll, a 1992 AFLBS graduate will serve under ARC Director Eric Westlake. The ARC food service staffers have trained and supported the AFLBS food service team since 1997.

**Michele Deubner** moves from the women's resident head position into the AFLBS office as director of student support and part-time seminary secretary. Michele has served at AFLBS since 1997. She and seminarian Wade Mobley plan to be wed at the Wayne and Carolyn Deubner farm in Brockton, Montana on July 8. She expects to complete her B.A. degree in counseling at Northwestern College in May.

### Dates to note

May 19 — Spring Concert  
May 20 — Graduation, 1 p.m.  
May 25-June 2 — Summer ministry team training

## From Vision 2004

Outreach has two aspects: 1) reaching out to those in this world who do not know Jesus Christ with the gospel so that they may learn of Him; 2) reaching out to those who know Christ as their personal Savior but have not surrendered all of their lives to Him and are caught up in or being destroyed by sin.

There are an overwhelming number of people in each area. What are we, as an AFLC, as a Bible school, as individuals doing about the needs around us? Deep down in our hearts we would want to say that we are doing as much as we can, but are we? Do we as an AFLC really have a heart for revival? Are we really concerned about the lost souls who slip into hell on a daily basis? Do we pray for and help those who know Christ and are struggling with sin?

The divorce rate among Christians is four percent higher than among non-believers. Does that bother us? What about some of our teenagers and young adults who say they are saved and love the Lord but are caught in alcohol, drugs, premarital sex, gambling, self-destruction, may be pregnant, etc. Are we reaching out to them, or do we simply say, "Oh, how unfortunate" and let them be? We need to be reaching out to all of these people with the gospel and love of Christ. In the day in which we are living, who knows but what we ourselves may need someone who will reach out to us,

because our walks might falter.

I truly believe that part of the whole of Vision 2004 is to train our young men and women and future pastors to be better equipped to reach out to all kinds of people. In order for our schools to be better equipped we need you, our people, to reach out in these ways:

Prayer — for students, faculty, staff, revival, growth, love, surrender.

Involvement — call faculty and encourage them, write letters to staff and students, come and visit campus, challenge others to pray.

Finances — Vision 2004, more faculty, more student missionaries, more counseling staff, the third-year program, maintenance, operations.

These are just a few ways that you can reach out and help our schools to make a bigger difference in the lives of people who need help.

This may seem to be a strange article for the director of Vision 2004 to be writing, but I believe that this is very much a part of Vision 2004. We are not about bricks and mortar: We are about changing lives in a mixed-up world.

Remember someone reached out to you so that you could be where you are today. Won't you reach out to help someone else?

— **Pastor Tonnes Pollestad**  
*Project Director for Vision 2004*

**Come, find out for yourself why we are singing a new song!**

**AFLBS Campus Days**  
**April 28-30**  
**call us at 612-544-9501**





**Camarillo, California** — Good Shepherd Lutheran Church was officially formed on January 23, 2000 when 21 charter members elected officers and elders, incorporated and adopted a constitution. The new congregation has been granted home mission status in the AFLC and is in the process of calling a pastor. The congregation was formed from a group of committed believers who have been meeting for Friday night Bible studies for three



years and meeting for Sunday morning Sunday school and worship services for about 20 months. President Greg Seeba says the congregation praises God for this new witness to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and stands in need of prayer for guidance in the days to come. Pictured are the newly elected officers of the congregation and some of the children of the congregation singing during a recent Sunday morning service.

### FLAPS has new director

**Lavon Bohling**, Hebron, Nebraska has been called to be the executive director of FLAPS (Free Lutheran Association of Pilots and Supporters). He will oversee construction projects, training and technical support for ministries on behalf of FLAPS. A hanger in Nakluk, Alaska is the current construction project.

Mr. Bohling received his Masters in Aerospace Education from Middle Tennessee State University at Murfreesboro in 1975. His career includes teaching high school science and training programs for Cessna Aircraft Co. in Wichita, Kansas. He retired as vice president of marketing for Reinke Manufacturing Company, Inc. of Deshler, Nebraska on December 31, 1999. He has been an active pilot since 1967, with 6,445 total flight hours. He currently is on the Hebron Airport Authority, is a FAA Safety Counselor, a director of Mission Aviation Training Academy, and is the Nebraska and Iowa Mission Coordinator of AirLifeLine. He and his wife Fern have three children and four grandchildren.

### 1999 Barnabas team honored by state of Oklahoma

The Southern Barnabas Team, commissioned by the AFLC Home Missions Department received a certificate of appreciation from the state of Oklahoma for its service in last summer's cleanup efforts following tornadoes and flooding in Oklahoma City. Members of the 1999 team were: Kevin Groven, Northwood, North Dakota; Andrea and

Katie Nelson, LaCrosse, Wisconsin; and Micah Swenson, Clarkdale, Arizona. The team was in Oklahoma City at the invitation of First Lutheran Church in early July when its next booking was cancelled. They stayed on in the city to aid in cleanup efforts needed from the storm damage sustained a few weeks earlier.

### Letter to the Editor

**Dear Editor,**

Recently a friend reminded me about the Bible story in Genesis when Abraham was asking God about what He would do if there were any godly people in Sodom. If you read the account (Genesis 18:22), you would note that it was not God who stopped answering

Abraham but Abraham who stopped asking God.

I have been tempted to give up on some things, and I know that is not within God's will. I had to be reminded to continue to seek God through prayer. "You will pray to Him and He will hear you" (Job 22:7).

God answers prayer!

— Mrs. Gene Barnum Smith  
Osceola, Wisconsin

**Wheatland, Iowa** — Christian Free Lutheran deacons called five other men to assist them as "Prayer Shepherds" for the congregation. They divided the congregation's

families into smaller groups with the Prayer Shepherds committed to praying for each family and learning more about each family's needs.



**Northwestern Minnesota District** sponsored a couple's retreat in Clitherall, Minnesota during March 31-April 2. Pastor Dick and Audrey Gilmore of LaCrosse, Wisconsin and the New Image Players presented "The Marriage Drama in Five Acts."

**Badger, Minnesota** — Nearly ninety people passed through the doors of Badger Creek Free Lutheran, as they hosted the Northwestern Minnesota District Bible Conference on February 4-5. Missionary Todd Schierkolk spoke on the verse John 3:16 on Friday evening and shared about the ministry in Aguascalientes, Mexico through a video presentation. On Saturday morning, Pastor Jerry Holmaas, professor at the AFLC Schools in Minneapolis, gave an overview of the book of Genesis in two sessions. Immediately after the conference concluded the AFLC Youth Ministries Training Team led those interested in youth ministry in a workshop using the Sonlife material. Next year's district conference will be held in Argyle, Minnesota.

**Pipestone, Minnesota** — Christ the King Lutheran Church paid off its seven-year mortgage in December, 1999 and celebrated a mortgage burning during their morning worship service on January 30, 2000. AFLC President Robert Lee was the guest speaker for the service. Christ the King is sixteen years old and has 423 baptized members. Pastor David Wold serves the congregation.

**Thief River Falls, Minnesota** — "Standing Firm: The Power to Fight for Your Faith in Christ" from I Peter 5:9-10, was the theme for the Northwestern Minnesota District Winter Youth Retreat held at the Best Western Motel, February 20-21. Approximately 95 people heard guest speaker Pastor Jason Holt, Fergus Falls, Minnesota, share at three sessions. Twelve students from AFLBS ministered as counselors and led praise and worship. Numerous adults from the district also were used as counselors. This retreat was planned by four district youth officers and their pastoral advisor.

**Metropolis, Illinois** — Faith Lutheran has voted to call seminarian Brent Logeman to serve as their part-time pastor while assisting him as he continues his studies at the Free Lutheran Seminary.

**Pastor Alvin Pinno**, Eagan, Minnesota has resigned as pastor of Living Word Lutheran where he has served for the past seven and a half years. He expects to conclude his ministry in that south suburban Minneapolis congregation on May 31. His future plans are to be involved in an evangelistic ministry, including working in Eastern Europe and Canada.

### New resources to help you

AFLC Parish Education has several new resources for teaching about the special days and seasons of the Christian Church Year including a colorful poster set with teaching guide, and other pamphlets. Help students of all ages understand and celebrate the history and significance of Lent, Holy Week, Easter, Pentecost, Advent, Christmas, and others. Call 612-545-5631 or e-mail [parished@aflc.org](mailto:parished@aflc.org) for more information.



Rev. Robert Lee, president of the AFLC-U.S.A.; Rev. Oseias Camera, president AFLC-Brazil; and Rev. Artur Villares, president AFLC-Portugal, met together during the March 5-7 annual conference in Campo Mourão, Brazil.

### Third Annual Evangelism Rally and Workshops April 28-29, 2000

**AFLC Schools Chapel**  
3120 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.  
Minneapolis, Minnesota

The rally begins at 7:30 p.m. on Friday with Pastor Kevin Garner, Marseilles, Illinois as the featured speaker on the theme, "It's All Because of Jesus." The Saturday morning workshops begin at 8:30 and include topics such as "Youth Evangelism," "Christmas Coffee Ministries," and other evangelistic tools. This year's rally is being held at the same time and location as the AFLBS Campus Days.

For more information call the AFLC Evangelism Department at 612-545-5631.

## PEOPLE & PLACES

### Deaths noted:

**Borghild Olson**, 93, Redmond, Washington, died on February 3, 2000. Her husband, Pastor Christian G. Olson was president of the West Coast District of the Lutheran Free Church prior to his retirement. Borghild was active in national WMF and educational programs of the LFC.

**Pastor Vince and Eunice Will**, Springfield, Missouri celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on March 19, 2000. They served as missionaries to Pakistan with the World Mission Prayer League and he has been the pastor of Immanuel Lutheran since 1956.

**Springfield, Missouri** — Immanuel Lutheran hosted 20 to 30 teens from Medicine Lake Lutheran Academy, Minneapolis, Minnesota during a week in March. The teens did repairs on homes of elderly people and canvassed the neighborhood in preparation for the congregation's vacation Bible school. AFLC Home Missions Director Paul and Laurie Nash led the team along with host pastor, Vince and Eunice Will.

## AFLC MEMORIALS

Given in January-February, 2000  
Department given to —

*In memory of —*

### World Missions

Henry Hanson  
Howard Thompson  
Alma Peterson  
Lloyd Haraldson  
Lloyd Lee  
John Horn  
Niklaus Heer  
Mildren Bakken  
Dean Steuland

### Home Missions

Rueben Esky  
Chris Farland  
Lloyd Haraldson  
Lloyd Lee  
Dagne Faust  
Dean Stueland  
Clarence Quanbeck  
Henry Hanson  
Sylvia Franz  
Pete Haarstad  
Hilda Erickson

**Marie Hitterdal**, 96, died February 9, 2000 at the nursing home in Ulen, Minnesota. She is survived by a daughter, retired missionary Ruby (Mrs. John) Abel, seven grandchildren and 25 great-grandchildren.

**Faye James**, 82, died in her home in suburban Minneapolis on March 8, 2000. She was a charter member of Medicine Lake Lutheran Church. Her survivors include her daughter, the AFLC president's wife, Gloria (Mrs. Robert) Lee.

**Pastor Herbert Franz**, 82, died on March 11, 2000. The funeral was held March 15 at Zion Lutheran in Hancock, Michigan. Pastor Franz was a long-time AFLC pastor, serving congregations in Eben Junction, Michigan; Cloquet, Minnesota; Ontonagon and Pelkie, Michigan. He also did much speaking and traveling in evangelism work. A more complete obituary will appear in the next issue of *The Lutheran Ambassador*.

### Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

#### AFLC Benevolences (2 months) — January 1 - February 29, 2000

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN FEBRUARY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund . . . . .	\$252,865.00	\$30,452.53	47,298.14	19
Seminary . . . . .	118,291.00	9,127.74	18,813.88	16
Bible School . . . . .	164,270.00	17,294.45	30,083.13	18
Home Missions. . . . .	262,125.00	15,990.57	52,813.46	20
World Missions. . . . .	239,968.00	9,947.85	24,974.92	10
Capital Investment . . . . .	15,226.00	1,099.00	1,902.04	12
Parish Education . . . . .	69,480.00	3,651.07	32,991.12	47
Church Extension . . . . .	25,285.00	1,957.67	2,766.92	11
<b>TOTALS . . . . .</b>	<b>\$1,147,510.00</b>	<b>89,520.88</b>	<b>211,643.61</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>TOTALS 1999 . . . . .</b>	<b>1,013,386.00</b>	<b>74,466.34</b>	<b>171,854.56</b>	<b>17</b>

**Goal 17%**

Evangelism Department received \$3,353.09 in February

### Vision 2004

Margaret Carlson  
Archie Hanson  
Rev. Ernest Langness  
Myron Smedshammer  
Alma Herrick  
Gladys Hollum

### AFLBS

Henry Hanson  
Dagne Faust  
Rev. Ragene Hodnefield  
Gilmet Pederson  
Ragnhild Bakken  
LeRoy Ellingson  
Art Nyhus  
Mary Evenson  
Cora Newfeldt  
Lincoln Engelbert  
Dagny Olson  
Helen Lindgren  
Mildren Bakken  
Lily Olson  
Orbin Erickson

Sylvia Franz  
Oscar S. Hanson  
David Schmiess  
Mildred Myrvik  
Nicole and Natalie Kroll

### AFLTS

Sylvia Franz  
William and Mayme Kangas  
Mildred Myrvik  
Henry Hanson  
Eudale Keller  
Rev. Ragene Hodnefield

### General Fund

Lloyd Lee  
Clarence Quanbeck  
Lloyd Haraldson  
Irene Larson

### Evangelism

Orbin Erickson  
Sylvia Franz

### Parish Education

John Horn

# The danger of becoming too familiar

**A**t times I get tempted to wonder if it would almost be better if I wasn't so familiar with the story of Jesus' death and resurrection. I've heard and read over and over again about Jesus going to the cross, suffering and dying; His body being placed in a tomb; and on the third day He rose again.

I know the details so well that a danger arises that the story may lose its freshness and excitement. We live in a culture with a "been there, done that" attitude. That type of thinking threatens to enter into our attitude toward the Cross and the Resurrection. We've heard it many times. We get tempted to think we ought to look for a new story; something that's more modern and up with the times.

It was a totally new story that first Easter. Nothing remotely similar had ever happened before. Jesus' friends and followers had been experiencing sadness of the worst kind: watching the One they cared for and believed in suffer such a cruel death. But how surprising, how stunning, how mind-boggling, how hope-inspiring when they saw Him and became convinced that Jesus had truly risen from the dead. He was alive! How wonderful it was the first time they realized it was true.

The thrill of what happened changed them completely. It was evident even to those who opposed them. "When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13, NIV). They had to keep telling people the news. "For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20, NIV). It was more than just an interesting story. What happened changed them forever.

But 2,000 years later, can the story still have a similar impact? Do we need a new story? Can the old one still change lives?

Paul told Timothy to "Preach the Word" even though "the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you ... do the work of an evangelist" (II Timothy 4:2-5, NIV).

The work of an evangelist is to share the good

news, the gospel which Paul described elsewhere. "Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. ... For what I received I passed on to you as 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 15:1, 3, 4, NIV).

We do not need a new story. We need a fresh and better understanding of the true story. Its power and vitality has not diminished over the years. It may have happened nearly 2,000 years ago, but it has more relevancy than any event of the past year. The latest seminar has nothing to share that is more practical. No current, best-selling novel is more interesting or as exciting. No matter how many times it has been heard and shared, the story of Jesus' death and resurrection remains a story unlike any other.

I do not really wish I had less familiarity with the good news of what Jesus did. The problem, when the good news starts to seem old and not very interesting, is not that we have heard it too many times. The trouble is we do not understand as we ought the significance of what happened.

One stanza of the hymn, "I Love to Tell the Story," says, "For those who know it best seem hungering and thirsting to hear it like the rest."

Maybe like me, you have heard the story many times. But do you "know it best"? Knowing it that way means making it personal. It involves admitting Jesus suffered what we deserved. It means knowing we have been rescued from death into life. Our sin has been paid for and death has been defeated. Nothing else has the power to make such a difference. Knowing it best means knowing nothing comes close to comparing to what Jesus did.

The ones who heard the story first were not just familiar with the details. They became transformed by what happened. That is what Jesus, by His death and resurrection, can do.

I'm glad I know the story, and I look forward to this time of year when I am reminded of it once again. And I am so glad I know the One who did the action in the story. I hope and pray that the story will always stir my soul, amaze my mind and thrill my heart, and do the same for you.

— **Pastor Craig Johnson**

**"I know the details so well that a danger arises that the story may lose its freshness and excitement."**



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## SOMETHING TO SHARE

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# A lesson at the feeder: food for life

**T**he feeder offers a variety of seeds to attract a variety of birds. Each species that comes to the feeder has its own taste and style of eating. We enjoy each one and its own characteristics.

### The enthusiast

The sparrow perches on the rail and swings its beak back and forth through the feeding tray, scattering seed everywhere. After choosing a few seeds to eat, the sparrow scatters more and then flies away, only to return soon. This time it may eat off the ground the seed it had so wildly scattered. Rarely is it alone and their feeding is obviously very enjoyable.

The woodpecker loves the suet cakes. Perched on the cage it steadily pecks, enjoying thoroughly each seed, nut or berry as it gets deeper into the cake. It's in no hurry and will feed for varying lengths of time. Other enthusiasts at the suet don't have the advantage of the long beak, but that doesn't stop them! Sometimes you'll see the suet caked around their bills as they have tried to get so much out of the cake.

### The ponderer

Look at the very interesting nuthatch. It picks three sunflower seeds into its beak and then flies to perch on a main branch. It tucks the first seed under one foot and lays the second safely nearby on the branch, leaving the third to be eaten first. This nut, held between his free foot and the tree, is cracked and hulled, and then leisurely eaten.

Then, in the same manner of cracking and eating, it takes and eats the second seed, and last, the one under its other foot.

Like the birds, we have life-giving seed for spiritual growth — the Word of God. "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up" (Deuteronomy 6:5-7). This seed is available at any time to all who desire to feed from it. God's Word is able to enrich, instruct and satisfy our lives. It provides inspiration and wise counsel.

Just as we need to keep a fresh variety of seeds available to the birds, so must we keep God's Word fresh, available and attractive to our family. We need to be enthusiastic, thought provoking, and creative in our approach to presenting and using His Word.

### How do you feed your family?

Assess the appetites of your family members. Enthusiastically scatter kernels of truth throughout your home in a variety of ways. Youth love having posters, notebooks, stickers, pencils, WWJD or other Christian jewelry. Attractive daily flip calendars provide thought-provoking messages for every age group and inter-

est. Christian videos and games draw you together while instilling values and reinforcing truths.

Books and magazines are a rich treasure of inspiration, insight and instruction for whoever opens them. You can nibble at them when you have only a few minutes available or delve into a subject for an hour or two. Bright colorful picture books are wonderful for young children and can lead into some interesting discussions.

No time? Christian radio offers a continual variety of programming that both instructs and entertains. It can be enjoyed while doing other activities. Cassettes and CDs provide the same opportunity to hear music, musicals, listen to lectures or Bible studies. You can even have a book or the Bible read to you!

Check out your family's appetites. On what do you feed? How can you be satisfied? Have God's Word readily available for the various members of your family. Enrich them through an attractive, appealing feeder — and keep it full.



— Mary Christenson  
Calvary Lutheran  
Fergus Falls, Minnesota