

The Lutheran AMBASSADOR

August 24, 1999



**Sunday school –
a place to raise up ones
to praise the Lord**

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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Editor: Rev. Craig Johnson
Assistant to the Editor: Solveig Hjermsstad
Editorial Board: Rev. John Mundfrom, Oryen Benrud, Rev. Jerry Moan.

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For editorial inquiries and information:

The Lutheran Ambassador, Box 446,
Bruce, SD 57220-0446; 605-627-5188;
fax 605-627-9254;
e-mail craigj@teleport.com
wshjerm@brookings.net

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AN ENCOURAGING WORD

Believe – pray – wait

Isn't it interesting how we have come to believe that everything we want should happen today, and that it should happen within the hour? We are hungry so we go to the drive through of a fast food establishment. We have film to develop and we take it where it can be developed in an hour. We count the items in our grocery cart to see if we qualify for the express line. We need shoes and we walk into the store and ten minutes later we walk out with new shoes.

Whatever happened to waiting for food to be prepared, film to be sent away for developing and eight business days later getting the prints, or sending to Sears and Roebuck for shoes and waiting two weeks for our parcel to arrive in the mail? We call it improved technology, and yet there are many times we are irritated and frustrated because we have to wait. It seems we would like to eliminate from our dictionary and vocabulary the word "wait."

If we were to pursue that idea it would mean some major revisions to the Scriptures because they have much to say about waiting and patience. However, wait and patience are used together with many other key words to reveal the will of our God.

Waiting without believing would be a very hopeless situation, wouldn't it? Imagine yourself standing at a bus stop waiting, but not believing that there was a bus or that if there were it would even run today. It would be no different than waiting for a God that we did not believe even cared or existed. I cannot see the bus, but I know it is running because the schedule says so. I cannot see God, but His Word assures me that He is in fact present, and that He is concerned about me and is working on my behalf. It is called faith, and it becomes reality in our lives when we receive Jesus as our Savior.

The second word that is so important in our waiting is "pray." To pray is a privilege, and we see in the Scriptures that it is not just an option, but it is a command of our Lord Jesus. Prayer keeps us in touch. Recently while traveling with a couple of other families to the FLY convention in Colorado, it was nice to be in touch with the others with the use of cell phones. Even though we could not always see each other we were always in touch. Prayer is that wonderful opportunity we have to speak to the One for whom we wait, knowing He will bring about and do in His timing what He desires for us.

In just a couple of weeks a new Sunday school year will begin in many of our churches. Wherever the teaching of our children takes place, be it by a teacher in the classroom or in the home by parents and other family members and friends, let us put into practice these three tasks which He has commanded. Believe Him and obey His Word. Pray often concerning your own needs and the needs of those entrusted to you as students and wait patiently for Him to do in His time what he desires for you and those whom He has entrusted to you. Thus saith the Lord, "Those who hopefully wait for Me will not be put to shame" (Isaiah 49:23b).



— **Pastor Elden Nelson**
Maranatha Free Lutheran
Willmar, Minnesota

sound bites

We must spare no effort, time, and expense in teaching and educating our children to serve God and mankind. We

1 must not think only of amassing money and property for them. God can provide for them and make them rich without our help, as indeed he does daily. But he has given and entrusted children to us with the command that we train and govern them according to his will.

— *Martin Luther*

In all our institutions let the Word of God be and remain the Book above all books. Let the Spirit of the Gospel, the fear of God, and that

4 which is inseparably bound together with it, singleness of heart and meekness, reign therein, and permeate every teacher and scholar as well as all teaching and learning. ... We do this for the church, that is for the blessed Kingdom of our Savior, whose partners and God-appointed fellow laborers we are.

— *C.F.W. Walther*

6

Take inventory. Look at your schedule and ask, "What time and energy is going toward the building of my soul as a dwelling place for God?"

— *Gordon MacDonald*

2

For most of us, the great danger is not that we will renounce our faith. It is that we will become so distracted and rushed and preoccupied that we will settle for a mediocre version of it. We will just skim our lives instead of actually living them.

— *John Ortberg*

3

Is not the great defect of our education today ... that although we often succeed in teaching our pupils "subjects," we fail lamentably on the whole in teaching them how to think: they learn everything, except the art of learning.

— *Dorothy Sayers*

Given that God is by nature infinite, even knowing everything there is to know about Him leaves infinitely more to discover. That God remains veiled in mystery enhances

awe and humbles any spiritual pride.

— *Daniel Harrell*

5



— *Marian J. Christopherson*
AFLC Parish Education Director

Remember the Sabbath —



Can children worship?

A child's understanding of worship and the Sabbath can be greatly influenced by their parents' attitude and preparation. I am thankful for the subtle ways in which my parents prepared our family for worship.

Growing up on a farm, there was always more than enough work for everyone. But on Saturday evenings, we finished work early in order to complete our Sunday school lessons and be tested on our Scripture verses and catechism memorization. Our Saturday supper was a simple meal, which freed my mother to make sure her six children had their weekly baths and that clothes were cleaned and pressed and shoes polished. For Sunday worship, we put on our "Sunday best."

These actions certainly did not make us more worthy in God's sight, but they were outward signs that this was a very important event in our family. We wanted to honor the King by preparing and giving our best. On Sunday morning our house sparkled from the extra cleaning done the day before, and sacred music echoed throughout the house. It was clear that this was a special day: a day of rest from our labors; a day for rejoicing; and a day to receive rich blessings and refreshment from the Lord as we gathered to worship. Now as an adult, Sunday is the day I look forward to most for the same reasons. I believe this is because my parents faithfully hallowed its sacredness and sought to instill this in our hearts.

"Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy."
Throughout the Bible and down through

history, the idea of intergenerational corporate worship has been a vital part of the spiritual life of the congregation. People of all ages unite together in the worship of the one true God. Corporate worship proclaims that God's grace and mercy are not limited to any particular age. "For the promise is for you and your children" (Acts 2:39).

An important heritage from the Reformation is the priesthood of all believers. This emphasizes that the Holy Spirit indwells and teaches every believer through His Word. The Holy Spirit is at work in the heart and mind of even a young child, teaching about our loving Heavenly Father, Jesus the Savior, and the Holy Spirit our Comforter. Just as an infant becomes a child of God through the Word in baptism, so also that child must be nurtured in faith as God's grace continues to be given through the teaching of the Word (II Timothy 3:15).

Worship is often misunderstood to be a work of man. Worship is initiated by God and only truly participated in by believers. The worship service has traditionally been called the "divine service" in the Lutheran church, because God comes to serve His people through the Word and the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. God's people gather together to receive from the Lord His gifts of grace. Where two or three are gathered together, there He is in our midst (Matthew 18:20). God is honored when as repentant sinners we are humble recipients of His grace in Christ Jesus.

"Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy."

And yes, children can worship, and should be given every opportunity. In their childlike faith they are least resistant to the work of the Holy Spirit. In this sense even an infant can participate in worship, simply being a recipient of God's wondrous grace in Christ (Ephesians 2:8-9).

In corporate worship there must be some kind of order (I Corinthians 14:40) which unites believers together. This is called the liturgy, which means "public service." Liturgy may include Scripture readings, confessions, prayers and music. It is important to remember that the purpose of the liturgy of worship is not therapeutic, to make people feel good. Liturgy is intended to convey the Word of God. Whatever forms of liturgy (orders of service) are used, it is vital that they are objectively Christ-centered. Christ-centered theology demands Christ-centered worship. The entire worship service is a confession of truth which should leave no doubt in the minds of members or visitors what the Word of God declares. Although we cannot see into the hearts of the participants, as leaders we can guard that all that is spoken and sung in the worship service is richly meaningful in that it is solidly rooted in Scripture and focuses on the cross of Christ. As children participate in this service, their understanding of Bible truths will be strengthened.

It should also be clear from the beginning prelude to the last Amen that the God who is being worshiped is like no other God (Isaiah 45). He is holy, righteous, and true. There should be a sense of the transcendence of God, a reverence and awe at the mystery and holiness of God (Psalm 2:11; Isaiah 6:1-7; Habakkuk 2:20). This may be conveyed by the respectful manner in which words are spoken and actions performed and by music that reverently reflects the nature and character of the things of God.

Today, children are used to being daily entertained. Rather than trying to compete with fun and excitement, parents need to make a clear distinction to their children that church is not a place to be entertained, but to be fed and nourished spiritually (Mark 11:15-17). Some may object that children should not be expected to sit still or to be attentive for any length of time. But sitting in church for an hour of worship can be a wonderful opportunity to cultivate discipline and reverence (Proverbs 15:31-33).

This may not be an easy task! It will take patience, firmness, and perseverance. But children can be taught to sit still if it is expected of them and to be reverent in the house of worship if it is modeled for them.

In our family with six children, all within six years of age, it became clear to us at a very young age that when we came to church we were expected to sit quietly and reverently. If one began to squirm and fuss, my father would reach over and squeeze the knee of the offender with a firm vise grip. We knew this meant to sit quietly and listen or there would be inevitable consequences of being taken out and spanked. We knew Dad was serious because he was a man of his word. We learned reverence and self-discipline by our father's model of reverence and consistent practice of discipline (Proverbs 13:24). We learned there is a time to be still and listen to God (Psalm 46:10).

The worship service also provides opportunity to actively and joyfully respond to God's grace through music, prayers and offerings. But our primary worship response is lived out daily, serving the Lord in the regular tasks of whatever role He has called us to. We are temples of the Holy Spirit, bought with a price to glorify God (I Corinthians 6:19-20). So then every duty, no matter how menial, becomes worship if it is done unto the Lord (Colossians 3:23-24). Washing dishes, pulling weeds, driving tractors, sailing seas — we worship God as we daily receive His strengthening and preserv-

ing grace through His Word and gratefully serve Him in every moment. Children also need to be taught this principle. They can be



assured that whether they are working or playing, singing or praying, they are worshipping God when Christ the Savior lives in their hearts.

Yes indeed, children can worship!



Leading children in

helping them see God



Prelude — Be silent before the Lord, preparing hearts and minds for worship.

Opening Prayer — Acknowledges the presence of God and states our intent in coming together to hear God's Word and receive His grace in Christ Jesus.

Opening Hymn — A proclamation of who God is and the greatness of God.



Confession of Sin — Declares our sinful nature and gives opportunity to confess our sins and to plead for God's mercy in Christ.

Kyrie — Calling on God for mercy as needy sinners. Teaches the Trinity and the work of each Person (Father, Son, Holy Spirit).

Declaration of Grace — Grants assurance in the forgiveness of our sins in Christ.

Scripture Lessons — Opportunity to hear various readings from God's Word. Often the texts are related to one another if following a pericope outline. Note the theme of all Scripture is Christ.

Response — An expression of joy in hearing the gracious Word of God.



Confession of Faith — Clearly states the united beliefs of the congregation relating to the work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (such as the Apostles' Creed).

Gloria Patri — Proclaims the Persons of the Trinity and their eternal character.

Offering — A love-motivated response to God for His goodness and mercy toward us, given to further His kingdom through various endeavors.



Sermon — Opportunity to hear the Word and for the Spirit to apply it to our hearts.

Other Hymns and Songs — Teach the Word and express the character of God, the accomplished work of redemption in Jesus Christ, and the eternal hope of the believer.

Lord's Prayer — Praying as Christ taught His disciples. Opens our eyes to our real needs and our helplessness, which ought to motivate us to pray. A model for content of our daily prayer life.

Benediction — A blessing of grace upon God's people to depart in peace and serve the Lord.

Threefold Amen — A final affirmation that corporately as a congregation we agree upon the things that have taken place in this service of worship.



The above service is familiar to many people of the AFLC (Ambassador Hymnal p.2). Other service orders and variations may also be used, with the theological content and emphasis always being carefully considered.



the Service of Worship

As children observe and participate in various parts of the service, worship will take on a deeper meaning for them. Some things to call attention to include:

A

Arrive early to allow time to quiet hearts and minds in reverent preparation for worship.

Note that the bulletin folder is provided as a guide for the congregation, which eliminates the need for continual prompters from the leader. This helps to keep the flow of the worship service without interruption, focused on God and not ourselves.

Provide children with their own Bibles at a young age and help them follow along as Scripture lessons are read. If you are already using the same Scripture passages in family devotions, children will confidently find them on Sunday morning.

Call attention to the hymn numbers posted. Give children the responsibility of finding the correct pages. Show them how to follow the words and notes. Set an example by holding your hymnal up high and singing out joyfully.

Teach humility in prayer by quietly folding hands, closing eyes, and bowing heads.

Encourage children to give their own offering of money to the Lord. Guide them in establishing a habit of saving and giving.

Help children to take sermon notes at their own level. Provide them with paper, and ask them to write down questions and key words or phrases and then be prepared to share with the family. Giving something specific to listen for will help them to listen more attentively.

Encourage them to especially listen for gospel, the good news of what Jesus has done for me.

Tell children to listen for names of the three Persons of the Trinity throughout the service: Father, Son, Holy Spirit. At home, help them to understand the different work of each Person using the catechism.

Call attention to other objects in the worship center such as the altar, candles, an open Bible, a cross, pulpit from which the Word of God is preached, bap-

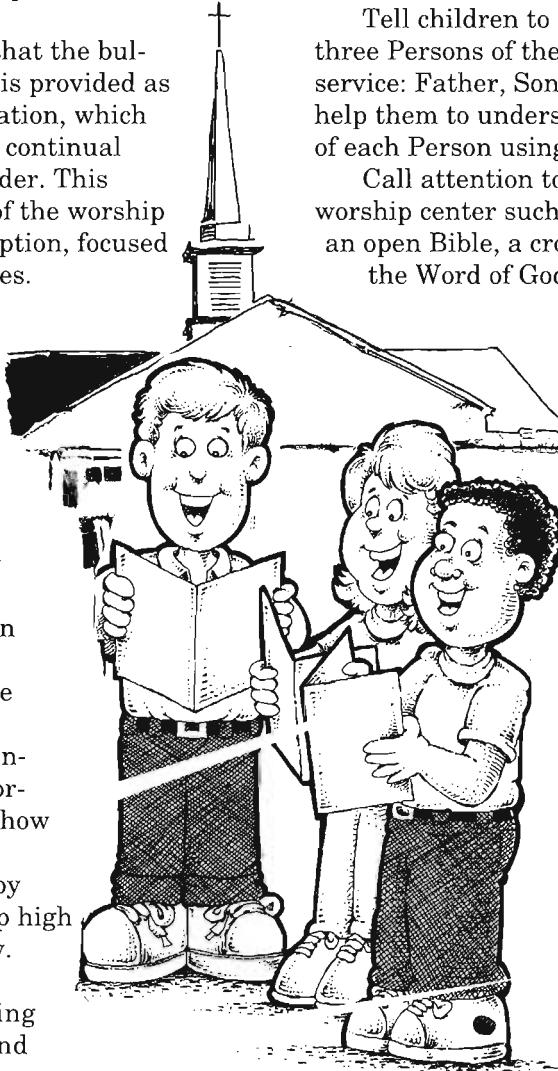
tismal font, communion rail, artwork and banners, flags, altar cloths, and other visual symbols. Discuss the purpose of each with your family. Ask your pastor if you are not sure what they mean.

When you know there will be a baptism or celebration of the Lord's Supper, prepare your children in advance to understand their meanings. Baptism is a gracious act of God whereby He creates faith in the heart and grants the gift of

salvation through water and the Word. Point out that this gift of faith can be lost if it is not nurtured by the Word. The Lord's Supper is a celebration for repentant sinners to receive forgiveness of sins and to be strengthened and preserved in the one true faith by God's grace.



— from the AFLC
Department of
Publications and
Parish Education

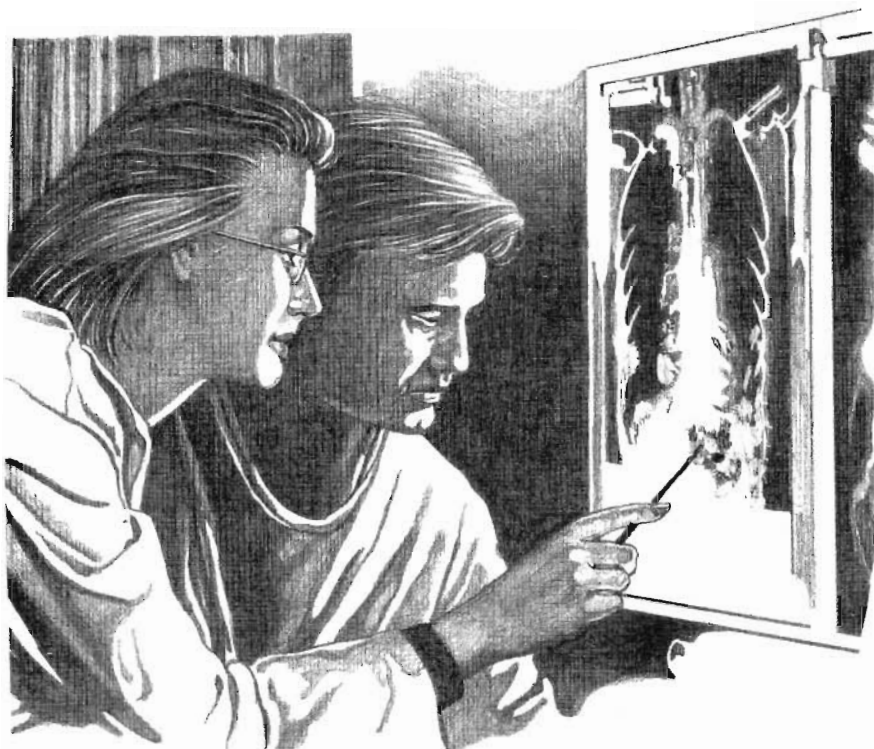


This is a consideration of our adult Sunday school class and not “the” adult class. There are likely as many variations of classes as there are classes. I would like to share what I believe our class does for its members and what it does for the congregation so that we might be better equipped to serve our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Although I am focusing on the relational aspects of the class and its impact on the members, it must be secondary to the teaching of God’s Word as we read in Proverbs 9:9, “Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still; teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning.”

Anatomy of an adult Sunday school class

We are one of four adult classes at Grace Free Lutheran in Valley City,



North Dakota. We meet in the church kitchen. We set chairs beginning in front of the upright freezer and continue across in front of the two ovens to the corner where the roaster is located. We then proceed in front of the drawers and cabinets and usually stop in front of the one labeled “spoons.” This arrangement will accommodate about twenty people, though some days we have only seven. I stand on the opposite side of the serving island so as to see everyone. Oh yes, by the way I am the leader. I don’t like the term teacher because I feel I learn more than anyone. Our members include young singles, newlyweds and on up to great-grandparents. We enjoy learning from each other. Because of the different stages in lives of our members, attendance every Sunday is difficult for some. I consider anyone who is there half of the time to be a regular.

Studying the Word followed by the fellowship and sharing were the first answers by the members as to what they felt were the important aspects of attending the class. I wasn’t surprised. We are a Word-centered class, but the discussion often turns topical and that’s when sharing and sometimes testimonies come out. We want to serve people’s spiritual needs, but we never know the needs of each one in the class, so we take every opportunity to present the gospel.

Sharing is what opens a group up and builds relationships, but this often happens slowly. I have seen some people wait several months before feeling comfortable to join in the discussion. I try to ask questions that require comments to help the process. It is

Discover a vital organ in your congregation’s life!

— Vince Larson
Buffalo, North Dakota

vitaly important that the leader remember the two and one rule — I have two ears and one mouth so do twice as much listening as talking. The leader can stifle responses by being too quick to talk. Our class knows that I'm not afraid of silence. Give people time to think before responding. Waiting may also encourage those to share who aren't as courageous as others.

Humor is an important ingredient to putting people at ease and building relationships. I like to lighten things up whenever possible without compromising the point of the lesson. As relationships within the class build and members become more comfortable with each other, more questions arise. If the general fund of the AFLC could have a dollar for every time I've heard a question preceded by the words, "this is probably a dumb question ...," there would be no lack of funds. In over twenty years of leading adult classes, I have yet to hear my first dumb question. What I have noticed by the looks on the other members' faces is that usually someone else has the same question.

The congregation benefits two ways from the adult Sunday school class. It is a discipleship tool that is enhanced by the Wednesday night Bible study and the Sunday morning message. In our study of Romans last year, I was surprised how many times the pastor's message covered something that was brought up in our class. There is also growth by the sharing of how situations are handled or mishandled and what we can learn from that. The other benefit to the congregation is how new people become acquainted so much faster. Thirty percent of our class is new to the congregation in the last five years, and this is not unique to our class. The fellowship and friendships that are built in the class carry over into the congregation setting also. New members involved in adult Sunday school class are enfolded into the church family faster.

If you are not involved in an adult class, consider attending one. Whether you are a new member or one who has been around for a long time, discover the blessings waiting for you. Perhaps there's a class that needs to

be started with you as the leader. You can be a part of developing a vital organ needed for spiritual growth and health for you and your congregation.



A New Flower

Silently pacing across the ocean sand,
Celeste was pondering for a great deal was
at hand.

A few days from now her life would
change evermore,
For in her womb a child very soon to be born.

Victim of deceit and pain and sorrow,
Her baby child would be gone by the morrow.

Even though she approved of it at the start,
She knew it was wrong by the weight in her heart.

Torn from reality, Celeste was ever so confused,
For being a mother was the blessing she
would lose.

How could she have done that? I do not know.
Her integrity would be shattered in one single blow.

Even now, while Celeste was debating her decision,
Within her mind's eye she had an extraordinary
vision.

Cold and expressionless, she saw her reflection;
But what else she saw grabbed her undivided attention.

Hazed in amazement, Celeste tried to remain mild,
For in her reflection she saw the face of a child.

In pain and in fear, Celeste saw this child's young face,
And to kill this precious life was way out of place.

Letting her conscience discern and not her sentiment,
Her new decision was based solely on divine judgment.

Desperately pleading in most anxious prayer
Pardon from the Maker for not choosing this life to spare.

Raging storms ascended from the ominous purple sky,
And as she poised there she knew the Almighty was nigh.

Expecting death from the maker for her punishment,
Celeste was spared due to another atonement.

Now awake from her dream, pondering for yet an hour,
For within that same day she conceived a flower.



— by Daniel Giles
son of missionaries Dan and Debbie Giles
Aguascalientes, Mexico

Where do missionaries

**Sunday schools –
places of challenging,
training, and praying
for young people
to answer the call
of the Lord
of the harvest.**

– *Pauline Moberg
Astoria, Oregon*



*I heard the
voice of the
Lord, saying,
“Whom shall
I send
and who will
go for us?”*

— Isaiah 6:8

As you walk down the stairs into our Sunday school assembly room, you will see a bulletin board on the wall with the pictures of our AFLC missionaries. On the front of the speaker's podium, the verse from Mark 16:15, “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel,” is a weekly reminder to our children and adults that we have a message to proclaim and a commission to reach our world with the good news of Jesus' salvation and love.

The first Sunday of each month, we observe Mission Sunday in our Bethany Free Lutheran Sunday School. The songs and lessons are all chosen to remind us to serve the Lord wherever we are as a representative of Christ Himself. Today's Living Bible in II Corinthians 5:20 says, “We are Christ's ambassadors. God is using us to speak to you.” We also spend time praying for our AFLC missionaries and talk about ways we can help spread the gospel. The monthly mission letters from our AFLC missionaries are copied and handed out to each of our church families so that we can read their experiences and pray for their specific needs. For our offering, we use a globe with slots cut out in Brazil and India.

At the beginning of each new Sunday school year, we choose a mission project,

focusing on children's ministries around the world. We have sent our offerings to the Miriam Infant Home and the ARCA in Brazil, the Sunday school in Aguascalientes, Mexico, among others. Our summer vacation Bible school chooses a mission project and has helped purchase a refrigerator in Africa and support a mission school in India. The children have brought toys, school supplies and toiletries for special projects to send to missions. One boy sent several pairs of slightly-used athletic shoes to boys in Brazil.

A highlight of our Sunday school year is missions month. During November we thank the Lord for what we have received by gathering our offerings for World Relief. Each child takes a small cloth bag home to collect their month's offerings and brings it to the worship service on Thanksgiving Sunday where the bags are placed on our altar. During the month's assembly times, we view the World Relief videos and try to see a glimpse of the needs of children around the world.

Several of our Sunday school youth have gone on short-term mission trips to Singapore, Taiwan, Russia, Mexico and Alaska. It is a great blessing and challenge to our Sunday school students to hear of mission experiences first-hand from their own peer group.

Last March we studied the life of Missionary Amy Carmichael and the blessings



come from?



she received from a life of commitment in service to Jesus. "I Dare," is her challenging story published by Child Evangelistic Fellowship and available from the AFLC Parish Education office. The aim of that story and others in that series is to teach children that God wants their hearts and lives while they are young; to lead, guide, and protect them; and then to prepare them to serve Him.

Our desire is that each child growing up in our Sunday school would know Jesus personally. As we focus on missions, our prayer is that someone will be called of God to go out from our congregation as a full-time missionary. Perhaps we should challenge each child in our Sunday school to plan to serve the Lord full time unless called into secular work, instead of the other way around.

"Give of thy sons to bear the
message glorious,
Give of thy wealth to speed them
on their way,
Pour out thy soul for them in
prayer victorious;
And all thou spendest Jesus
will repay."

— Mary A. Thompson
Ambassador Hymnal #303

Music: a tool to teach

"Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God."

— Colossians 3:16



— Karen Westlake
Medicine Lake
Lutheran
Plymouth, Minnesota

Music is one of our greatest tools to teach the truths of God's Word to our children. From the earliest years, the words of "Jesus Loves Me" teach us the basic truth of God's love for us and from where we learn of it ... "the Bible tells us so." Much of a child's knowledge of the Bible comes from the lyrics of songs and stories learned in Sunday school. Learning comes more easily and the powers of retention are greater when kids are involved in activities they enjoy. The fact that learning music can be a fun, pleasurable experience, means it can be an effective teaching tool.

When evaluating songs to use in your ministry to children, the following questions may be asked:

- Are the words consistent with Scripture?
- Are they appropriate for the ages of the group? If dealing with many ages, can it be adapted to incorporate all ages?
- Are the words clear and easily understandable?
- Do they emphasize important truths and concepts that the children can comprehend?

In my own experience as an opening exercise leader for our Sunday school, I have found that if I take the time to plan the music selections around the theme of the story or object lesson for that week, it enhances the message I'm trying to bring forth. Scripture songs especially reinforce
(continued on next page)

Parish Education's revised curriculum now available

Four grade levels of the revised Ambassador Sunday school series are being used in a growing number of congregations throughout the country. The kindergarten, grades

one, two and four books now being used are joined by a new adult Bible study on the book of Romans. An updated Ambassador Publications catalog is available with many addi-

tions from the past year. Contact AFLC Parish Education at 612-545-5631. The fifth and third grade curriculum are in the process of being revised.



Special project funds and volunteers needed

Several books are in need of reprinting for the fall of 1999: first quarter student books for Grades 5, 6, 7, 8 and the Grade 2 teacher manual; the "Bible History for Home and School;" and a booklet — "Luther's Small Catechism for Sunday School." Funds are needed in order to continue providing these materials for our churches. Funds are also needed to complete printing of the new adult Bible study on Romans.

Volunteers are needed to do word processing and reformatting of teacher manuals. Contact the parish education office for more information: 612-545-5631.

MUSIC

this and there are many verses that have been set to music.

One year our Sunday school chose a theme centered around the memorization of Scripture. Each week I selected songs that were Bible verses and as the children learned the words to the songs they were literally hiding God's Word in their hearts. It continues to be an important reminder to me of how music can be a very effective tool in teaching God's Word to children.

Presentation is also extremely important. A large part of the responsibility of making learning new songs enjoyable is how you go about teaching them. All the right stuff can be there as far as good content in the music, but if you neglect to think about how you are going to present it in a way that will be exciting for the kids to learn, the message will be lost. Be excited about teaching! Let them see your enthusiasm for the words and the music. Think about the songs that have stuck with you from childhood. What made them memorable for you and how can you bring that experience to your teaching techniques? Pray that the songs you are teaching them will be the ones they remember as they grow up.

Teachers, be encouraged to use music as a tool for teaching in the Sunday school classroom as well. In a large group, it's often hard to address the questions of age appropriateness, especially if you have preschoolers up to middle school age children in the same group. Attention spans of preschoolers can be dealt with more easily in the classroom, with short, easy-to-learn songs with simple concepts. In the older grades, music can be a tool for teaching worship, providing spiritual growth, and developing a love for God's Word. Try setting your Scripture memory work to a familiar melody or have one of the children make up a tune and teach the rest of the class the song. It's fun and it will definitely stick with them.

As workers in Christian education, let us be challenged to select music that is edifying, that emphasizes the truths of God's Word, and that our children will be excited to carry out into the world week after week, year after year. The effectiveness of the music in our ministry can be measured in the lives of our children. Now that's not only a great challenge and humbling responsibility, but also a tremendous honor.





From the Christian Academic Education Board —

The first in a series on educational choices facing parents today.

— *Peter and Mary Ann Ward*
Medicine Lake Lutheran
Plymouth, Minnesota

Christian schools

An answer to prayer

The education of a child is a great privilege and a responsibility entrusted by God upon all parents. Just as the goals of a good education are varied, so too are the means by which one is sought.

There was a time for us, before Christ became Lord and Savior of our household, that the goal of a good education was worldly in character — defined as a post-high school degree that would throw open the doors to success in the world of business. In other words, a good education was almost synonymous with a good paying job. Later on as Christian parents, we felt the burden of how to fulfill the God-ordained duty of the training of His children in light of Matthew 6:33, “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added to you.”

For this family, the clear choice became private Christian schools. What began as a burden has blossomed into a blessing as we watched the Lord provide opportunities to educate His children in a means that has brought great peace to our lives. We prayed for provision. He has made that provision. Part of prayer must be our obedience to His answers to prayer.

What is it that the Lord has used to lead us to a decision of peace concerning the education of our children, in spite of criticism by unbelievers in general and from some fellow believers in particular? The training of our children into the truth has focused our understanding of the purpose of their education. It centers on the goal of growing as godly people in Christ. We have come to realize that a Christian child's education is to not be

merely the transfer of facts, but is to lend to their sanctification.

Seeking the Truth

Most certainly, the home is to be the primary educational center of any child, whether in a believing or unbelieving family. Consistency is important. The message at home, at church and at school should be united and in harmony. Believing that the formal education serves as a supplement to the training at home, we take peace knowing that our children are being taught the same consistent message at school as they get in the home and at church. That message is the truth that Jesus Christ is Lord.

We have sought an education where all things are taught as being under His Lordship. We have felt it especially important for a child of God to be educated in the truth — the truth of salvation, and also the truth that Christ's rule of domain is over all things. “The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ, He is Lord of all” (Acts 10:36).

Over the years we have come to categorize the world into two segments: secular and Christian. The truth is we live in one fallen world of two types of sinners: sinners who have accepted the truth that they have been saved by grace, and sinners who have yet to accept that fact. It is at our Christian school where the truth is being taught under the light of Christ. Students are taught not mere facts but to be growing into thinking Christians, for “in the image of God He created him, male and female” (Genesis 1:27).

In educating our children, we felt it important to have them educated in a setting that deals honestly with their human sinful nature. In his “Rediscovering the Lost Tools

of Learning,” Doug Wilson wrote, “A Christian education in order to accomplish its purpose must not see the fall of Adam as an incidental obstacle in the path of learning. Rather, we are to see that godly education is made necessary by our sinfulness, and that the goal of this education is to ‘repair the ruins.’” Recognizing that truth, as parents we can appreciate the assurance that in our Christian school, a structure of discipline is in place, founded upon Christ's redemptive loving work in dealing with sin.

Certainly an education may be Christian in name only. We thank Him today for schools such as Medicine Lake Lutheran Academy (and earlier for Schaeffer Academy in Rochester, Minnesota, and for the curriculum and textbooks used. How we appreciate the diligence and discernment exercised by the faculty in their use of Bible-based, Christ-centered books and a curriculum where not only the facts of truth are taught, but its meaning, its purpose and its application as well, in light of Christ's creative work. “All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that has been made” (John 1:3).

Seeking Safety

Like all other parents of young children, we seek their safety — physically, intellectually, emotionally and spiritually. We have found that safety in our Christian school. We had struggled greatly in taking our children out of public school. How our hearts hurt for the wonderful Christian teachers in public schools who sought our prayers. Theirs is a difficult task.

We rejoice in praise to our Lord that our children are taught in a school where the leadership prays for God's intervention and where the blood of Christ is their protection.

Finally we thank Him for administrators, for teachers, for coaches, for helpers, and for bus drivers with the unified purpose of giving our children a godly education. That is their calling, but their goal is something different — to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ.



The Acts of God

Praise the Lord! Oh give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; for His loving kindness is everlasting. Who can speak of the mighty acts of the Lord, or can show forth all His praise? Psalm 106:1-2

A farm contract specifies that an annual payment shall be made on the mortgage, subject to an "act of God," which means a crop failure due to drought, flooding or other natural disasters. An electric company refuses to replace appliances ruined by a so-called power surge, claiming that they were victims of an "act of God."

It is curious indeed that our society still uses this phrase in contracts and insurance policies, in spite of a growing unwillingness to even acknowledge the existence of the Creator. The problem is the only acknowledged "acts of God" are disasters. Does God ever do good things?

The heart of the psalmist overflows with thanksgiving to God for His mighty acts, and our hearts should do the same. His mighty acts begin with the gift of salvation through His Son, and include the abundant kindnesses (v.7) shown to His people from day to day. Yes, this psalm also shows that the hand of God can chastise through disasters, but His acts of mercy far outweigh His judgments.

Our AFLC continues to be blessed by the acts of God. He adds to our numbers those who are being saved through evangelistic outreach as well as like-minded brothers and sisters with a heart concern for a conservative Lutheran witness. He leads a growing number of students to our Bible school and theological seminary, opens doors for mission endeavors in North America and around the world, and abundantly provides for our support ministries such as parish education and publications, youth, evangelism, etc.

God disciplines those whom He loves. I recently preached a series of messages on the Letters to the Seven Churches (Revelation 2-3), and noted that hard words of impending judgment were addressed to several of the congregations. Yet, there is something worse than receiving such a letter from the Lord, and that is to receive no letter at all. The purpose for His mighty acts of judgment, like His acts of loving kindness, is to draw people to Himself in repentance and faith.

Praise the Lord for His mighty acts in our midst!

— Pastor Robert L. Lee

Opportunities to give

I have the privilege of being a member of the AFLC Youth Board that oversees the work of our youth director and youth ministries. It has been a tremendous experience to work with board members and a youth director who give of themselves for the love of our youth and their knowing Christ as Lord and Savior.

In recent years, and especially since the hiring of a full-time youth director on January, 1996, youth ministries has grown. This department not only oversees the FLY conventions and the youth leadership conference, but also deals with mailings such as the *Connection* and *Contact*, and articles on youth in *The Lutheran Ambassador*, and on the back of the Sunday bulletin. Additional areas of outreach include improving district communications with AFLC youth, planning and coordinating mission trips, and offering an annual youth worker's retreat. Our newest development is a youth ministries training team to help revitalize local youth ministry programs.

We need your help. There are three ways you can give:

1. Give through praying.

Select one or more of the ministries mentioned above and begin



The AFLC Youth Board met at the national youth convention at Estes Park, Colorado. Members are: Paul Kneeland, Kalispell, MT; Pastor Kevin Olson, Youth Ministries Director, Shakopee, MN; Brenda Stilley, Pittsburgh, PA; Jeremy Larson, Buffalo, ND; Pastor Alan Arneson, Badger, MN; and Pastor Lloyd Quanbeck, Minot, ND. Jon Dryburgh, Grand Forks, ND will begin serving on the Youth Board this October when Brenda Stilley completes her term.



From the youth director

There is more to this life ...

The 1999 FLY convention meeting in the Longhouse at Estes Park, Colorado.

The e-mail read, "I can't do it alone! I need help, does anyone understand? I know the right answers. I know what I am supposed to do, and I even want to most of the time,... but I must be the only one."

That is a lonely cry of a youth struggling to walk with the Lord. Conventions and youth rallies are great for encouraging youth to begin a walk with the Lord or challenge

them to the next level of commitment, but the local congregation and the youth group carry the difficult responsibility of helping the person grow and face the daily temptations of life. One hour a week on Sunday morning or Wednesday night is not enough to carry them through the pressures of their peers. youth need someone who cares for them beyond the religious rituals.

They need someone who will care about them besides those who are assigned that responsibility.

It can be as simple as a note in their mailbox or a lunch where you listen and they dump. How about you? Could you be a friend to a youth within your reach? Could you be a youth ministries supporter?

— Pastor Kevin Olson

praying on a regular basis for that ministry. Let our youth director know what you are praying for and inquire how that ministry can be lifted up in prayer. Remember the promise in James 5:16: "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."

2. Give through helping.

I continue to discover the blessings that exist in teamwork. Inquire how you can be of assistance. Everyone needs the support of an "Aaron" as did Moses.

3. Give through contributing.

II Corinthians 9:7 says, "Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God

loves a cheerful giver." Ever since my wife and I were married, we have supported a staff member of a college ministry. Through it we have been blessed by seeing how God is at work. The receipt letter shares a brief note on what has happened on that campus and how we can pray for that ministry. AFLC Youth Ministries has begun this convenient way of receipting. When you give you not only receive a short note, but a receipt with a tear-off portion to be used if you choose to give again.

You either are or were a teenager. By giving in any way to youth ministries you communicate you care about winning, building and equipping youth for Jesus Christ.

— Pastor Alan Arneson
Youth Board member
Badger, Minnesota

Upcoming

September 15

See You At The Pole

October 22-24

AFLBS Campus Days

January 28-30

Side by Side
High school retreat
at the ARC

February 18-20

Junior Sno Daze
Junior High retreat
at the ARC

July 17-22

AFLC Leadership
Training Conference
at the ARC

Don't miss your district youth retreats and camps!

The exciting life of serving

— Karen Palmer
Faith Lutheran
Shakopee, Minnesota

A

As a young girl I always looked forward to the John Abel family coming to our church to share about their work in Brazil. It was then and

still is thrilling to hear about the many people touched by God's power on the mission field. As a child, it seemed to me that being a missionary meant leading a glamorous life.

After having been to Brazil to visit our missionaries, I realized that life for them was not so glamorous, but in fact very difficult in those beginning years. Even today there are many comforts we here in America take for granted but they live without. Though struggles and hardships are part of missionary life, they experience many joys and adventures.

So what makes the missionary life seem so full and exciting? Missionaries are people willing to take the abilities and gifts God has given them and use them to further the kingdom of Christ. In September's Women's Missionary Federation lesson from I Peter 4:1-11, we read about some of the abilities each one of us can use in our own mission field that God has called us to.

Each one of us can pray. This is where all things start. To talk with our heavenly Father each and every day about those things that are happening right now in our lives is so precious. Prayer should be an ongoing lifting of our praises and requests to the heavenly throne all day long.

Then Peter says, "Be hospitable." To me hospitality is opening your home to those around you. It is an exciting adventure when we get past the fear of having someone see that we did not dust this week or that the floor needs mopping.

Our text commands us to be fervent in our love for one another.



Some of the ladies in the women's group in Campo Grande, Brazil. Missionary Tamba Abel is to the far right.

Mark your calendar — plan for a day of blessing Fall District rallies

South Dakota — Sept. 11 at Grace Lutheran, Bruce

North Central Minnesota — Sept. 18 at Faron Lutheran, Erskine

Pacific Northwest — Sept. 18 at Triumph Lutheran,
Ferndale, Washington

Central Tri-State — Sept. 25 at Salem Lutheran, Radcliffe, Iowa

Eastern North Dakota — Sept. 25 at Bethel Lutheran, Grafton

Illinois — Oct. 2 at Grace Lutheran, DeKalb

Northwestern ND/Eastern MT — October 9 at Prince of Peace
Lutheran, Beulah, North Dakota

Southwest Central MN — Oct. 16 at Maranatha Lutheran, Glyndon

Minneapolis — Oct. 23 at Emmaus Lutheran, Bloomington

There are so many that need to feel loved. It could be that young family new to your church. Their family may be many states away and they need to feel they belong in their church family and community.

If you live near a college community, remember that students get tired of dorm life and often need a place to hang out. Your home could become a place where they can read the Sunday paper after church while dinner is being put on the table; a place that feels like home away from home for them.

There may be a ministry opportunity to offer a bed to sleep in when a motel is too expensive. Ones who could be invited in include missionaries or special speakers visiting your congregation. They can provide wonderful times of fellowship in your home. Also, get to know

your children's friends and have them over often for the day or to spend the night. Our children are older now but they know that if a friend needs a place to stay for a few days they are always welcome.

What better way to get to know people than to share our lives with them. Our lives speak louder than our words. As people see Christ in us, then they will want to know what makes us different.

This is what our missionaries do each and every day. They share their lives with the people God has placed around them and take advantage of opportunities to serve. Are you looking for the same opportunities in serving those around you today and do they see Christ through you? Your life could be just as full of adventure and joy!

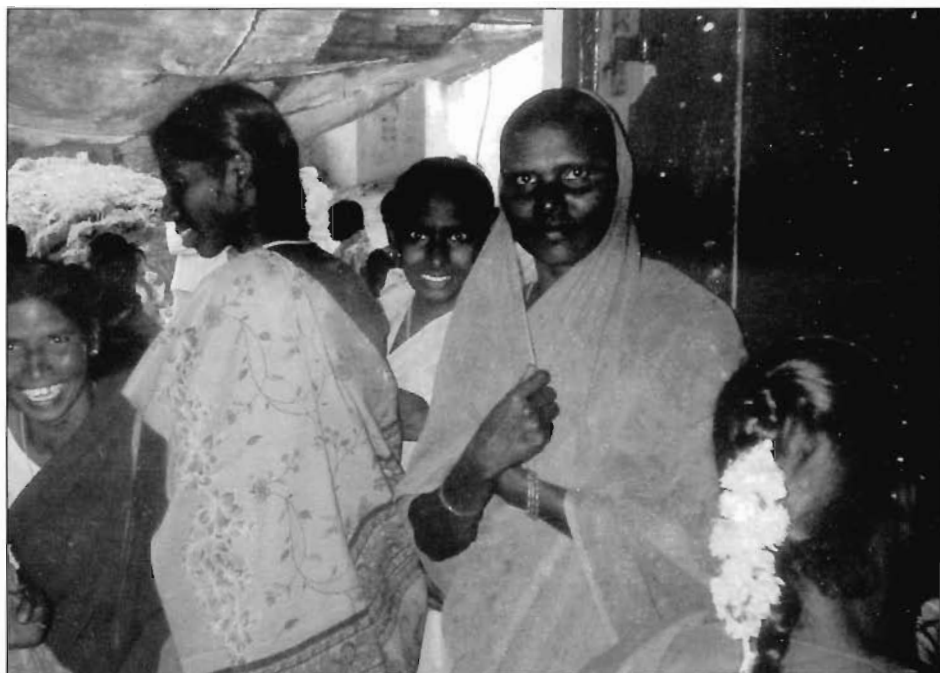


World Missions purchases property in India

On June 5, 1999, the purchase of two pieces of property in India by AFLC World Missions was finalized. Registered in the name of the AFLC, the sites are located in the coastal city of Chirala. The property includes a two-story house on 900-square-yard parcel and will provide housing and offices for the mission. The second site is two acres of development property located 1/2 kilometer from the house. Looking ahead, this acreage will be ideal for the development of the growing medical ministry and a possible location for a workers' training school.

The properties were purchased with an anonymous gift of \$100,000. World Missions Director Eugene Enderlein said, "God has especially blessed in that He has enabled us to purchase both sites at a cost that leaves us with half of those funds for future development."

The city of Chirala was chosen because of its central location to the AFLC area of ministry and because it



has a much larger Christian population than most communities in India. Currently the AFLC ministry is focused within a 50/60 mile radius of the mouth of the Krishna River and the Bay of Bengal. Since the beginning of 1999, the church body in India has legally reorganized and

taken the name of The Association of Free Lutheran Congregations — India. The fellowship includes 30 organized congregations, with regular preaching services in an additional 20 locations. Rev. D. Luther Sasstry is the president and there are thirty-two national workers.

Missionaries Todd and Barb Schierkolk, are living with her parents, Lowell and Jan Sheldahl, at 1869 Tecumseh St. NE, Keizer, Oregon 97303; phone 503-390-1365. Beginning in September they will be sharing in churches in the Pacific Northwest about their work in Aguascalientes, Mexico. They plan to travel to Illinois in November. They also may be contacted through the world missions office at 612-545-5631.

Joanna and Christina Abel, Santa Felicidade, Brazil, spent June 11-25 in Rio de Janeiro. The teenage daughters of Missionaries Paul and Becky Abel received scholarships to help as translators for the 300 U.S. girls participating in Focus on the Family's "Brio in Rio" outreach. Joanna, a high school senior will attend Hillcrest Academy in Fergus Falls, Minnesota, beginning in January.

Try raising a steer!



It's a great way to support AFLC World Missions through designated ministries or overseas work. Multiply your missionary dollars (1998 STEER donations were \$2,962) by being a donor or a farmer/rancher through STEER, INC. For more information contact the office at 612-412-2013 or 612-545-5631.

AFLC schools prepare for fall semester

On September 7, the Association Free Lutheran Bible School students will begin classes after several days of orientation. Fifty-five senior students are expected to return. The current rate of applications indicate over 80 first-year students will join them.

On September 8, the Free Lutheran Seminary opens for registration and orientation. This fall's enrollment is 12 students with seven of them beginning their first year of course work. Mark Hamp, Merrill, Wisconsin is a one-year colloquy student. The six first-year seminarians are: Richard Carr, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Mark Johanneson, Eagan, Minnesota; Brent Logeman, Metropolis, Illinois; Wade Mobley, Lake Preston, South Dakota; Peter Makadi, Nigeria; and Steve Manion, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. They join current students: Jon Bylkas, Steven Carlson, Dana Boyle, Todd Erickson and Peter Ward.

East European Missions Network led their fourth annual Friendship Language Camp in Petrozvodsk, Russia, during June of this year. Recent AFLBS graduates Emily Baker and Lidia Herrera, along with seminarian Jon Bylkas were part of the team working with the camp.

While there, Pastor Don Richman, director of EEMN, interviewed six students who want to study at AFLBS. Pastor Richman said, "The need for biblically informed people is so great that I am strongly encouraging people to contribute to a special East European Bible School Fund for scholarships. All but one of these young people are a product of the language Bible camps. This camp has been virtually their only Christian teaching. They wait the whole year to come back to it."

For more information contact: East European Missions Network, 10800 Lyndale Ave. S., Suite 210, Bloomington, MN 55420 or call 612-881-3554.



Ministry Training Institute opening postponed

The fall opening of the Ministry Training Institute at AFLBS was postponed until the fall of 2000 by action of the Schools' Board of Trustees at their July 23 meeting. Low enrollment was the reason given for the postponement. The board had set a 7-15 student enrollment requirement in order to open the third-year missions and evangelism training program offered through AFLBS.

Grant money received

The Free Lutheran Seminary recently received \$3,450 from Lutheran Brotherhood through the Member Matching Gift program. The payment matches 36 gifts from Lutheran Brotherhood members during the second quarter of 1999. During the same quarter, 19 gifts were matched for a total of \$1,635 to be given to the Association Free Lutheran Bible School.

Pastor Philip Haugen is the newest member of the AFLC School's faculty. He's back in the same classrooms he taught in from 1977 to 1993. This familiar picture to so many students was taken before he left to serve Faith and Bethel Lutheran Parish in Brockton and Culbertson, Montana.

With student enrollment near 140, the small classroom facilities will now feel even smaller. Classes are now held in the cafeteria below the chapel besides the regular classrooms on the first floor of the men's and women's residence halls. The next project of Vision 2004, after completion of the first unit of seminary housing, is a campus multipurpose building which will provide more classroom space.

Seminarian Todd Erickson, Plymouth, Minnesota is the new dean of men at AFLBS. He replaces Jason Holt who graduated last spring from seminary and is now serving at Calvary Free Lutheran in Fergus Falls, Minnesota. Todd and his wife Joyce and their two children moved into the men's residence earlier this summer.



Thirty-nine students attend the seminary's Summer Institute

The Free Lutheran Seminary Summer Institute of Theology was held during July 26-30 at the school's campus at 3120 East Medicine Lake Blvd. The morning classes included "Studies in the Pastoral Epistles," with Rev. Jerry Moan as the instructor and "Denominational Differences" with Dr. Francis Monseth. Professor Jerry Holmaas taught "Studies in Nehemiah" during the afternoon, followed by "Evangelism in the Local Congregation" with Rev. Jim Rasmussen as the instructor. Pictured to the left are Dr. Monseth and Pastor Roger David of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Lincoln, Illinois.



Students attending the 1999 Summer Institute of Theology.



Pastor Gary Jorgenson, Durant, Oklahoma, member of the schools board of trustees, and Pastors Jerry Moan and Jerry Holmaas of the AFLC Schools faculty.

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal."

— Matthew 6:19-20

The AFLC Foundation is a permanent fund established and maintained by contribution to assist in carrying out the charitable purposes of the Coordinating Committee of the AFLC, the Schools Corporation, the Missions Corporation and the Association Retreat Center, Inc.

Call for a free consultation:
1-800-950-2109
Mark D. Johnson
AFLC development consultant

The impact of a praying congregation



What is the impact of a praying congregation where the gospel of Jesus Christ is proclaimed? What are the results of praying parents, faithful Sunday school teachers, pastors, and youth workers whom teach and live out the Word of God? Sometimes we see some fruits of our labors but rarely do we see the whole picture of what God is doing.

The weekend of June 12-13 was a special homecoming at Grace and Zion Free Lutheran churches of Valley City, North Dakota to have ten sons of the congregations involved in full-time Christian ministry around the world come

and share what God has done in their lives. The time together truly was a "Praise Gathering" to rejoice in what God has done and is doing from coast to coast and border to border in this country and around the world as souls are being saved! Each of the 10 men was deeply impacted by the ministry of Pastor Fritjof Monseth who served in Valley City from 1954-1968. As a result of his encouragement and times of weekly prayer with youth at 6 a.m. on their knees, several of the men served as student pastors and sensed God's call into full-time ministry.

The ministries of these men

have included: parish pastorates, child evangelist, teaching Bible school and seminary, training lay workers and pastors in Latvia and Estonia, teaching school in Saudi Arabia and the United States, church planting and mission work in Germany and Austria, and World Relief Ministry to refugees from Kosovo, Somalia, Sudan and many other parts of the world. They also serve Minnesota chaplaincy ministry in hospitals and hospice, police department chaplaincy, military chaplaincy to soldiers here and abroad, translating Scriptures in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Botswana and Cameroon, chaplaincy to the Seattle SuperSonics basketball team and to people in media around the world. Literally thousands have come to saving faith in Jesus Christ as a result of the ministry of these men who grew up in Valley City. Among them is one governor and several in the House of Lords in London!

May we never underestimate what God can do through praying parents and congregations!

— **Pastor Joel Rolf**
Valley City, North Dakota

A set of five audio tapes of the weekend is available for \$10.00. Your request can be sent to Grace Free Lutheran Church, P.O. Box 37, Valley City, ND 58072.

Canadian Pastors' and Laymen's Retreat

September 6-10
Vernon, British Columbia

AFLC All-Boards Meeting

September 28
at the ARC

Classic's Retreat

at the ARC
Osceola, Wisconsin
October 1-3

Early registration deadline — September 21.

AFLC Family Retreat

at the ARC
October 22-23

Early registration deadline — October 12

For more information call the ARC at 1-800-294-2877

Buckley, Washington —

Grace Lutheran has a special ministry network of encouragement within the congregation. A VIP list (very important people — widows) is used by the ladies to call each other daily. They look forward to their contacts and enjoy each other's support.

Pastor Allan Ness, Oregon, Wisconsin, has resigned as pastor of Bethany Lutheran in Brodhead, Wisconsin where he has served since 1997.

PEOPLE AND PLACES



Buxton, North Dakota — Ny Stavanger Lutheran held their summer VBS around the theme, "Jonah and the Big Fish," which was also a musical. The children practiced each evening along with their Bible stories, crafts, and treats. Pictured is Karen Knudsvig, director of the musical, with some of the children.



Ottawa, Illinois — Faith Lutheran broke ground for their new educational building on July 25. Nearly 200 members of the church gathered to watch Faith Lutheran's chairman, Kevin Berryman and Ottawa's Mayor Robert Eschbach dig the ceremonial spade of soil. Also pictured are representatives from the construction firm, and (right) the chairman of the expansion committee, Bob Deckard. Faith Lutheran was organized in 1988 and completed their present church building in 1991. The addition will meet the need for more classroom space. They plan to have the exterior completed in November. Members of the congregation plan to do most of the interior work.

Eden Prairie, Minnesota — King of Glory Lutheran finalized the sale of their property on July 28, 1999. They sold their 11.6 acres at 17850 Duck Lake Trail to Southwest Christian High School. The non-denominational school hopes to build a two-story building in two phases, with initial occupation being the 2000-2001 school year. The congregation will lease the church building from the school. King of Glory's property included a gymnasium and some school facilities because of its previous cooperation with Chapel Hill Academy before the school moved to nearby Chanhassen. Pastor Richard Anderson serves the congregation.



Pastor John and Ruby Abel, Hitterdal, Minnesota, are celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary on September 3, 1999. St. Paul's Lutheran in Fargo, North Dakota, commemorated the occasion on August 22 with cake and coffee after the worship service. Pastor Abel started the fellowship group in 1963 that later became St. Paul's Lutheran. The church met at the AFLC Mission Center (then headquartered in Fargo, with Pastor Abel serving as the director). The congregation later purchased that building which continues to serve as their church facility. The Abels left to open the AFLC mission work in Brazil in 1964, where they served until their retirement in 1991. They took an extended furlough time from 1969-71 during which they also served St. Paul's Lutheran.

Pastor Frank Cherney, Tucson, Arizona, has resigned as the pastor of Living Faith and Body of Christ Lutheran churches in Tucson where he has served since 1995 and has accepted the call to St. John's Lutheran in Duluth, Minnesota. He expects to begin his new ministry early this fall.

Lay Pastor Wayne Olson, Faith, South Dakota, was installed as the pastor of Bethel Lutheran in Faith and of Emmanuel Lutheran in Eagle Butte on Sunday, July 25. AFLC Director of Evangelism James Rasmussen officiated at the installation services. On June 27, Bethel Lutheran held a dedication service for their new digital carillon and outdoor lighted cross.

Pastor Oliver Olson, Murrieta, California, was placed on the AFLC's Clergy Roster at the June meeting of the coordinating committee. Pastor Olson was the founder and director of Omaha Lutheran Bible School in Omaha, Nebraska from 1976-95. He continues with a teaching ministry in Biblical studies and has worked with Youth With A Mission.

Lay Pastor Richard Asmussen, Evergreen Park, Illinois, has resigned as the pastor of Ebenezer Lutheran where he has served since 1997.

Dexter, Minnesota — Zion Lutheran sponsored evangelistic meetings held at the Dexter city park during July 19-24. Seminarian Todd Erickson was the speaker at the 3rd annual summer services.

Pastor Louis Balderach, Hondo, Texas, has accepted the call to Faith Lutheran in Weslaco, Texas. He has been accepted on the AFLC Fellowship Clergy Roster. He was ordained by the ALC in 1971 and most recently served as an independent interim pastor. One of the congregations he served was Good Shepherd Lutheran in Pleasanton, Texas.

Cumberland, Wisconsin — Timberland-Ringebu and Hosanna Lutheran Parish is hosting special meetings September 17-19 with Pastor Vince Will of Springfield, Missouri.



Kenyon, Minnesota — Hauge Lutheran Church celebrated its 140th anniversary at its "Old Stone Church" on June 27. Pastor Edward Strom preached on the theme, "God's faithfulness: a proper object of trust." Norwegian settlers in the community began worshipping in 1859 and Osten Hanson served as pastor until his death in 1898. The Old Stone Church was built around 1875 and completed in 1888 and is now a historical landmark. In 1902, the congregation decided to build a new church in the town of Kenyon. The congregation still worships in that facility.

Everett, Washington — Missionaries Vivian Forsberg and Don Van Wynen were married at Calvary Lutheran during the worship service on June 13, 1999. Vivian, a member of Calvary, has worked with Wycliffe Translators

in the Philippines, while Don has retired from translation work in Brazil. They left for the Philippines to finish the translation and literacy work which Vivian has been doing with the Tboli people for the past 45 years.

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences (7 months) — January 1 July 31, 1999

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN JULY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$234,385.00	\$26,362.48	151,429.62	65
Seminary	110,296.00	6,877.10	65,401.33	59
Bible School	147,674.00	8,261.98	92,850.64	63
Home Missions.	238,152.00	19,046.24	125,084.89	53
World Missions.	190,909.00	11,928.08	80,096.66	42
Capital Investment	14,065.00	1,157.35	3,854.45	27
Parish Education	56,854.00	3,297.72	38,199.15	67
Church Extension	21,051.00	854.09	11,120.61	53
TOTALS	\$1,013,386.00	77,785.04	568,037.35	56
TOTALS 1997	1,278,758.00	98,553.86	679,004.33	53
Goal 58%				

The Evangelism Department received \$11,193.43 in July.

It happens to everyone

One news commentator, in describing John F. Kennedy, Jr., said for those of us in our late 30s, he was “the coolest guy in class.” He had it all. He had money, fame, style and looks. He was athletic. He had a wife who was beautiful and full of class. They say he was well mannered and considerate. It seems he was always the brightest “star” in any room he was in. He had a vast number of options as to what he could do with his life. But now, before reaching 40 years of age, he is dead. When something like this happens to the coolest guy in class, it’s time for the rest of us to sit up and take notice.

C. S. Lewis observed that war does not change the percentage of a generation that dies. The percentage is always one hundred. Things like war simply speed up the inevitable.

The time of its coming is unknown, but it is a certainty that, until Jesus returns, death will come to each of us. It happens to “the cool ones” and the not-so-cool ones. We are all in the same condition. Each of us needs to be ready today.

One young man who came to Jesus in some ways may have been the John Kennedy of his time. He had great wealth. He had power and influence. His record was clean. He was well respected. He liked challenges and had not met one he couldn’t handle. When he started to approach Jesus, the disciples must have been a little excited. This guy was something special. It would sure be neat to have him along as part of the group. What a great guy to hang out with!

Even though he seemingly has it all, he still has a question: “What good thing must I do to get eternal life?” (Matthew 19:16, NIV). He has what this life has to offer, but it’s not enough. He is not sure if he is ready for the life to come. Jesus seems to have something he doesn’t, so he asks how he can get it. He is expecting to get a list of things to do, but Jesus’ command is simple and short: “Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me” (Luke 18:22, NIV).

Jesus knows what is getting in the way of this young man’s relationship with the Lord. Out of love and a longing for this man to be in the kingdom,

Jesus calls him to put aside that which is blocking the path and seek what is best. The man refuses and goes away sad. The disciples are stunned. “Who then can be saved?” they ask. Jesus’ reply is, “With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God” (Mark 10:26, 27, NIV).

The guy who seemingly has it all, doesn’t have enough to get into the kingdom of God. The disciples are thinking, “This is the guy we all want to be like. If he can’t get in, who can?” Jesus wants them, and us, to see it’s not what you have, what you’ve done, how much you’re respected or how talented you are. What matters is faith in Christ, who died for us and rose again.

John Kennedy seemed to have it all, but he still couldn’t escape death. At that moment what

mattered was not his wealth, his influence, how many magazine covers he had been on or the fact that he was the son of a president. Faith was the only issue. The rest was trivial. As Jesus said, “What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?” (Mark 8:36, NIV).

Since faith is what matters when we die, that is what should be of importance now as we live. We may not have the abilities or looks, fame or wealth of John Kennedy. But it matters little. We have what we need when we have Jesus. We need not pursue the rest or envy

those who have it. The same fate awaits us all. The same faith is needed by all and available to all.

Jesus said: “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? ... 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 6:25, 32, 33, NIV).

So many of the things we get concerned with and let occupy our time matter so very little in the light of eternity. Kennedy’s death reminds us that this life is short. What matters is being ready. The good news is we can be when we are clinging to and rejoicing in the salvation found in Christ.

— *Pastor Craig Johnson*

“Since faith is what matters when we die, that is what should be of importance now as we live.”

SOMETHING TO SHARE

One picture = 1000 words

It was a parent-teacher conference with our fourth daughter's kindergarten teacher. You would have thought I'd be a master at mothering a kindergartner by now, but she revealed to us the new idea that our daughter was a "visual learner." As she described the trio of learning styles, visual, auditory, and "hands-on" kinesthetic, it became obvious that I, too, had always been a visual learner. I needed to "see" a picture of something to really grasp the concept.

That would explain my need to sketch the algebraic airplane-going-east-at-600 mph before solving the problem; my gravitation toward recipes that showed a delicious picture; my obsession with detailed note-taking; my reliance on visual aides when giving a speech.

My daughters have resigned themselves to pose for my incessant photography habit. I take pictures of every event in our family life. Photos, carefully sorted into appropriate albums, help me record the memory. They make the "happening" stick in my mind.

One of our youth leaders curiously told our teens, "Share the message of Christ; if necessary, use words." As we think about sharing our faith, it is obvious that the visual picture of our living witness speaks volumes before we are even

able to open our mouths. Consider a silent video of your life. Is it a visual aide?

A visual aide must relate to the real lesson being taught. It cannot be so farfetched that the learner needs to force the application. So my life needs to be so close and true to Christ that the real message is most easily understood, not lost in the trappings. I would like to be a transparent container for the Christ living in me, so that when others view my actions, they will see Jesus, not Jeannie.

I witness by what I **do** do.

A visual aide must be clear. The diagrams, graphs, pictures, or objects must be large, defined, easily viewed, not fuzzy. It is important that my living testimony be clear and uncompromising. A young woman in our church attended a social event in our community. There she observed an acclaimed Christian woman participating in an activity that my friend had not associated with an acceptable biblical standard before. Her reaction stamped an indelible impression on my mind. "Her testimony is confusing to me," she said. Her words have convinced me to joyfully and purposefully forsake some "lawful" choices in order to keep my visual testimony clear.

I witness by what I **don't** do.

A visual aide must be memo-

orable. The picture must be so vivid that those observing cannot forget the message, and will always associate the visual object with the invisible, corresponding truth. I would like my visual video to be so consistent, so daily that every view, from every angle would repeatedly and unforgettably remind the observer of the one true Christ.

I witness **always**.

Our lives are so visible. Others form impressions of Christ just by watching us. The ordinary, even the broken pieces of our lives, surrendered to the Lordship of Christ, can be viewed through the prism of Jesus to reveal a kaleidoscope of beautiful visual testimony. Share the message of Christ, relatively, clearly, memorably ... if necessary, use words. "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ" (Philippians 1:27).



— Jeannie Brandt
*Abiding Savior Lutheran
Sioux Falls, South Dakota*