

The Lutheran AMBASSADOR

April 8, 1997



PUTTING
IT IN GOD'S
PERSPECTIVE

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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AN ENCOURAGING WORD

Committed, generous, and hilarious giving

William Allen White, a famous newspaper editor in Emporia, Kansas, once gave a 50 acre tract of land to the city for a park. At the dedication, he made the strange statement that there are "three kicks in every dollar." He explained, "One kick is when you make it — and how I love to make a dollar! One is when you save it — and I have the Yankee lust for saving. The third kick is when you give it away — and the biggest kick of all is the last one."

It seems Mr. White discovered on his own what Jesus taught 20 centuries earlier: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35b).

The Scriptures speak much about principles of giving. The Old Testament gives instruction to tithe, or to give the first ten percent of one's income to the Lord. Along with the command comes the promise of God's blessing. Read Malachi 3:8-12. Although there is no mention of the tithe in the New Testament, there is much said about giving.

Let's examine three principles of giving in II Corinthians 8:2-5 and 9:6-7. The churches of Macedonia sent a gift to the needy brethren in Jerusalem. The Macedonians had suffered much because of civil war, draining their monetary resources. Yet Paul says, "Out of their most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. And they did not do so as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us

in keeping with God's will."

The first principle in giving is to *give ourselves to the Lord first*. It's only as we are willing to do this that we can be committed to the other two principles.

The second principle is to give *generously*. Paul says, "Remember this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously."

The story is told of a woman who took her young children to the matinee one Saturday. Her young daughter watched her push a ten dollar bill under the window and receive the tickets. The next day they were at church. When the offering was taken, the child saw her mother open her purse, take a quarter, and put it in the plate as it passed them. The little girl looked up at her mother and in a clear stage whisper which everyone around could hear said, "Mother, church is a lot cheaper than a movie, isn't it?" Perhaps this is too characteristic of giving in the church today.

The third principle is to give *cheerfully*. Paul says, "Each man should give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." The word *cheerful* comes from the Greek word *hilaros* which translated to the English means "hilarious." We can have a hilarious time in our churches whenever we take an offering. I wonder if God doesn't love it when we do!



— Pastor
David Skordahl
Dalton,
Minnesota

sound bites

“Do not you know that God entrusted you with that money (all above what buys

1 necessities for your families) to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to help the stranger, the widow, the fatherless; and, indeed, as far as it will go, to relieve the wants of all mankind? How can you, how dare you, defraud your Lord, by applying it to any other purpose?”

—John Wesley

“A person who has everything but Christ will always

4 be a pauper ... those who have nothing but Christ possess everything that matters.”

—Neil B. Wiseman

2 “Earthly goods are given to be used, not to be collected ... Hoarding is idolatry.”

—Dietrich Bonhoeffer

3 “With God no emergency is unforeseen and no want unprovided for.”

—George Muller

“Seven areas that reveal our true values and commitments:

1. What we want most.
2. What we think about most.
3. How we use our money.
4. What we do with our leisure time.
5. The company we enjoy.
6. Whom and what we admire.
7. What we laugh at.”

5

— A.W. Tozer

6

“The world asks, ‘What does a man own?; Christ asks, ‘How does he use it?’”

—Andrew Murray

The use of money:

KEEPING GOD'S PERSPECTIVE



— David Bjornson
Grace Free Lutheran
Valley City, North Dakota

As we think about keeping a proper perspective in the management of money, the words trust and obey come to mind. Throughout the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, God has given us examples of both the proper and improper use of money. In Genesis we read of the blessings bestowed on Joseph, not because he was a financial genius, but because he loved the Lord first and trusted God completely. Genesis 39:3 says, “the Lord caused all that he did to prosper in his hand.”

Joseph could have chosen not to trust the Lord, considering all that he had been through, but he did, and in time God saw to it that he was placed in charge of all of Egypt's financial affairs. And all of this while he was still in his thirties! Joseph trusted God and obeyed Him.

Covetousness is described in the Scriptures as idolatry and held on the same low level as adultery (cf. Ephesians 5:3; Colossians 3:5). Materialism is considered one of the chief sins for it disrupts our lives like a cancer eating away at our living body, not caring what it does to us or who it hurts in the process. I Timothy 6:10-11 says: “The love of money is the

root of all evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But you man of God, flee all these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience and gentleness.”

The teaching of Scripture and the attitude of the general public of today toward money are vastly different. We are constantly being bombarded with messages that relate to society's love of money. How often can you go through a day without hearing of something that relates to money? Whether the claim is of how wonderful the benefits are of owning a particular credit card or perhaps how inexpensive a new sport utility vehicle appears to be, the message is, “it's not so bad to love money or to love what money can do.” Ecclesiastes 5:10 says, “He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves abundance with its income. This too is vanity.”

Does this mean that those who possess any wealth at all need to throw it all away in order to be a child of God? Not at all! Nowhere in the Bible is there a condemnation of wealth, possessions and riches. The rich are not excluded from the kingdom of heaven. On the contrary, wealth and possessions are great blessings when they are used under God's direction. The important thing to remember, when considering how money is to be used in our lives, is what the First Commandment says, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”

How do we keep money and the things money does in our lives in proper perspective? It comes down to trusting and obey the Lord constantly. He wants us to bring our needs to Him in prayer. We are also to ask Him to enable us to do His will with the gifts He has provided. By acknowledging that everything we have is a gift from God and trusting in Him, He will lead us in such a way that His work will be glorified and our needs will be met.

This is more easily said than done because of our sinful human nature. We need to be responsible for the gifts God provides, whether large or small, and always willingly give Him a portion of these gifts.

Money management is not an option, but our God-given responsibility. It is important that we do our best at this job He has given us. An effective way to do this is to develop a budget that acknowledges God first in its expenditures. It should also provide for a savings plan for you and your family for both short-term as well as long-term financial needs. This will enable you to make responsible choices, freeing you rather than confining you, stimulating you rather than depressing you. I believe God never meant for us to be unhappy because of financial affairs.

You should also carefully study your need for such things as insurance, realizing that you face risks that could have a dramatic impact on your family's future should an unexpected event occur. Taking some time to anticipate your financial needs and developing a plan can go a long way in putting money in its proper perspective. It will also help in dealing with the everyday temptations we are faced with. It has been said many times that “people don't plan to fail, but they do fail to plan.”

I encourage you to seek God's help in resisting the trap the devil sets for us by getting us so wrapped up in our daily activities that we neglect our responsibilities as managers of God's gifts. If we remember that we are to trust and obey Him in all things, then through Him all things will be possible. By daily asking the Lord to help us with our needs, we will be able to keep the proper perspective when it comes to dealing with money.



What does the Bible say?

—Richard Rasmussen
Solid Rock Lutheran
Osseo, Minnesota

The Old Testament gives us a clear picture of God's original intent regarding personal debt. In the book of Leviticus, God formalized the rules for how He was to be worshipped and how His chosen people were to live. Although some of the details of God's instructions for living were specific to the Israelite culture and not appropriate in our day and age, the timeless principles behind them are as valid today as they were the day God delivered them through Moses. God has not changed and neither has human nature. Leviticus 25:23, 35-38 and Deuteronomy 15:1-3 form the biblical framework for the subject.

Timeless Principle 1

Borrow only for necessity, out of necessity.

The condition given for borrowing was one of personal necessity, when a breadwinner could not support himself and those he was responsible for. The imagery in Leviticus 25:35 is rich. It speaks of someone who is "poor" and whose "hand trembles." The word "poor" used here literally means to "become thin" indicating impoverishment, having a lack of the basic necessities of food and shelter. A "trembling hand" indicated an inability to provide for oneself for a reason outside of one's control such as illness, injury or crop failure. Today we call such circumstances "acts of God."

The book of Proverbs provides supporting advice. Proverbs 11:15 tells us not to co-sign a loan for someone else. We are not to go into bondage for another. Proverbs 12:9 says, "Better to be a nobody and yet have a servant than pretend to be a somebody and have no food." In other words, it is better to look poor and be rich than to borrow just to look richer than you are.

Do our reasons for personal borrowing agree with God's?

Timeless Principle 2

It is the duty of the blessed to lend to the poor.

Those who had been blessed by the Lord with more than their basic necessities were to support or provide relief to the poor. The lender was to provide for the borrower as one would provide for a

guest living with him, not merely subsistence but adequacy. No interest was to be charged. The charging of interest would make it a commercial venture instead of an act of charity. The Hebrew word for interest means to bite, to strike with a sting (as a serpent). We are not to worsen our neighbors plight by adding the "bite" of interest to a loan.

The Psalms provide support for this principle. Psalm 37:21b, 37:26 and 112:5 impart praise and blessings to those who are "gracious and lend." Psalm 15:5 commends those who do not charge interest.

At what standard of living do we consider ourselves blessed by God and begin to offer significant help to the needy?

Timeless Principle 3

A loan is to be repaid.

A loan given under God's principles was charitable to provide and honorable to accept since it was expected to be paid back in full once the crisis had passed. This undergirded the relationship between the lender and the borrower. The borrower and his household were to be

Children learn God's way

When we were asked to write this article on teaching the biblical value of finances to children, we realized immediately that we had no one-time, sit-down class plan to draw from and say, "There it is, children will be set for life." Rather, like a lot of other things, we have been finding that biblical finances are taught through life's experiences. Deuteronomy 6 puts it this way, "When thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."

One of the biblical uses of finances is to provide for basic needs. God has called us to contentment in having goods and clothing; that which is necessary to maintain life (I Timothy 6:8). We would do well to call our children to that same biblical attitude. It is good for a

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treated with the same respect and courtesy as before the loan was made. Psalm 37:21a emphasized, "The wicked borrows and does not pay back."

What is our attitude toward repayment of personal debt, including casual debt not recorded anywhere?

Timeless Principle 4

The burden of debt is not to be endured long term.

God commanded that every seventh year (the sabbatical year) all debts between Israelite brothers were to be canceled. The regulations given to Moses included instructions to make sure that loans needed near the end of the sabbatical cycle were indeed given and not withheld because of the nearness of debt cancellation. Proverbs 22:7 tells us that "the rich rules over the poor, and the borrower becomes the lender's slave." The Israelites had endured 400 years in bondage to the Egyptians. It was not God's plan for His people to trade bondage to one taskmaster for bondage to another.

When Jesus was teaching about the cost of discipleship in Luke 14, He used the illustration of building a tower,

cautioning His hearers to consider the cost before beginning the task. Likewise, we need to consider the psychological and spiritual costs of bondage to debt over time.

Do we consider all the costs of debt before borrowing?

Timeless Principle 5

Everything belongs to God.

Leviticus 25:38 gives several reasons why these principles were to be observed. First because God decreed it — "I am the Lord your God." Second, God brought the Israelites out of bondage in Egypt. He did not do that to have them enter another type of bondage. Third, Palestine was God's gift to the Israelites. The example of such mercy and kindness was not to be forgotten in dealing with each other. However, the underpinning of the entire thought process is found in verse 23, "the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants." We are only stewards, caretakers of God's property. In the New Testament Jesus reminds us that moths, rust and decay "own" our material possessions.

How much of what we consider "ours" is really ours?



child to recognize that receiving beyond his basic needs is a privilege, rather than a right to be expected. Children who get everything they want will tend to grow up thinking everything is a right, and will lose the appreciation of what they have.

Teaching children to pray to the Lord for specific basic needs is vital. We can do this when a need for something arises. Then we can go as a family to the Lord in prayer and commit it to Him. We marvel to see what God teaches us and our children as we call out to the One who is the Giver of all good things, and as He answers our prayers. Further help in teaching this comes from reading biographies on such people as George Mueller, Hudson Taylor, and others who have trusted God for their basic needs, and have seen Him miraculously provide.

Children learn at home how God uses the availability or lack of funds to give concrete direction for decisions and purchases. It is a tremendous lesson for children to hear their parents say, after pray-

ing about a situation, they are glad for a lack of funds because it helps them know God's direction is for them not to proceed.

In the Scriptures, another one of the reasons why God gives money is so that we can give toward others' needs (II Corinthians 9:8). It is important to emphasize to our children that the proper motive for being thrifty is so that we can have more to give to others. Jacob Tanner says in his Senior Confirmation book, "If we give gladly, freely, and as God prospers us, saving will not make us greedy misers. It is only by being thrifty that most of us are able to give freely and gladly."

Parents can teach their children to give the tithe to the work of their local church by being faithful in doing so themselves, by instructing their children on how to do likewise when they earn money, by encouraging them with Scriptures such as Malachi 3:10-11, and by relating personal examples of God's faithfulness and provision.

May we be faithful in the blessed task of training our children in God's ways.



— Pastor Jim and
Linda Fugleberg
St. Paul's
Lutheran
Fargo,
North Dakota

The Bible and economics

— Trevor Gilkerson, 16
Brookings, South Dakota

What does God say about economic principles? I have wondered about this during my study of economics, so I decided to find out what the Bible says. After this study of the Scriptures, I am convinced that the success of an economy depends on the ethics of the people involved in that economy. An economy composed of moral people will thrive, whereas one made up of people lacking in moral values will suffer. Alexis de Tocqueville, author of *Democracy in America*, put it this way: "America is great because she is good; when America ceases to be good, then she will cease to be great."

God's Word says:

■ Frugality and saving money earned through honest labor leads to financial success.

Dishonest money dwindles away, but he who gathers money little by little makes it grow.

— Proverbs 13:11

■ Money is not to be our goal in life. When people are interested only in acquiring riches, they are never satisfied. We are to use the resources He has given us to glorify Him and do His will: that is satisfying.

Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless.

— Ecclesiastes 5:10

No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

— Matthew 6:24

■ Share with the poor. God freely gave to us, so we should freely give to others.

John answered, "The man with two tunics should share with him

who has none, and the one who has food should do the same."

— Luke 3:11

■ We may disagree with the government about how much we pay, or how our tax money is spent, but the authorities are God's servants and we owe them what they ask for in taxes.

This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

— Romans 13:6-7

■ Love of money causes us to do evil. People who make money

the top priority in their lives often end up breaking the law, hurting other people and even hurting their own families.

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

— I Timothy 6:10

■ Our dependence should be on God who will never leave us.

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you."

— Hebrews 13:5



AFLBS Campus Days offers something new this year! The April 18-20 weekend features guest speaker, Kirk Militzer; a 3-story waterslide; indoor beach basketball and volleyball; and of course the sample classes and Gospel Team

Service. It's almost free: just \$10 covers the whole weekend! High school students from around the nation are welcome. Bring your sleeping bag and pillow, our dorms should be packed. Call now! Phone (612) 544-9501 or fax (612) 544-6404.



Minot, North Dakota — Pictured are some of the youth at Bethel Free Lutheran serving soup and sandwiches after a church service last February. Proceeds went to aid the youth in attending the FLY Convention in Estes Park, Colorado, next August 4-9.

YOUTH NOTES

Rallies challenge youth to walk with the Lord

Presidents' Day weekend is just another date on the calendar for many, but for three districts in the Midwest, it is a time to get together for encouragement and challenge to live for Christ. The Northwestern Minnesota, North Central Minnesota and Eastern North Dakota districts have sponsored Presidents' Day youth rallies for several years. This year all three districts reported high attendance and positive responses.

The Northwestern Minnesota rally was in Thief River Falls at the C'Mon Inn. Their theme was "Mission Impossible" from Philipians 4:13. Missionaries Connely and Carolyn Dyrud challenged the crowd to give their all to Jesus first. Without a commitment to the Lord Jesus the mission to spread the gospel is impossible. A call to home and international missions was given with many requesting prayer and guidance. The AFLBS gospel team, the district youth officers and Pastor Alan Arneson made everything come together for a great weekend.

The North Central Minnesota district had the theme "Igniting Students to Prayer." Their rally was held at the Northerner Inn at Bemidji. Pastor Kevin Olson led them in some serious time of prayer while they were challenged in their walk with the Lord. The highlight was Sunday night when many of the students stayed after the afterglow to pray about specific personal issues in their lives. The AFLBS team "Ransomed Heart," Pastor David Johnson, the district youth officers, and Pastor Todd Peterson put together a weekend which was an ignitor event

in the lives of the youth.

The Eastern North Dakota district used several of their own pastors to lead their weekend in Grand Forks. "The Press" theme referred to the basketball comparison of a full-court press to deal with the topic of temptation. The youth were challenged to identify, break, and reverse the pressure that gets put on them from the world and their peers. It was fitting that they would host this event at the Grand Forks YMCA, and sleep in the gym.

Each district has its own unique character and every rally is different from the one before. But one thing they all have in common is that young people are being challenged to walk with God. They are being presented with the gospel of Jesus Christ and receive encouragement from others who share their struggles. I challenge you to help with the

rallies in your area. They are a lot of work, but they offer eternal rewards as well.

On March 7, the Minneapolis District hosted another "One Incredible Night" at Emmaus Lutheran in Bloomington. That rally dealt with the topic of forgiveness. Two-thirds of the 450 youth that came checked a box that meant they were dealing with some area of their relationship with the Lord. That same weekend Arlington, South Dakota, hosted another "Saturday Night Alive." That event has become a tool to keep the summer camp experience alive all through the year.

Pray for the up-coming rallies. The Illinois District will be meeting on April 5 with the theme, "Thin Ice;" South Central Minnesota will meet at Faithhaven on April 11-13; and the South Dakota District will meet in Pipestone, Minnesota on April 12-13. Remember AFLBS "Campus Days" on April 18-20 in Minneapolis.



— Pastor Kevin Olson
AFLC Youth Director



Snow fell in record amounts in the winter of 1997 for many AFLC people. The youth group at Maple Bay Free Lutheran near Fertile, Minnesota, created a giant turtle out of a snowbank next to their church.

PEOPLE AND PLACES

AFLBS Annual Alumni Basketball Tourney is scheduled for April 18-19, at the North Hennepin Community College gym a few miles north of the Bible School campus in Minneapolis. This alumni men's and women's tournament is the same weekend as the Bible School's Campus Days.

AFLBS alumni — where are you?

Alumni president, Kermit Nash, is hoping to update all the addresses of Bible School alumni and former students. Forms to correct addresses are being sent out. If you did not get one, please send your current address and those of your alumni friends to: AFLBS Alumni, 3120 East Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55441 or call Kermit Nash at (612) 525-0184.

Bible School choirs on Spring tour

On Good Friday, March 28, the AFLBS Choir and Choral Club began their two-week annual spring tour. Choir director Jerry Nelson and his singers are visiting congregations in Minnesota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Colorado, California, Arizona, Texas, and Oklahoma, before returning to the campus on April 13. They will take a weekend tour on April 25-27 into Iowa, Illinois and Wisconsin. The Choral Club, under the direction of Marian Christopher, is traveling at the same time through northern Minnesota, North Dakota, and Montana in route to our Canadian congregations. The last weekend in April, the Choral Club will visit congregations in Fosston, Borup, and Bloomington, Minnesota, and Fargo, North Dakota.

Choir director Jerry Nelson

Plan now to attend the 35th Annual Conference, June 11-15, 1997, at Thief River Falls, Minnesota. Coming next issue — conference information!

Missionaries Todd and Barb Schierkolk, Aguascalientes, Mexico, are enthused about a new Bible study group in a village community outside of Aguascalientes. They will carry on with the work in Mexico while the Dan and Debra Giles family is on furlough.

Missionaries Paul and Becky Abel, Curitiba, Brazil are thanking the Lord for blessed summer camp experiences at the ARCA. On March 21-23, they hosted a youth retreat for the three AFLC congregations in the Curitiba area.

AFLBS switches to semester system

The Board of Trustees approved a change of AFLBS's academic calendar to semesters rather than quarters beginning next fall. Minnesota state colleges are scheduled to make the switch to semesters for the fall of 1998. AFLBS Dean James L. Johnson said, "Had we not changed, we could have been the only college-level school in Minnesota still using quarters in 1999." The change is welcomed by the faculty because they share their teaching load with the Free Lutheran Seminary which has always been on the semester system.

said, "Next year, we're sending both choirs through the Midwest, hoping to visit many of the AFLC churches that helped get our school off the ground 30 years ago." If your congregation would like to invite a choir next year, contact Jerry Nelson at (612) 544-9501.



Missionaries Connely and Carolyn Dyrud at the February Youth Retreat in Thief River Falls, Minnesota.

From the Miriam Infant home

Let me introduce you to Jorge (George). He is one of 18 children living at the Miriam infant home. Jorge likes to play with old tires with the other boys, and would rather do anything than obey Irani, and Luciana, the ones who take care of him. He just started preschool with the other children in February.

Each child needs to bring to school all the materials that he will use for a year. Materials include things such as pencils, paper, crayons, clay, paint, toothbrush, toothpaste, and, of course, toilet paper.

We are thankful for the pencils, markers, crayons and other school materials that you have sent us. We would ask that you would continue to pray for Jorge, and the other children here that God would keep them safe, and bring them into Christian families.

— Sonja Dahl
Campo Mourão, Brazil

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Calgary, Alberta — Bethlehem Lutheran hosted the annual conference of the AFLC-Canada during April 4-6, 1997. The theme was, "The Son of Man Must Be Lifted Up" from John 3. Brazil missionaries Connely and Carolyn Dyrud were the guest speakers along with special music provided by the AFLBS Choral Club from Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Camrose, Alberta — Solid Rock Lutheran is thankful for what the Lord is doing in their community. On January 19, they added 43 new members, including children. The young congregation elected a property committee at their January annual meeting.

Pastor Don Richman, Bloomington, Minnesota was the keynote speaker for the AFLC Brazil Annual Conference in Vitoria during January 24-26. He spent ten days visiting the AFLC mission and meeting with the national pastors. Pastor Clovis Xavier, Jr. of Curitiba, was elected to be the new president of AFLC Brazil. He is only the second national president, succeeding Pastor Oseias Camara. Pastor Oseias will continue to serve in the Campo Mourão area and oversee the ministries of the schools and infant home at the Campo Mourão campus.

World Missions gets new phone service

A new phone service has been installed to go directly to the AFLC World Missions Office. The line can be used 24 hours a day and will allow voice messages to be left or the option is given to receive a fax. The number is (612) 545-9662. Internet e-mail for AFLC World Missions should be sent to: eugene9@idt.net

Monroe, Washington — Monroe Free Lutheran held their first worship service on March 9 in a newly rented storefront building on Main Street in downtown Monroe. The building is handicap accessible and recently remodeled to make a worshipful setting. Monroe Free Lutheran has met in a rural grange hall since its beginning in the fall of 1992. Pray for this home mission congregation as they seek to reach the community of Monroe with the gospel.

Portland, Oregon — In response to interest that has been expressed, prayerful consideration is being given to starting an AFLC congregation in the Portland, Oregon/Vancouver, Washington area. The AFLC Home Missions Department is interested in receiving information on individuals in that area who might be interested in being a part of such a work. Home Missions may be contacted at 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55441; phone (612)545-5631; fax (612) 545-0079; e-mail pnash@afcl.org.

Wallace, South Dakota — Calvary Lutheran officially installed Pastor David Johnson on March 9, 1997. Calvary shares Pastor Johnson's time with Ortley Free Lutheran in Ortley, South Dakota. Pastor Walter Johnson, interim pastor at Kenyon, Minnesota, officiated at his son's installation service. The elder Johnson filled in for AFLC President Robert Lee who was unable to officiate due to his bout with viral pneumonia.

Wichita Falls, Texas — Christ Lutheran Women's Missionary Federation (WMF) has made banners to sell for the past few years. The support and prayers for this ministry has enabled the WMF to contribute to the various ministries of the AFLC and Christ Lutheran. They are printing a new catalog with new designs added. This will supersede all previous catalogs. If you are interested in receiving it, please send a dollar with your name and address to:

Christ Lutheran WMF
4300 FM 1954
Wichita Falls, TX 76302

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences — January 1 - February 28, 1997

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN FEBRUARY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$279,330.00	\$20,871.07	37,337.67	13
Seminary	113,300.00	5,375.60	13,659.37	12
Bible School	142,509.00	6,262.45	18,434.28	13
Home Missions.	257,432.00	15,982.99	37,612.86	15
World Missions.	341,000.00	30,260.81	61,697.69	18
Capital Investment . .	19,000.00	353.30	2,059.09	11
Parish Education . . .	56,517.00	4,906.96	10,491.31	19
Church Extension . . .	14,813.00	1,622.01	3,042.20	21
TOTALS	\$1,223,901.00	85,637.19	184,334.47	15
TOTALS 1996	1,232,267.00	68,217.30	193,894.81	16
Goal 17%				

PARISH EDUCATION

You can help us!

All missionaries — You can help the Parish Education Department compile a collection of true mission stories from our own AFLC people who have served or are currently serving in foreign countries (including short-term missionaries). We hope to make these available to our AFLC churches to use with their Sunday school classes and opening chapel time. It is not necessary that your mission work be through AFLC missions specifically. If you have a story to share about God's work on the mission field, please send it to AFLC Parish Education, 3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard, Minneapolis, MN 55441. These can be either typewritten or dictated onto a cassette tape and we would be glad to transcribe it for you. We look forward to hearing from you!

Has Sunday school impacted your life? What do you remember about Sunday school? How did God's Word transform your life through Sunday school? Was your spiritual life impacted through a specific teacher in Sunday school? We are looking for your answers in 50-100 words to print in the August *Lutheran Ambassador*, dedicated to Sunday school. Please send your testimony to the AFLC Parish Education Department by April 30, 1997.

Are you updating to a new computer? Parish Education is in need of an additional personal computer (486 or higher) with color monitor and hard drive. If you are willing to donate your old system, please contact Marian or Karen in Parish Education at (612) 545-5631.

Strandquist, Minnesota — Hegland Lutheran is looking for seven to nine foot pews. If you have some available, write to Hegland Lutheran Church, Box 132, Strandquist, MN 56758.

Israel Study Program is scheduled for February 7-21, 1998. The hosts are Pastors Mark Molstre and Todd Olson. This trip is not a popular tour

but a Christian Study Program. Your understanding of the Scriptures will be enhanced as you study the historical, geographical and archaeological background of the Bible. The instructor will be Dr. Jim Martin of Bible World Seminars. For more information contact Pastor Mark Molstre, 308 N. Benson, Tioga, ND 58852, or call (701) 664-2164; e-mail: Zion Luth@Tioga.Ndak.Net

AFLC Memorial Gifts

January, February, 1997

Name	Given By	Department
Dorthea Hurd, Wilfred Langness and Harvey Langness	Paul/Elaine Eliason	AFLBS
Bertina Thingelstad and Lucille Harvey	Gerry/Karen Knudsvig	AFLBS
Mildred Whitman and Pamela Sundhagen	Randall/Karen Pederson	AFLBS
Mary Swanson	Ella Rekedal	World Missions
	Byron/Dorothy Klemmetson	AFLTS
	Jerry/Karen Swanson	AFLBS
Robert Jaeger	Bethany WMF, Abercrombie, ND	Home Missions
	Lois Oscarson	Home Missions
	Kenneth/Mary Nash	
Boyd Barlow	Orrin/Lorraine Nyhus	AFLBS
Adelia Anderson	Pastor Christian/Charlotte Oswood	World Missions
	Myron/Florence Pederson	
	Leslie/Anne Miller	AFLBS
	Thora Eide	
	Beatrice Konsterlie	
Evelyn Affield and Grace Edlund	Percy/Judith Strand	AFLBS
Angela Sveen and Pamela Sundhagen	Arley/Cheryl Hartsoch	AFLBS
Ed Haseth	Diane Haseth	Evangelist
Roy Rasmussen	Ken/Kathi Anderson	AFLBS
	Delbert/LuVern Jones	
	Pastor/Mrs. Orville Sunde	
	Edna Eversvik	
	LaVerne Storley	
	Donald/Donna Jacobson	
	Loiell/Mary Lynn Dyrud	
	V.J. Wik	
	Sherman/Adeline McCarlson	
	Clarence/Edna Quanbeck	AFLTS
	Orlin Quanbeck	
	David/Arleen Dyrud	World Missions
	Irvin/Janice Schmitke	Evangelist
	Harvey/Myrtle Dyrud	
	Peter/Judy Dyrud	
	Lee/Hannah Quanbeck	
	Sam/Mary Jo Dyrud	
	Kenneth/Mary Nash	Home Missions
	David/Marilyn Jacobson	
	Erwin/Bethel Cudmore	
	Pastor Raynard Huglen	World Missions
	Chester/Gwen Dyrud	
	Leola Furman	

NEWS OF INTEREST

Church giving patterns studied

Church giving patterns are mixed, according to Empty Tomb, Inc., publisher of an annual report on the state of church giving.

An analysis of giving patterns in 1994, the most recent year for which figures are available, found that per-member giving in constant dollars (adjusted for inflation) increased from 1993 to 1994. However, during the same period per-member giving as a percentage of U.S. per capita disposable (after-tax) personal income decreased, suggesting that giving patterns are not keeping pace with improved personal financial conditions.

Under a three-year grant from Lilly Endowment, John and Sylvia Ronsvalle conducted a study of congregational dynamics (reported in a new book, *Behind the Stained Glass Windows: Money Dynamics in the Church*

from Baker Books).

"Some of the dynamics affecting church member giving patterns are deeply ingrained at the congregational level," suggested Sylvia Ronsvalle. "For example, we encountered many congregational leadership boards that valued the status quo more highly than expanding the support base of the church. Because the issues of money and power are often closely connected, these leaders were willing to keep their congregations at a maintenance level rather than risk a shift in the congregation's power structure."

John Ronsvalle noted that some of the dynamics are larger than the congregation itself. "The church has not had a positive agenda for the affluence that spread through our culture after World War II. Seminaries have not trained pastors in either the practical or the spiritual aspects

of money. In the resulting void, church members' attitudes toward their increasing resources were influenced more strongly by consumer advertising than by any religious perspective."

The result, the authors suggest, is that many pastors feel pressured to make people happy rather than to lead church members into a deeper — and perhaps more demanding — relationship with God.

According to Sylvia Ronsvalle, "Current leaders would much rather maintain the church at its present level of activity than involve more people in responsible stewardship to expand its vision. But giving patterns suggest that if the church is not expanding its vision, it will slowly lose market share with its members over time."

(Used by permission of the EP News Service.)

Remote India villages receive gospel



Elachetta Dibba, India — Rev. Luther Sastry and his companions are pictured sailing on a boat to the fishermen's village named Elachetta Dibba. It's the only way to reach this village at the mouth of the Krishna River. Many watched the "Jesus" film donated by Emmaus Lutheran in Bloomington, Minnesota.



Pictured is Rev. Luther operating the 16MM projector given for the "Jesus" film in the Telugu language. Approximately 300 people gathered to watch the story of Jesus' life. A need long felt by the workers in India is a vehicle to help with the travel. All travel is presently done by public transportation. Emmaus Lutheran, Bloomington, Minnesota, has provided the first gift of \$250 as seed money and challenges other congregations to match their gift to provide the \$5,000 needed for a small vehicle for the mission in India.

God will provide

A lady was visiting her non-churchgoing, unsaved grandmother at Christmas time. She suggested they look for a church in the area to go to on Christmas Eve. Grandmother thought about it and admitted it would be nice and a good idea. She was tired, though, of those churches that "are always passing the plate, asking for money."

We would be correct in saying that Grandmother has a problem in not letting God be in charge of her finances. At the same time, however, it is important to remember that before her view of finances is straightened out, her heart must be right with God. The question needs to be asked, is the way some Christians and churches treating and emphasizing money a hindrance to people like her coming to know the Lord? Are people hearing us talk about money so much that they do not hear the gospel of Jesus Christ?

The Lord is more interested in and more desiring of people's souls than their pocketbooks. That should be our interest and message as well. Yet far too often the focus of the talking and thinking of congregations and ministries is money. We complain about how people should be giving more. We dream about what we would do if we had more. We worry about what we will do if we do not receive more.

I wonder if unsaved people listening to us occasionally think, "It is too bad their God is so poor." Does the world know by observing our attitude toward money that we serve the God who says, "I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens, for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills" (Psalm 50:9,10, NIV)? Is belief in the promise "my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19, NIV) reflected in our talk and our walk?

"But Jesus talked a lot about money." Yes, He most certainly did. His message, however, was "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth ... You cannot serve both God and Money ... do not worry about your life ... For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:19,24,25,32,33, NIV).

Jesus and His disciples did have some kind of treasury. We must wonder, however, about its impor-

tance to Christ since the one in charge of it was the one who ultimately betrayed Him.

Their financial situation was quite humble and meager. Jesus declared, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head" (Matthew 8:20, NIV). They accepted assistance from women who "were helping to support them out of their own means" (Luke 8:3, NIV). They did not have much and they did not require much.

In looking at the Gospels it does not appear Jesus engaged in anything that we might describe as a fundraising project or a stewardship campaign. This is not to say that those are entirely wrong and never appropriate. They may have their place in some cases, but we see that prayer and confidence in the Father to provide was in the prominent place in the life of Christ. Should it not occupy the same place in our lives?

The example of Jesus shows that congregations have a role to play in teaching people about making wise use of the money God has provided them. We are to call them to have an eternal perspective and values. We are also to share the good news that money is not something the child of God needs to worry about.

Congregations and ministries are not to be beggars. The ministry of the gospel should not be degraded in that

way. We teach and encourage. We trust God to provide.

We are to lead people to give out of love for Christ. Money is not to be sought simply by means of dropping a load of guilt, creating a feeling of shame or making a slick appeal. We do not look to gimmicks but to the gospel.

The great missionary, Hudson Taylor, while speaking at meetings chaired by the evangelist D. L. Moody, refused an offering that was to be taken for his China Inland Mission. Moody described him as "the first man I ever met who refused a good collection." A Christian man left the meeting pleased that the \$20 he had intended to give was still in his pocket. Later, after a sleepless night and a troublesome conscience, the same man sent off a \$500 check to be used in the evangelization of inland China. As Taylor was famous for saying, "God's work done in God's way, will never lack God's supplies."

— Pastor Craig Johnson

**We are to
lead people
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Christ.**

For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. — Acts 4:20

I listened with interest as an evangelist recently in our area addressed the distinction he understands between *witnessing* and *evangelism*. Evangelism is the intentional presentation of the plan of salvation — mankind's need for forgiveness, Christ's all-sufficient sacrifice for sin, and faith which receives God's free gift. By contrast, witnessing is sharing what God has done in one's own life. Obviously, witnessing may lead to or include an evangelistic presentation just as effective evangelism can include personal testimony, but they can legitimately be distinguished from one another.

It is good to recognize the distinction, because witnessing plays a critical part in the process of world evangelization. Witnessing personalizes the truths of the gospel message and helps bring them to life in a practical way before a watching world. A Christian is witnessing when he tells how much knowing Christ helped him through the loss of a close family member. A Christian is witnessing when she tells another young wife who is struggling in her marriage how bringing God into their lives and home has made all the difference in their

family relationships. A Christian is witnessing when he simply radiates settled joy in the hubbub of day to day circumstances at work; and when asked how he can be so calm, he says it was not always that way but Jesus Christ has made the difference. A Christian witnesses at the bedside of one who is sick while sharing the strength and comfort he himself drew through Christ when receiving the news of personally having cancer.

Witnessing has been compared to the gentle rain which softens hardened soil. It does little good to hammer a seed into dry ground with no moisture. How much better for the soil to be prepared through gentle rains and for the seed to be planted in that moist environment. Your witness of God's personal dealing in your life may be the very instrument that God uses to prepare a lost one to give a serious hearing to the gospel.

Perhaps one of the most frequently noted examples of simple witnessing is that of the shepherds who received the angel's announcement of Christ's birth in Luke 2. The shepherds bubbled over with the whole experience each time they crossed paths with someone. Do you imagine the enthusiasm of their witness made an impact on those with whom

SOMETHING TO SHARE

they shared? Was it because they had rushed from the manger to a late night evangelism training class first? No, they just did what was so natural to do. They gave simple witness to what they had heard and seen.

The man healed of his blindness by Jesus is another perfect example. When approached by the religious leaders for an explanation of what had happened to him, he gave a direct witness: "A Man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to the pool of Siloam and wash.' So I went and washed, and I received sight ... One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see" (John 9:11,25).

God can use you to have a positive impact on another person! The encouraging fact is that every Christian has a witness to give since God is at work in every Christian's life. The witness need not be dramatic — and must not be exaggerated. In fact, be confident that God will put you in situations where the witness you have to give is the very witness needed by the person with whom you have the opportunity to speak.

Go and be what you are — a witness.

— Pastor Rick Long
Atonement Lutheran
Arlington, Washington