

The Lutheran **AMBASSADOR**

August 26, 1997



Reverend John P. Strand, 1916 - 1997

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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AN ENCOURAGING WORD

For I am not ashamed of the gospel ...

for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith; as it is written, "The righteous man shall live by his faith."
— Romans 1:16-17

Paul's introduction to Romans promises that God's power in salvation can be experienced by anyone who believes in Christ. Faith is the key.

Faith is one of the least understood teachings of Christ. Serious misunderstandings are these: thinking of faith as a feeling or as an aptitude.

I asked someone about faith once and was told that it is a feeling. This is no surprise in our emotion-centered world. We might confuse faith with a sense of optimism or confidence that things will turn out well. Sometimes we feel optimistic while other times we don't. Faith must be more than a feeling in order to help us in life. Optimistic feelings are usually a matter of personality or temperament, not spiritual life or maturity. Faith functions even when pleasant feelings are absent.

Another misunderstanding of faith is to think of it as an aptitude. Whenever I hear someone called a very "spiritual" person, I wonder what that means. It isn't the same as saying that someone is very musical or beautiful. Those things are abilities or characteristics which are inborn. Some so-called spiritual people are no doubt neck-deep in the New Age movement or some other cult.

We should want to be spiritual. But we should not regard spirituality as an aptitude that some have and others cannot ever have. Don't some Christians moan about being unable to have

so strong a faith as others? Such thinking about faith and spiritual life is useless and anti-biblical.

The problem with these ideas of faith is they leave out Jesus Christ. No understanding of faith is adequate unless it requires a personal knowledge of Jesus.

Paul speaks about salvation through God's power for **everyone who believes**. He does not narrow the field to a certain select group with a particular temperament or aptitude. Rather, he broadens the field to include all sinners who need the grace of God. The power of God showing itself in us as spiritual life is simply a matter of faith in Christ!

I like the familiar illustration that likens faith to an empty hand reached out to God receiving His salvation and blessing. Remember, faith is an empty hand. Can it be that anyone is not spiritual enough or has the wrong kind of personality to enjoy lively faith and true spiritual life? Not if faith is an empty hand. Because the only way to keep God from filling that hand is to hold something else. No one can be too empty, too lacking in spiritual aptitudes or supposedly spiritual feelings for God's power to work in them.

When Paul writes **to everyone who believes**, he tells us that the power of God works in us when our lives are directed toward the Savior, Jesus Christ.

— Pastor Steve Mundfrom
Bethany Lutheran
Sebek, Minnesota

sound bites

"The teacher deals with immortal souls. The possibilities for good as well as bad seem unlimited. It is in the

1 teacher's power to mold and direct the soul and to influence it not only for a time, but also for eternity. Truly there is no higher and more important work than that of a teacher. May all teachers realize the greatness of their calling and prayerfully prepare themselves to utilize the opportunities to the fullest extent."

— *Jacob Tanner*

"(Jesus) used methods but was not bound to any one method. He moved comfortably from the known to the unknown; from the simple to the profound; from the concrete to the abstract. A remarkable freedom appears in His methodological skills and with a clear-cut objective. He is not an entertainer but an educator. He desires more than gaining attention; He is committed to changing lives."

— *Kenneth O. Gengel and Howard G. Hendricks*

6

"As we take time to build relationships, we make it possible for our students to see Jesus in us. We share ourselves with our students, and in doing so, we model for them what it means to live as a man of God, as a woman of God."

— *Jane L. Fryar*

2

"The idea that a child must have a knowledge of the outline of the Bible story before he knows the central

truth that Jesus Christ is his loving Savior, is as unreasonable as it would be to suppose that a child must know the anatomy of the human frame before he is able to believe in his mother's love for him."

— *H. Clay Trumbull*

3

"How fortunate that boy or girl who cannot remember the time when he did not love the Lord Jesus and try to obey Him! How fortunate that child whose affections have been set on things above from the earliest years, who, from a child, like young Timothy of old, has known the holy Scriptures (II Timothy 3:15)!"

— *Lois E. LeBar*

"There is power in content, but even more power in a life which demonstrates the truth. Therefore, the teacher with a prepared heart has integrity with the message. This teacher is humble enough to realize that without dependence upon God,

no teaching will have its maximum impact."

— *Bruce H. Wilkinson*

5

Does it really matter?

Beware, lest your hearts be deceived and you turn away and serve other gods and worship them. Or the anger of the Lord will be kindled against you, and He will shut up the heavens so that there will be no rain and the ground will not yield its fruit; and you will perish quickly from the good land which the Lord is giving you. You shall therefore impress these words of Mine on your heart and on your soul; and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. And you shall teach them to your sons, talking of them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road and when you lie down and when you rise up. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

— Deuteronomy 11:18-20

To “impress” these words on the heart and soul creates a picture of permanence, not soon to be forgotten and too important to set aside. These vital teachings of Scripture were to be an integral part of every facet of life, every moment of the day. The Jews took these words literally by using “phylacteries.” Strips of parchment on which passages of the law were written, enclosed in a box, were bound on the forehead and left wrist and worn at prayers by the worshippers. This custom was widely practiced among Eastern peoples, carrying about their personal slips of parchment on which were written sentences of religious importance. Scripture passages were also enclosed in a reed or cylinder, and fixed on the right-hand doorpost of every room of the house. In these ways, the commandments of the Lord were constantly in view and mind, so as to undeviatingly observe them.

The warning to “beware” and command to “impress” are no less applicable today. Paul also warns in Colossians 2:8, “See to

it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.” The more subtle the deviation, the swifter the deception. Those that seem the most harmless may be the most dangerous.

The temptation to exalt self over God has existed since Adam and Eve’s fall into sin. Today, the self-centered desire to be tickled with “feel-good” Christianity is often nurtured in churches through gimmicks which are employed to attract man to spirituality. We begin to promote activities, numbers, experiences, acceptance and building “self-esteem” rather than drawing people to the Bible and Christ. As a result, content, doctrine, law and gospel, daily repentance and faith are sacrificed in favor of making a person feel good about his spirituality or comfortable coming to church.

As Luther was reminded by his friend, Dr. Stouptiz, we are not “painted sinners” in need of a “painted Savior,” but “real sinners” in need of a “real Savior.” When we make shallow the depths of darkness, we also lose the intensity of the brightness of the light. Lessening the distinction between the church and the world only leads to confusion for both.



Why Parish Education

It is not necessary, but rather it is harmful, to create manmade diversions to attract one to Christianity. Let us not foolishly attempt to create an outward appearance of spiritual life, thereby causing souls to lose out on true inward spiritual life whose source is in Christ alone.

Christ draws the soul to Himself. There is nothing flashy or pompous about the man Jesus Christ. "He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. He was despised and forsaken of men ... like one from whom men hide their face ... but He was pierced through for our transgressions ... and by His scourging we are healed ... the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him" (Isaiah 53:2-6).

The way to prevent this deception is, by prayerfully preaching and teaching the Word alone. It is not relying on self-centered rationale or personal charisma to bring about spiritual results. It is not attempting to manipulate emotions or imitate the work of the Holy Spirit. It is not measuring spiritual results by the world's visible standards. We are certainly not above these temptations. Therefore, we must guard against combining biblical concepts with other ideas which do not come directly from the Word of God, and confidently embrace the supernatural power of the Word of God to transform lives from the inside out. May we "beware" of idolatrous thinking which draws attention to man rather than to God, and demonstrates unbelief in the immeasurable power of the Word of God to call sinners to repentance and to instruct and nurture spiritual growth.

A deep concern of our Parish Education Board is that our literature would never teach moralisms instead of Jesus' life and



— adapted from the Annual Report
Marian Christopherson,
Parish Education Director,
35th Annual Conference, 1997

ministry. We define a moralism as "an application of the biblical text which distorts the simple gospel teaching in an attempt to make the text practical — to give the student 'something to do,' thereby turning the gospel into law." This is a common shift in theology. Instead of offering the freedom to live differently because Christ dwells in us and the Spirit transforms us, such teaching urges us to live by efforts of self-improvement which will always meet spiritual defeat. Theology which does not draw its life from the gospel is utterly incapable of truly changing hearts and lives.

Our publications hold firmly to the divine authority and complete infallibility of God's Word. We believe there is a great need for this type of literature in a modern world of spiritual compromise with no absolutes. It is for this reason that we desire Ambassador Publications to become more accessible to other individuals and churches. Because we believe our publications are solidly biblical with an emphasis on a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and a need for daily repentance and faith, we believe God can use these to call others to salvation and to challenge godly living in Christ. Therefore, we must not be tossed about by every wind of doctrine, but stand firm in our commitment to produce educational and devotional materials which reflect the biblical Lutheran heritage of the AFLC.

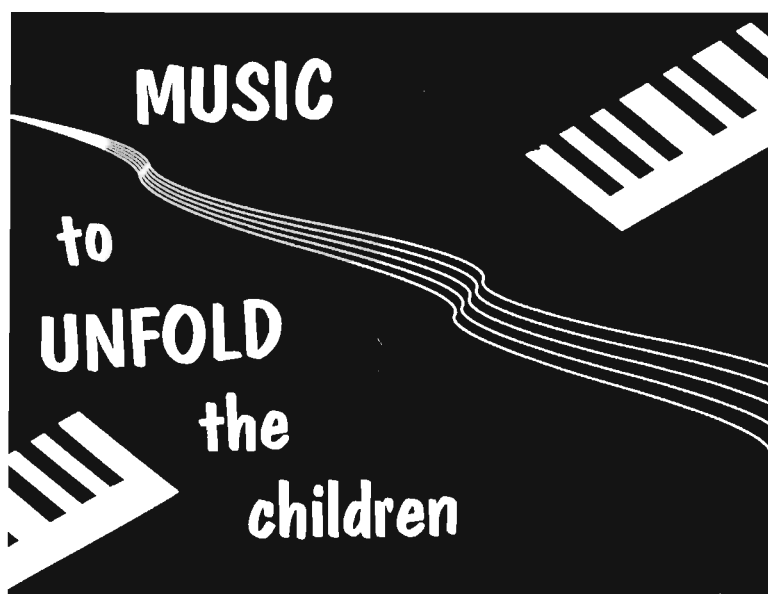


We want all our AFLC churches and people to know we are here to help and serve them in their local ministries. We exist for the purpose of serving you. We desire to be a source of guidance to assist in finding, recommending, producing, and making available biblical Lutheran materials.

Have you ever received a package that had many layers to it? These layers were intricately folded to make the package interesting. As you slowly unfolded layer by layer you found something new and exciting. At the last fold you discovered a masterpiece: a child, now an adult, bearing all the rough and smooth marks of the unfolding process.

It has been said, "Children are not things to be molded, but people to be unfolded." If we approach children as people to be unfolded and to grow as God intended, we will have greater success in reaching them with the gospel. We pray for hearts and minds that are unfolded to God's grace, love, and forgiveness, and then for personalities to develop and blossom in the soil of the Word of God.

Martin Luther said, "Music is one of the fairest and most glorious gifts of God, to which Satan is a bitter enemy, for it removes from the heart the weight of sorrow, and the fascination of evil thoughts." What a ministry is ours in the Sunday school through music!



When we think of music in the Sunday school setting, we need to remember at least three things about the music which we choose.

First, our music needs to glorify God, the Father; God, the Son; and God, the Holy Spirit. Music can help us **worship** the Trinity and focus our thoughts on Him.

Second, through our music we can **teach** our children the basics of the Christian faith. Check the lyrics. Are the words of the song in total agreement with the Word of God and with the doctrines of the church? Church history shows the destruction when false teaching is allowed.

Third, our children need to learn songs of **witness and testimony** about what Jesus has done for them. These songs can work two ways. If the salvation message is included, it can reach children with the gospel so they can know Jesus as their personal Savior. Once Jesus is known personally, these songs can help children express their faith in a very natural way to others.

Scriptures tell us about three types of music to be used by the church in worship and in daily living. Colossians 3:16 gives three basic categories which fit the three reasons for teaching music to children in Sunday school: "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in

**psalms,
hymns and
spiritual songs,**

singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God."

Most of the psalms are songs of praise and worship of God the Father — whom He is and what He has done. Teaching

— Lorilee Mundfrom
*Prince of Peace Lutheran
Beulah, North Dakota*



our children songs of Scripture, many of which are taken from the Psalms, is a wonderful way to learn Scripture and praise God.

At the Last Supper Jesus and the disciples ate, then sang a hymn before departing for the garden of Gethsemane. Knowing this was His last meal with the disciples, I am sure Jesus wanted them to focus on the truths He had taught them and the truths that were to be the mainstays of their ministry. Children can and need to learn hymns of the faith. One idea may be to teach and sing a "hymn of the month" during Sunday school.

The third type of music Paul speaks of is spiritual songs. These are songs of witness and testimony. Spiritual songs can be gospel songs, choruses that teach about salvation, and songs that admonish us to live lives pleasing to God. Be sure they teach the truth of Scripture and that the music does not detract from the message of the words.

Scripture often commands us to sing and make music to the Lord. Our God enjoys music. It is our responsibility to return this gift of music as an expression to God!

Our ability to communicate with God distinguishes us from all other creation. Worship can be defined as our coming to God, recognizing God's holiness and our sinfulness, focusing our complete attention on Him, and responding in humility to His character. God demands that we worship Him and only Him. Worship places God and humans in their proper relationship of the holy God and the helpless sinner.

Worship music is a corporate and individual expression but it is always an expression to God. Churches and children's programs that limit their music to personal expressions of daily experiences deny the biblical injunction to "sing to the Lord." Music that is directed to people — whether to build them up in the faith or

to relate the claims of Christ may be valid musical expressions, but they were never intended to be worship or replace the music that is sung to God. To deny individual and corporate worship music is to violate the biblical mandate.

Children are capable of true worship. They need to participate in songs of praise and thanksgiving to God, songs that give glory to God, songs that convey personal commitment and dedication, and songs that express prayers. Unfortunately, many of our children are deprived from experiencing biblical worship because their music does not embody any of these characteristics. To deny a child the opportunity for true worship postpones his discovery of why God made him — for spiritual fellowship — and prevents his development of this essential communication during the formative and impressionable years of life.

Let us use music in our Sunday schools that will unfold children to God's holiness, love and grace. As they learn to worship the Lord, He can minister to their hearts and unfold them to be the people He wants them to be.



Recommended reading: *Children's Music Ministry; a guide to philosophy and practice*, 1981, by Connie Fortunato. David C. Cook Publishing Company, 850 N. Grove Ave. Elgin, IL 60120. *Music and Worship in the Church — The Complete Resource for Musician, Minister, and Layman*, 1960, by Austin C. Lovelace and William C. Rice. Abingdon Press, New York: Nashville.

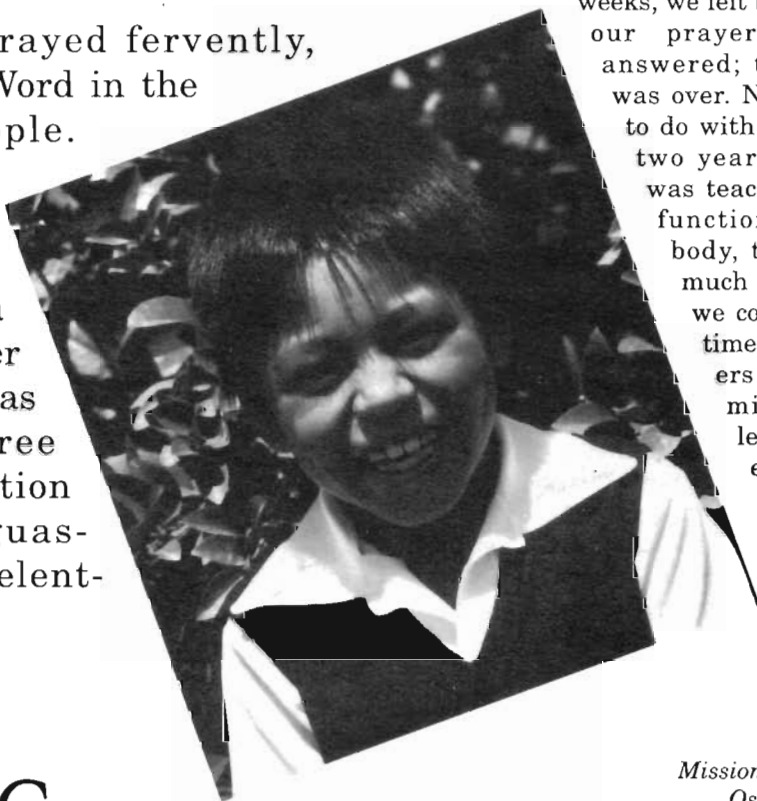
Recommended resources: Ambassador Publications of the AFLC is a wonderful resource for music to use in Sunday schools. Be sure to use the *Ambassador Hymnal* as much as possible in your Sunday school, too.

It was finally a reality! There was indeed a newborn congregation in Aguascalientes, Mexico. For two years we had been by turns excited, frustrated, tired and happy. We knew it would one day be a joyful reality, although with the knowing came some doubting.

"Oh Lord," we prayed fervently, "please bless your Word in the ears of these people. Please save them out of their dark lives and help us gather them into a church!" That prayer became our mantra as the vision of a Free Lutheran congregation in downtown Aguascalientes burned relentlessly before us.

And so that day arrived! Six new Christians stood in our little chapel and confessed before each other and the Lord that they wanted to be a Christian congregation, banding together to help each other follow their new Lord, Jesus Christ. Hallelujah! Spring of Living Water Church was born.

During those first few weeks, we felt blissful — all of our prayers had been answered; the hard part was over. Now all we had to do with the remaining two years of our term was teach them how to function as a church body, teach them as much of the Bible as we could fit into the time, train lay leaders for continuing ministry, and leave an educated, Mexican, Lutheran pastor in charge.



— Debbie Giles
Missionary on furlough
Osceola, Wisconsin

STARTING A SUNDAY SCHOOL SOUTH OF THE BORDER

Twelve years later we are viewing things a bit more realistically.

One of our first hurdles was developing a Sunday school department. I personally felt called to this; it was my main mission for years. I knew that if Spring of Living Water had a future, a solid ongoing program of Christian education was a must, especially for the children. For every one of the children in our little church, it was the very first opportunity to grow up in a Christian congregation. I knew the blessings of coming regularly to Sunday school and learning about Jesus would go out like concentric circles for generations to come.

My first quest was for material. There wasn't any! I searched Christian book stores in Texas and tried to order from Spanish catalog departments of the larger Lutheran synods. The material would get lost in the mail, or be unusable for doctrinal reasons if it did arrive. One time, a box of Spanish Sunday school material arrived from another denomination. It looked like a year's worth of supplies. We were thrilled! Then we began translating some of the lessons. The following statement is a direct translation of what was given as the teaching point of Moses' crossing of the Red Sea: "If you obey God perfectly in every detail, you can learn to manipulate His power." Help! Back to the drawing board. Finally after a few years of fitful starts and stops, we found a good Lutheran curriculum available in Spanish from the Wisconsin Synod. God bless them!

Our next major hurdle was convincing the Christian parents in our church that Sunday school attendance was important for their children. We expected them to be happy we were willing to teach and train their children in the faith! But most saw no reason for it, and seldom brought their children. Once again we had forgotten we were working with people who had absolutely no prior knowledge of or experience with Jesus Christ and His Church.

Many truths are fundamental to us because we grew up with them, but these dear people did not have that privilege. Just this year one of our founding members shared with the congregation how moved he was to see his little daughter responding in love and obedience and repeating Bible verses to her friends. "I

Parent-teacher meetings in Sunday School

Carefully plan the program in advance, and mail copies of the program to the parents. Program topics might include:

The objectives of our Sunday school.

How the home can cooperate with the Sunday school.

An explanation of our Sunday school lessons.

The missionary program of our Sunday school.

The place our church and Sunday school has in the community.

What the Bible says about the duties of parents.

The power of parents' example.

Special challenges of the preschool, grade school, and adolescent child.

Family worship in the home.

Teaching a child to pray.

Quality reading material for children.

Purposeful Bible reading.

The importance of Christian companions.

credit this," he said with tears in his eyes, "to our excellent Sunday school and to her dedicated teacher, Ingrid." Praise the Lord!

We now have a good Sunday school department at Spring of Living Water. Our children know many, many Bible verses and enjoy the teaching of dedicated Mexican teachers.

Two main challenges will face our Sunday school when we return to Mexico next spring. One is the need to reach more children! The number of children attending Sunday school in our town church, Spring of Living Water, is very small. Please pray that God would give a burning vision of reaching the children to the members of our church.

Our other big challenge is again the need for solid Lutheran material in Spanish. We believe God wants us to translate and publish the entire Ambassador curriculum. This will be an enormous task! Please pray for us.

We thank God for Todd and Barb Schierkolk. Barb's special gift is for children's ministry. She is and will be such a blessing to the vital, exciting work of reaching and teaching the children.



Truly God's Word never returns void! Even now I can recall the simple Bible verse a dedicated teacher taught my preschool Sunday school class, "God is with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9). It still comforts me.

I remember the example of a teacher who had engrafted a large portion of God's Word into his heart and was both willing and able to recite it to my high school class! It still inspires me.

And I remember the moment I first realized the young age Daniel was when he demonstrated such great faith. It still challenges me.

God's Word through Sunday school continues to bear fruit.

— Rachel Fugleberg
Fargo, North Dakota



Sunday school sowing seeds for eternity

Filled with the Holy Spirit and speaking of Jesus, Peter said, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

My eighth grade Sunday school teacher, Miss Martha Kleppe, assigned this verse to us to be memorized, and helped us learn it. Miss Kleppe had recently completed her career as a college professor and had returned to her hometown to retire. She loved the Lord Jesus Christ and had a passion for His Word. She also had a love for youth, even restless

junior high school boys. This nugget of truth that is supported by the rest of the Bible message has stuck with me ever since. It has had eternal significance in my life. It contributes to my daily yielding to Christ.

Martha Kleppe ended each class period by leading us in a unison recitation of the Mizpah from Genesis 31:49, "May the Lord keep watch between you and me when we are away from each other." I look forward to the day of our reunion.

— David M. Dyrud
St. Paul, Minnesota

The beginnings

The people of Israel were God's chosen people and they were careful to teach their children about God and His commands.

In the days of Samuel, prophets taught young men, in schools that must have been something like our seminaries. At that time, children were taught in the home by the parents.

During Nehemiah's time, synagogue schools appeared. These schools consisted of elementary day schools in which the Old Testament was taught from the little parchment rolls especially prepared for the children. There were also higher schools of learning. In connection with the synagogue worship on the Sabbath, there was a Sabbath school for children. It is considered the oldest Sunday school, even though it was very different, of course, from the Sunday school of today.

In the early Christian church, children were taught in the home and in catechetical schools. Justin Martyr and Clement - you've already heard about them - taught in catechetical schools.

When monasteries became common,

monks often took care of the instruction of the young.

You remember Charlemagne who was like a light in the dark ages. He encouraged parents to teach their children in their home. In 804 A.D., he had a law passed requiring parents themselves to learn the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the words of the institution of baptism, and to teach them to their children and to those whom they brought to Holy Baptism.

After he died, people again lost interest. Again they became careless about Christian truths. They did not even know the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, or the Ten Commandments. Luther became very sad at the ignorance of the people, and so he wrote a "little Bible," called the Catechism, which contained some of the most important truths of the Bible. He taught the Catechism to children and grown-ups. This was called Catechetical instruction. Then he encouraged parents to teach the Catechism in their homes, and pastors to teach on Sundays, either before or after services.

The modern Sunday school had its beginning in 1780 when Robert Raikes (1735 - 1811) of Gloucester, England, who had been reading the Bible and providing teachers for prisoners, became discouraged and turned to the more hopeful task

I think of Sunday school with a great deal of gratitude to my parents. They realized the importance of the Lord in their lives and brought their children to Sunday school and church regularly. No greater gift than that could they have given me.

Part of that gift was the wonderful teachers I had. I still remember how they led their classes in prayer, and the light in their eyes and eagerness in their voice as they talked of our Lord. What a joy it was to come to know our Lord and Savior through these people.

— Diane Krause
Zumbrota, Minnesota



I remember Sunday school in a tiny little country church on a North Dakota prairie. Many times my classroom was in a car. There were no audio visual aids. But I learned lots of Bible history and my Catechism and memory verses. My favorite teacher left such an impression on me that I wanted to be like her. She was a softspoken lady who radiated her love for the Lord. Her face reflected peace and joy, and she showed a sincere interest in her students. Sunday school now is not so simple, but my teacher had the two most important requirements — love for Jesus and love for her students.

— Charlotte Quanbeck
McVile, North Dakota

The Lord has taken me through wondrous adventures in life, not the least of these is the adventure of gaining continued greater understanding of His Word — discovering that **this**, a certain passage, pertains to **me**. How thankful I am to my Lord Jesus for the salvation which is mine through Him, and to the Holy Spirit who led me to a very blessed group of men and women who love our holy God and study His Word.

I now understand why the Lord gave me this very special confirmation verse: "In Thy presence is fullness of joy; and at Thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore" (Psalm 16:11).

— Erna Jochum
Bethel Park, Pennsylvania

of dealing with children. He was appalled at the ignorance and vice of many children in the poorer sections of the city. He decided to gather these children on Sundays and provide them with much needed instruction. His school was at first called the "ragged school" because of the ragged, dirty, ignorant waifs that became the first pupils of the Sunday school. Cleanliness was particularly stressed. Because education was not free then, as it is today, both secular and religious subjects were taught. In time, however, the Sunday school became a school for teaching Christianity.

The first teacher was Mrs. Meredith who conducted class in the kitchen of her home in Sooty Alley. Later, Mrs. Mary Critchley started a Sunday school in her home which was near Mr. Raikes' home. Mr. Raikes paid her salary. She taught from 10:00 to 12:00, from 1:00 to 3:00, and sometimes until 5:00.

After a few years of experimentation, Raikes published a report about his work. Immediately many people went to Gloucester to see the work he was doing. The result was that the Sunday school movement spread rapidly, especially in America.

The first Sunday school in America was organized in Philadelphia in 1790 and was known as "The First Day Society." It was not a church undertaking. It

was a Sunday school society organized to teach reading, writing and spelling, as well as Christianity.

Now there are Sunday schools in many places in the world. Since 1889, world Sunday school conventions have been held regularly every four years in various parts of the world.

The Lutheran church has always laid great stress on the training of the children in the Christian religion. Most Lutherans who came to America brought with them the Catechism, Bible, hymn books, and devotion books. One of the earliest successful attempts at Sunday school work in the Lutheran church was at St. John's Lutheran Church in Philadelphia, in 1821.

In the last ten years, the number of children attending Sunday school in the Lutheran church has increased a great deal, and the growth is more rapid each year. A very important improvement is the Bible class department where parents can have instruction too. When teachers are trained, prepared, conscientious teachers like yours, then the Sunday school can be a great blessing in winning and holding souls for the Kingdom.



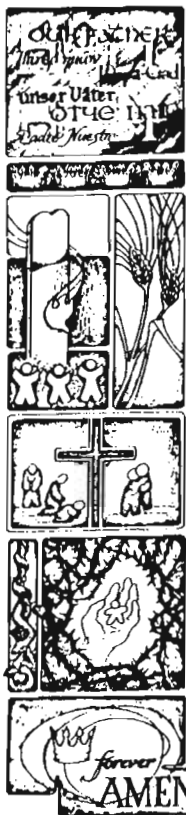
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The Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven,

Hallowed be Thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done on
earth, as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our
daily bread.
And forgive us our
trespasses, as we
forgive those who
trespass against us.
And lead us not into
temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

For Thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

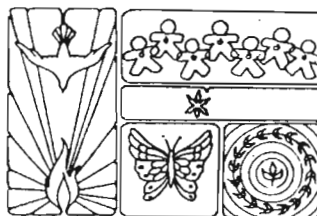


The Apostles' Creed



I believe in
God the Father
Almighty, Maker
of heaven and
earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His
only Son, our Lord; Who was
conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary, suf-
fered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and
buried. He descended into
hell; the third day He rose
again from the dead; He
ascended into heaven, and
sitteth on the right hand of
God the Father Almighty;
from thence He shall come to
judge the quick and the dead.



I believe in the
Holy Spirit; the
holy Christian
Church, the com-
munion of saints;
the forgiveness of
sins; the resur-
rection of the
body; and the life
everlasting.
Amen.

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Impress these words on your heart

The poster set, *The Small Catechism in Illustration*, is a valuable teaching tool for both home and school. A lady recently purchased a set to put on the bedroom walls of her grandchildren's room so that they would be continually reminded of these foundational truths of Scripture.

Martin Luther originally wrote on wall charts to assist in memorization. Throughout his life, he recited parts of the Catechism daily and required it of his family as well. He said if the children would not learn, than they should not eat.

You shall therefore impress these words of Mine on your heart and on your soul. The essence of the word *impress* is to **sharpen**, as in sharpening a

knife, turning it repetitively from side to side. There is great value in discipline for the purpose of godliness. The Catechism facilitates this discipline because it summarizes the fundamentals of the Christian faith. Luther recognized:

- *The Ten Commandments* as a mirror of sin;
- *The Apostles' Creed* as a proclamation of forgiveness;
- *The Lord's Prayer* as an acceptance of mercy; and
- The sacraments of *Baptism* and *The Lord's Supper* as a means of receiving God's grace.

Eternal truth is timeless, and the Catechism is a timeless tool for teaching children and adults doctrine, faith, and personal godliness.

I am also a doctor and a preacher, yea, as learned and experienced as all who have such presumption and security. Yet I do as a child who is being taught the Catechism. Every morning and whenever I have time I read and say, word for word, the Ten Comandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Psalms, etc. And I must still read and study daily, and yet I cannot master it as I wish, but must remain, and that too gladly, a child and pupil of the Catechism.

— Martin Luther

OUR PRESIDENT WRITES

What would they think?

A "pioneers' breakfast" was scheduled on Saturday morning at our recent annual conference in Thief River Falls, for those who were in attendance thirty-five years ago when the AFLC was organized. Memories were shared, and a question was discussed: What would the people think who were present for our first conference if they could all attend in 1997?

I believe, first of all, that they would be greatly encouraged to see that the AFLC continues to stand on the inerrant Word of God and our "Free Church" Fundamental Principles, with the same strong emphasis on the necessity of a personal relationship with Christ by grace through faith. Those of us who were there in 1962, rejoiced that the conference messages in 1997 clearly represented the spirit of evangelical Lutheran Christianity that was so precious to our forefathers.

Second, they would be amazed to see how the AFLC has grown. In 1962 it was logical to meet in Thief River Falls, since this community was in the center of the area where most of our congregations were located. This year's conference, however, included friends from Arizona, Alabama, California, Texas, Oklahoma, Missouri, Colorado, Nebraska, Illinois, Indiana, and Pennsylvania, and other states where we were not represented thirty-five years ago. We were greatly encouraged at the organizational conference to have people in attendance from about 70 congregations (even though some of them never did affiliate with us); it would have been almost beyond belief to imagine that in some of our lifetimes there would be a growing fellowship of 240 congregations committed to our vision of freedom and life.

The third impression that comes to my mind is that the AFLC pioneers from 1962 would be absolutely thrilled to see all of the youth among us, for many of the first congregations were located in declining rural communities, and they feared that the number of young people would be few. How excited they would have been to return to Thief River Falls thirty-five years later and see what the Lord has done!

The 1997 Annual Conference seemed to be an especially singular one in this regard, as I looked out each day over an assembly with so many young families in attendance. It was at another Thief River Falls conference where the decision was made to open a Bible school, and now this year we heard of summer teams ministering throughout our congregations, an expected record enrollment for this fall as well as plans to construct new facilities to accommodate the expansion. We also heard of over 1400 youth and advisors registered for our national youth convention in Colorado, an outreach that continues to be the largest AFLC gathering.

Many of the memories that were shared at the "pioneers' breakfast" included pastors and lay people who have gone home to be with the Lord. We do thank Him for all of these faithful ones who stood up to be counted in 1962 for the cause of free and living Lutheran congregations. It is only speculation, of course, to wonder about their thoughts concerning our church life today. The more important question is "What does the Lord think?" The verdict of the One Who knows the heart is what really matters, for it concerns both life and eternity.

May the AFLC of today be found faithful in preserving and passing on the heritage that has been committed to us!

— Pastor Robert L. Lee

A dream come true

I remember it as a turning point in my life. I was in my first year of college, struggling with challenges to my faith. I had discovered the books of C. S. Lewis, who had shown me, to my delight, that being a Christian didn't mean I had to disconnect my brain. Then one day I opened the cover of *The Screwtape Letters*, and there was the dedication: "To J. R. R. Tolkien."

Tolkien! The author of *The Lord of the Rings*, the fantasy trilogy I'd fallen in love with in high school! I hadn't known before that Lewis and Tolkien had been close friends.

At that moment a light bulb went on for me: Lewis' world of theology and reason was not divorced from Tolkien's world of romance and adventure. There was a living connection between the two.

Almost thirty years later, that connection means more to me than ever. All around me I see people trying to live in two worlds at once. They talk about love and goodness and "spirituality," but they actually **believe** in a scientific world view that makes no room for any kind of spiritual meaning at all. One by one, quietly or loudly, quickly or slowly, they lose their minds or die because they can't reconcile the two worlds.

The gospel of Jesus Christ offers a message that brings the two worlds together — "The Word became Flesh" (John 1:14). In the Incarnation, **The Word** (*logos* in the Greek), everything that's rational and precise and orderly, became *flesh* — everything that's emotional and feeling, that dreams and aspires. In Jesus Christ they are united, making a perfect, whole Man; the man Adam had been intended to be.

I think it was that day that I also knew the kind of book I

wanted to write someday. I wanted to write a Christian fantasy, set in the real world, where realistic people moving in believable situations would encounter the supernatural and the Holy. I had no reason to think anyone would want to publish such a book, but I was pretty sure I'd write it.

Later this fall, Baen Books of Riverdale, New York will publish my novel, *Erling's Word* (I write under the pen name "Lars Walker"). *Erling's Word* is a Christian fantasy set in Norway in the days of King Olaf Trygvesson. It's the story of an Irishman, Ailill, a failed monk and impostor priest, who is taken to Norway to serve the chieftain Erling Skjalgsson of Sola. As Ailill struggles with his conscience, he also faces enemies outside himself, both human and spiritual — pagans and elves and the old gods. In my book, documented history rubs shoulder with legend and magic and miracles, and God is present everywhere, even in His silence.

I trust many will want to read the book, but I don't recommend it for everybody. It's published by a secular publisher, and that's not accidental. I wrote *Erling's Word* for non-Christians, for people who

have never seriously considered the claims of Jesus Christ. To speak to such people I had to take great care. I avoided religious jargon. I had to let my characters, even the worst ones, act in the ways such people would really act. I had to admit the failures and sins of Christians and the church. And I portrayed life as it is, not as I'd like it to be. So if you enjoy books about nice people who do nice things and say nice things, this isn't it. I beg you not to buy it because I have no wish to offend you. I also do not recommend it for children. Call it PG.

But if you have a friend who isn't a Christian, perhaps someone interested in Norway or in fantasy literature, you might suggest *Erling's Word* to them, or even give them a copy as a gift. Tell them the author works for your church body. It might make them curious enough to come and visit. And God willing, they might open the cover and come to their own turning point.



— Larry Walker
Home Missions
Administrative Assistant
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Missionaries commissioned

Darwin and Mary Ann Jackson were commissioned as lay missionaries on August 8, 1997 at Elim Lutheran in Lake Stevens, Washington. At the last annual conference, the World Mission Board approved the Jacksons as AFLC missionaries on loan to the World Mission Prayer League. The Jacksons plan to go to Puebla, Mexico, where they will join Missionaries Dick and Clara Gunderson in a team ministry.

Special Retreats Coming at the ARC

**Single Adults – all ages
Sept. 26-28**

Concert – speakers
Warm fellowship for only \$65

Classics Retreat

– all seasoned citizens.

Oct. 3-5

with Pastor Phil Featherstone
and a fall colors luncheon cruise
on the St. Croix for only \$60!

We are handicap accessible.
For more information call the ARC
at 1 (800) 294-2877.

Only our needs

It is difficult for me to separate *needs* from *wants*. Advertising would convince me and my children, that each product is essential. The fact that most transactions can be charged to a credit card makes me prey to any number of so-called specials. "Buy now, pay later," is an offer that is hard to refuse sometimes.

What the Lord holds up to me in His Word is quite different from the media messages. And I need reminders because when I fail to see life from God's perspective, I lose mine. He says that if I seek Him first, He will supply what I need. I've never put that promise to the test in the same way George Mueller did — by faith he took care of hundreds of orphans. But I have known the joy of waiting on the Lord and

then receiving just what I **needed**.

The WMF lesson for September focuses on identifying *needs* from God's point of view and on the admonition to share with others what God provides. Michael Dubina wrote "Only What I Need."

God seldom gives me what I want,

But gives me what I need.

I ask for wealth, He gives me health

For love, He gives me seeds.

"Go sow the seed," He seems to say,

"And love will grow for you,

And health will be the wealth you need

To share the loves you grew."

And, when I pray for worldly goods

And comforts of a king,

He fills my heart with little joys,

For simple, common things;

And, when I beg for things I see

Of envy to my mind

He guides my steps to happy souls

Who are completely blind.

So, now, I just come unto Him

In simple, humble prayer

And only ask He keep me safe

From harm and hell's despair.

For He has shown that He will not

Reward my prayers of greed

And will not give me what I want

But only what I need.

— Dee Berkas

In loving memory of Constance L. Grothe, who went to be with her Lord on June 29, 1996. Her heart was in the work of the church and the AFLC.

One day we'll be together again

— Elva Grothe Auestad
Living Word Lutheran
Tucson, Arizona

Dear sister, Connie, I miss you so much —

Your love, your friendship, and your gentle touch.

I know you're with Jesus where you wanted to go,

And with Mama and Papa who loved Him so.

Life now seems so empty, there are tears, and I pray

That Jesus will comfort and give strength for the day.

When that song comes to mind — "It Is Well With My Soul" —

I remember we sang it, and tears start to roll.

You taught me so much about following the Lord,

And being diligent about reading His Word.

You taught me to witness whenever I could;

When an opportunity arose, you always would.

Jesus meant everything to you in this life.

To Him you were true through all kinds of strife.

You reached out to others, of yourself gave no thought.

So unselfish you were, and God loved you a lot.

He loved you so much He just took you "up home"

Where trials and heartaches would surely not come.

I long to be with you, my heart tends that way,

But I need to seek God's will and diligently pray.

So I'll look up to Jesus and trust Him to give

All the grace I will need so for Him I can live.

And one day my journey and earth will be done

And together we'll praise Him and heaven will be won.

*To the saints
gathered at
the 35th
Anniversary
Conference
of the AFLC*

Pastor Strand wrote this letter to the annual conference on June 11, 1997. The AFLC secretary did not receive the letter until after the conference. It is printed here in its entirety.

To the saints gathered at the
35th Anniversary Conference of the AFLC

Dear friends,

Grace and Peace!

It would have been great to have been with you at this anniversary conference. Surely many wonderful memories would be aroused, friendships renewed, as well as challenges received.

The first conference that October season in Thief River is still fresh in our minds. Surprisingly, though I was young and inexperienced, I was elected president of that fledgling group. Thankfully most of the boards elected were gray-haired or bald men who had their feet on the ground and their hearts in the heavenly, and were devoted to the concept of free and living Lutheran congregations. They shepherded their novice president. It may not have been always appreciated, but thankfully it was received. As First John reminds us, the fathers, as John calls them, knew God. This is what John states and repeats of them. While gifts and abilities have their place, the key to all godly fellowship and service is knowing God. After all, as the psalmist reminds us, the power belongs to Him.

We are not making any plans for the earthly future. I appear to be growing weaker, but the pains are manageable. It is one day at a time. I have fine doctors, but we know God is in control. We do not know what He might or will do. We are most appreciative of all your prayers, letters and cards. There is no doubt that the many prayers of God's people have been answered. Last winter, the oncologist in Arizona gave no assurance that I would ever get up north alive again. Our sons spent several days in Arizona with us. Pastor Orville Olson gave us the Lord's Supper the last morning we were together. It was hard to part. Now it appears we will be together again the first part of July. God is working in answer to many prayers. Thank you most sincerely. Our lines have fallen in pleasant places, as the psalmist says.

My desire for you is found in Jude 24-25:

"Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

May you have a wonderful, spiritually uplifting conference. With kind personal greetings to each one of you.

Sincerely in Christ,
Pastor John P. Strand

AFLC's first president dies at age 80

Reverend John Peter Strand, 80, of Remer, Minnesota, died Friday, July 25, 1997 at his home. John Strand was born October 7, 1916 in Carpio, North Dakota, the son of Peter and Petrine (Petterson) Strand. The youngest of eight children, he grew up and attended school in Carpio. He was baptized and confirmed at First Lutheran Church in Carpio. After high school he attended Augsburg College and Augsburg Theological Seminary in Minneapolis, Minnesota, graduating in 1944.

He married Mildred Thorsgard in Northwood, North Dakota, on June 23, 1945. He then served Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Grafton, North Dakota, and Aspelund Lutheran in Vang, North Dakota. He moved to Tioga, North Dakota, and served the Tioga Lutheran Parish of Zion, Temple, St. Olaf, Norman, Lindahl, and Beaver Creek. He

was elected as president of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations in 1962 and moved to Minneapolis in the fall of 1964. He served as president until 1978 when he moved to Fargo, North Dakota, where he served St. Paul's Lutheran. He retired in 1982 and moved to Remer.

He is survived by his wife, Mildred; sons Steven, St. Paul, Minnesota; Michael and Barbara, their children — Erica and Bob, Panama City, Florida; and Jonathan and Ruth, their children — Justin, Alicia, and Erin, Edmonton, Alberta; one brother Eddie of Rugby, North Dakota and one sister Della, also of Rugby. He was preceded in death by his parents, two sisters and three brothers.

Services were held July 29, 1997 at 11 a.m. at Trinity Free Lutheran Church in Grand Forks, North Dakota; Pastor Bruce Dalager, officiating. Pastor Ray-

nard Huglen, Newfolden, Minnesota, gave the sermon and greetings were brought by AFLC President Robert Lee, AFLC Coordinating Committee Chairman Terry Olson and Jonathan Strand. Ivar Berge, Fargo, North Dakota, sang "Thanks to God for My Redeemer," and the congregation sang the closing hymn, "Through the Night of Doubt and Sorrow." (Pastor Strand always concluded annual conferences with this hymn — #302 *Ambassador Hymnal*.) Pallbearers were: Robert Knutson, McVile, North Dakota; Jon Presteng, Grafton, North Dakota; Loiell Dyrud, Thief River Falls, Minnesota; Gary Sorensen, Valley City, North Dakota; Donald Olson and Roland Peterson, both of Fargo, North Dakota. Burial was in the Northwood South Cemetery in Northwood, North Dakota.

Blessed be his memory.

Graduation at Mexican Bible Institute for AFLC student

Mazatlan, Mexico — On May 31, 1997, Fernando, one of the members of Spring of Living Water Church in Aguascalientes, graduated from the two-year basic course at the World Mission Prayer League's Bible Institute in Mazatlan. He plans to continue for two more years in the advanced course. Fernando and his wife, Monce, are praying about the possibility of serving the Lord as foreign missionaries to the Muslims. Pictured are Missionary Todd Schierkolk, Fernando, Pastor Guadalupe and WMPL missionary Jan Tollefson — both teachers at the Institute.



PEOPLE AND PLACES

Record enrollment expected at the Bible school

The Opening Service at 4 p.m. on September 7, is expected to welcome 53 seniors and over eighty juniors for the fall semester at AFLBS. The 1976-77 record enrollment of 133 is likely to be surpassed. The 1980s average enrollment hovered in the 90s with one exception: seventy-five students registered in 1987-88. Recent years has seen the student body number around one hundred with last year's enrollment reaching 112 students. AFLBS Dean James L. Johnson said 144 students would pack the two dorms. As of this printing, 132 students were confirmed with ten "maybes," potentially filling the dorms to capacity — a first in the school's history.

Pastor Tonnes Pollestad, Andover, Minnesota, began serving as Vision 2004 Project Coordinator for the Association Free Lutheran Bible School on August 1. He will work with the Plymouth City Hall and the architect in developing the planned building project for the Bible school. He will also coordinate visits to each AFLC congregation to present the proposed building project. This half-time position will be shared with Marantha Lutheran of Spring Lake Park, where he has served as pastor since 1991. Seminarian Ivars Krafts will assist Pastor Pollestad in the ministry at Marantha.

Pastor Eugene Enderlein, AFLC World Missions director, Minneapolis, Minnesota, left on July 24, for approximately a week in Mexico. While there, he attended the annual conference for the Mexican church.

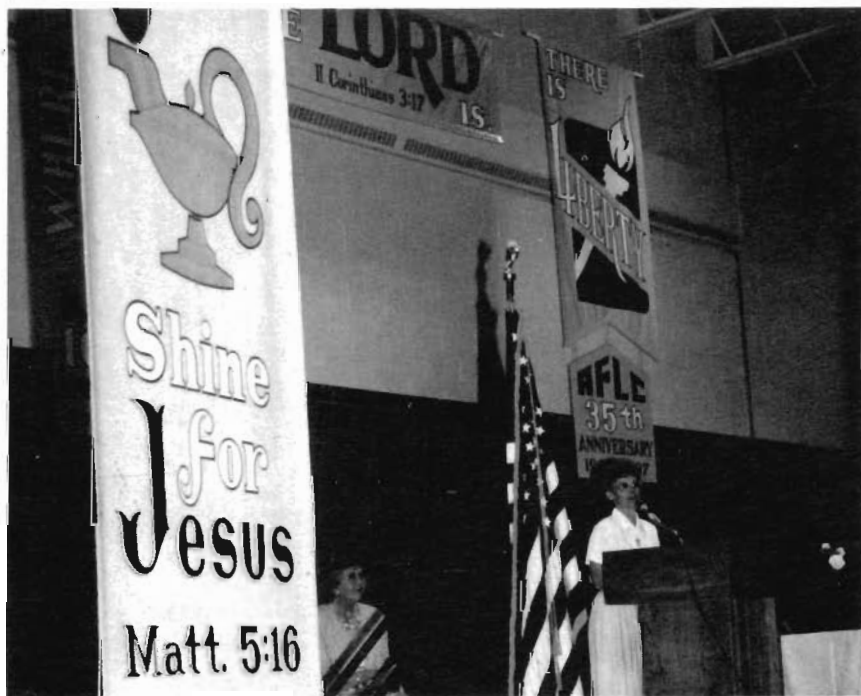
Wanda Jacobson, Minneapolis, Minnesota, has resigned as administrative assistant to Pastor James L. Johnson, AFLBS dean. Her last day at AFLBS on August 15, 1997, concluded nine years of service to the Bible School. Pastor Johnson said, "I would have loved to have seen her stay on. She has been an invaluable aid for me during this past year when I was new."

Ellen Erdman, Minneapolis, Minnesota, is the new interim administrative assistant to the AFLBS dean. She is the former office manager at the Lay Ministry Training Center in nearby Roseville. Ellen attends Marantha Lutheran in Spring Lake Park, and expects to serve in this interim position until January, 1998. Another interim office worker is Sarah Olson, a 1997 AFLBS graduate. She is working part-time in the student accounts office on campus.

Ingrid Giles, Osceola, Wisconsin, was recently given the good news that the original diagnosis of her rare lung disease was not as serious as was told to them by doctors in Mexico. She plans on attending AFLBS in September. Ingrid is the daughter of Missionaries Dan and Debbie Giles.

New dean announced

Michele Deubner, a 1995 AFLBS graduate, is the new dean of women at the Bible School. Her home congregation is Faith Lutheran of Brockton, Montana. Michele has two years of college studying elementary education and plans to continue her studies part-time while serving as dean. This is the first time the dean of women will also be continuing an education while serving as dean. In recent years, the dean of men has been a seminarian.



Sylvia Sundby, Outlook, Saskatchewan, brought greetings from the Canadian WMF to the WMF Convention this past June in Thief River Falls, Minnesota.



Craig and Debbie Benson with Dr. Monseth and Pastor Orville Hiepler.



Pastor Orville and Florence Hiepler, Oceanside, California with Mrs. Alice Cox. Mrs. Cox became a friend of the Hieplers through a tour to Israel several years ago.

Why study at the Free Lutheran Seminary?

John 8:31b-32 says, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." After two years of theological studies at the University of Latvia, I had questions that could not be answered. I wanted a deeper relationship with my Savior, Jesus Christ, and to understand God's Word better. When the Lord opened doors to attend the Free Lutheran Seminary we followed Him. Now it is a time in our life when God makes a difference. We hope to study for one more year, than my wife and I believe that the Lord, by His grace, will use us as servants in our homeland back in Latvia. We claim Isaiah 55:12-13 as we look forward to the ministry God has in store for us.

— *Seminarian Raitis Evamois*

Gift given to seminarian

Mrs. Alice Cox of Santa Barbara, California has offered funds to assist a seminarian while in school. Her desire is that her gifts would help a young man train for the ministry and therefore continue bearing fruit for many years. Through the coordination of Dr. Francis Monseth, FLS dean, Craig Benson was chosen. He received her gift of \$10,000 for his second year and now begins his third year in September.

Seminary starts new year on September 3

After several years of classes with lower enrollment, six new seminarians expect to begin studies at the Free Lutheran Seminary on September 3, 1997. The last class with six students graduated in 1992.



Kenyon, Minnesota — Men from the Hauge/Emmanuel Parish helped Pastor Walter Johnson raise the roof at his lake home in Wisconsin. Pastor Johnson has been the interim at the parish this past year.

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Greenbush, Minnesota — Dr Lyle and Corrine Mattson and family, recently received the Nehemiah award, given out by the United Free Lutheran Church of Greenbush, Rev. Dennis Gray, Pastor.

It is given to those who are builders in the congregation. It does not mean that there are no other builders, of course. Its purpose is to recognize a certain individual, couple or family.



Cumberland, Wisconsin — Section Ten Lutheran celebrated the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Lutheran Free Church on June 8, 1997. The congregation was one of the twelve founding churches of the LFC in 1897. Section Ten congregation was organized in 1876 as a member of the Norwegian-Danish Conference. The present church was built in 1893.

Descendants of the early members and other friends with roots in the Lutheran Free Church were invited to attend the historic worship service. Nearly two hundred people joined the worship service which featured the liturgy and customs of the church 100 years ago. The men and women sat on separate sides. A klokkar (cantor) led the liturgy. For the

The entire Mattson family is involved in the promotion of the gospel. The Mattsons have been especially involved in Bible Camp work at Galilee Bible Camp, Lake Bronson, Minnesota.

The first award was given in 1993 to Mrs. Donald (Sharon) Christianson. After the resignation of the Sunday school superintendent, Sharon stepped in and has been doing a great job with the program.

offering the worshippers walked in line and laid their gifts on the altar. Music for the service was provided by grandchildren of the early members. Pastor Jay Eberth, the current pastor, was the speaker.

Following the fellowship dinner, descendants of early members shared memories which had been passed on to them. One item of historical interest was that the congregation's Pastor Lageland and L. L. Gunderson of Section Ten were delegates to the organizational meetings at Minneapolis in June, 1897. Greetings were brought by Pastor John Kjos, a former pastor.

One family added a special touch to the celebration when they arrived for the service in a horse-drawn carriage.



Pastor Jan Home, a recent member of the AFLC Clergy Roster and pastor of Faith Lutheran in Fairbury, Nebraska.

Plymouth, Minnesota — Medicine Lake Lutheran Academy (grades K-9) will begin their new school year on September 2, in a new location. The school is now renting classroom facilities from Olivet Baptist Church. The move brings the school's location closer to academy families and to Medicine Lake Lutheran Church.

Bloomington, Minnesota — Emmaus Lutheran hosted a retirement-birthday party for Pastor Jack Aamot on July 27. He celebrated his retirement from L.E.M. and forty years of ministry along with his 65th birthday.

Bethel Park, Pennsylvania — Ruthfred Lutheran's Senior Choir, Bell Choir, Children's and Crusader's Choirs along with their organist, trumpeters and soloists taped a number of favorite anthems. Copies of the audio tape can be ordered for \$3 from Ruthfred Lutheran, Patterson and South Park Roads, Bethel Park, PA 15102.

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Pastor David Barnhart, Melbourne, Florida, is leading a ten-day tour to Israel, departing May 4, 1998. For more information contact him at 3535 Bull Run Ct., Melbourne, FL 32934; or call (407) 253-9387.

San Diego, California — A new fellowship group held their first service on July 20, 1997, sponsored by Community Lutheran in Oceanside. The new congregation is Rancho San Diego Lutheran Church.

Oceanside, California — Community Bible Church has changed its name to Community Lutheran Church. Even though the teaching and the identification has not changed, the question is asked, "Why do you leave Bible out of your name? Is it changing?" No, the congregation has always been Lutheran and yet people still ask, "What kind of denomination is Lutheran?"

These questions are good as they give an opportunity to explain and declare that historical Lutheranism is synonymous with the Bible. We also declare the infallibility of the Scriptures and frequently these words are used in our explanation of what we believe: "Word Alone, Faith Alone, Grace Alone."

Community Lutheran church isn't only dedicated to establishing the membership in a strong Lutheran faith but to evangelize the lost, strayed and former Lutherans. This church prays and works to fulfill the part of its name "Community" by door-to-door calling, a weekly boys and girls club and special road signs welcoming the 35,000 cars that daily go by the church. The church is seven minutes off of I-5 and forty minutes from San Diego. Pastor Orville Hiepler welcomes your relatives and friends who may be moving to the area. Call (760) 731-0980 for more information or to request a visit.

Kalispell, Montana — Faith and Stillwater Free Lutheran congregations gathered at the Big Sky Bible Camp during August 22-24, for their annual family Bible camp. Pastor David Barnhart, Melbourne, Florida was the guest speaker. His studies in prophecy focused on the theme, "See! Your Savior Comes."

AFLC Memorials – March and June, 1997

Name	Given by	Department
Omer Ross	Valborg Hedman	AFLBS
Beulah Sunde	Bea Anderson	
	Aini Myking	
	Esther Larson	
	Pastor Amos/Ovidie Dyrud	
	Dr. Francis/Ellen Monseth	
Connie Grothe	Gordon/Doris Newell	Home Missions
Emma Krause	Donald/Mildred Krause	AFLTS
Bill Everson	Pastor Phil/Hazelle Featherstone	
Kenneth Priebe		
Clara Gray		
Alvin Sur		
Art Mykanen	David Borg family	Home Missions
Kermit Ferden	Karsten/JoAnn Grundyson	AFLBS
William Mooney	Mr/Mrs. Otto Seidelman	World Missions
Myrtle Hove	Ella Rekedal	AFLTS
	Pastor Les/Jan Galland	World Missions
	Pastor Tim/Evonne Skramstad	AFLBS
Omer Ross	Kenneth/Mary Nash	Home Missions
Alfred Leland	Percy/Judith Strand	AFLBS
	Inga Mae Urke	World Missions
Arnold Swenson	Aini Myking	AFLBS
Olive Jacobson	Ernie/Darlene Meidema	AFLTS
	Bea Anderson	
	Pastor Laurel/Joan Udden	AFLBS
	Pastor Robert/Gloria Lee	
	Friends	
	J. Arden/Jewell Agrimson	
	David Agrimson	
	Pastor Amos/Ovidie Dyrud	AFLTS
Lloyd Gaard	Esther Danielson	AFLBS
Roger Thompson	Roger/Judy Johnson	
	Lois Oscarson	
	Ella Oscarson	
	Tim/Evonne Viland	
Irene Erickson	Gerry/Karen Knudsvig	
Glen Apland	Kenneth/Luella Loomis	World Missions
Margaret Hitterdal	Pastor Laurel/Joan Udden	
	Mabel Johnson	
Lester Mitterling	Kenneth/Mary Nash	Home Missions
Lydia Reinertson	Robert/Ruth Rolf	AFLBS
Rick Alfson	Delbert/LuVern Jones	
	Tim/Mary Jones	
Erling Romsos	Orrin/Lorraine Nyhus	
Edith Arnstad	Edna Skarderud	General Fund
Pastor James Asp	Pastor Tim/Evonne Skramstad	AFLBS
	Curt/Pam Twedt	
Lester Johnson	Pastor Jerry/Rebecca Moan	Schools
Leon Windingland	Vernon/Dorothy Russum	World Missions
Amanda Hinden		
Joyce Freeman	Terry/Patricia Anderson	

NEWS OF INTEREST

San Diego, California — As many as three million teenagers are expected to gather for prayer on at least five continents September 17 for See You at the Pole, a day of student prayer. Junior high, senior high and college students will meet before school at flagpoles of schools, courthouses, churches and other locations to pray for local and national concerns. See You at the Pole began as a student-initiated, student-led movement, and has maintained that distinction for seven years.

Washington, D.C. — “The time has come for America to raise her voice as global religious persecution continues to grow both in frequency and in cruelty. Americans continue to be shocked by the ongoing and increasing intensity of world-wide persecution of Christians,” said Gary Bauer, president of the Family Research Council.

“If you have trouble getting to church on Sunday, just imagine being a Christian in Sudan, where the National Islamic Front is using horrific tactics to put an end to Christianity. Armed by Iran, Iraq and China, the Sudanese government has declared holy war against African Christians who are being kidnapped, starved, tortured, raped, enslaved, crucified and murdered for their faith. Even Muslims who object to these tactics are themselves threatened,” he continued.

“America has an obligation and responsibility to speak out against manifestations of tyranny and oppression — it was our forefathers who fled to this country for freedom of religion, speech and press. These are the values that unite this country and we should defend them. Clearly, the pro-family and Christian commu-

nities need to be full partners in the quest to bring an end to the horror of global religious persecution. It’s time to let oppressed believers around the world know that America is on their side during their struggle against persecution for their faith.”

North Korea — Famine, a plunging economy and floods can work for good — when such disasters cause individuals to turn to God.

The threat of starvation is causing many people of North Korea to sink to their knees — and to switch on their radios. By listening to international Christian broadcasts from Trans World Radio and other ministries, North Koreans are finding food for the soul. Gospel programs are also reaching Koreans living in northeast China, who in turn pass on the Christian message to relatives living in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

“We have a burden to help reach North Korea’s 23 million people for Jesus Christ, and our programs do target them,” acknowledges the Rev. Insoo Jeong, executive director of TWR-Korea. “We believe there are some positive signs that God is opening doors for ministry to North Korea, and we’ll be ready to air evangelistic programs when that day comes. But for now, our primary ministry focuses on the two million Koreans living in northeast China and those additional Koreans living in the far eastern part of Russia.”

The missionary radio organization has been broadcasting programs from the Pacific Island of Guam since 1992. Currently, one hour of programming produced by Koreans in South Korea is aired each morning and expansion is being considered.

Given North Korea’s secretive society, measuring the influence

of missionary radio is difficult. Missiologist Patrick Johnstone’s book *Operation World* declares that there are 130,000 North Korean Christians living in China. Jeong estimates 2,000 churches and house churches exist among Korean Chinese believers, served by as few as 100 trained pastors.

Milwaukee, Wisconsin — A study of 45 cancer patients found that a majority reported that their illness had been a faith-building experience, while only one said it had caused a loss of faith. More than half of the patients studied at the John L. Doyne Hospital in Milwaukee said they had never asked God, “Why me?” Vincent D. Moschella, one of the primary researchers of the study published in the *Journal of Religion and Health*, said that lack of questioning was the most surprising finding of the study. “They just assumed God has a reason for their suffering,” said Moschella. The researchers wrote, “The answer to the questions, ‘Why me, God’ and ‘Why do bad things happen to good people’ appears to lie in the Old Testament proposition that mere mortals cannot understand God’s working and must defer that understanding with pure faith.”

Lansing, Michigan — While Beanie Babies are all the rage, the item that’s flying off the shelves of Christian bookstores across the nation is even simpler — a \$1.50 bracelet with the letters “WWJD.” The letters remind the wearer to ask themselves this question: “What would Jesus do?” The bracelets were created eight years ago by the Michigan-based Lesco Company for a local youth group. They are available in more than 1,500 Christian bookstores.

(The above stories used with permission of the EP News Service.)

One who made a difference

Nobody told me Pastor John Strand was on the board of trustees for the schools when I had my interview for applying to seminary. I wasn't too nervous about answering questions posed by the other members of the board, but Pastor Strand was different.

As I was growing up, he was the president. When he came to an event in our congregation you knew it was special. Our pastor and my family spoke of him highly. And now he was going to ask me questions?! I didn't feel quite ready for this.

During the interview I had been saying I believed it was God's will for me to apply to seminary. Pastor Strand got a somewhat quizzical look on his face and asked me, "You say it was God's will for you to apply to seminary; how do you know it was God's will?" I gulped a little and then shared some Bible verses through which I believed God was speaking to me. Pastor Strand smiled. By the grace of God, certainly not because of any wisdom on my part, I had given a good answer. I was looking to the Word for direction, not my feelings or a person or something manmade.

I soon had the privilege of getting to know Pastor Strand a little bit as a person and not just as the president. I quickly realized he was probably the best friend and supporter I had on the school board. Maybe the only time again I was a little nervous for an interview was the first one without Pastor Strand there. I felt a little on my own.

With the death of Pastor Strand we in the AFLC now feel a little "on our own." It had been some years since he had been in an active leadership position, but it was still good to know his advice and counsel was only a phone call away. I made some calls, and now wish I had made more.

We feel a little bit on our own because Pastor Strand was very much our leader. Leadership is one of those terms that is somewhat tough to define, but when you see it you know. When you were with Pastor Strand, you knew you were with a leader.

At the pioneers' breakfast held during the 1997 Annual Conference, those who attended the organizational conference of the AFLC in 1962 said it became quite clear during that conference who was to be the first president. Praying people recognize the leader who is called by God.

He was a leader called by God and a special gift of God to our church body. He is to be remembered and

also learned from. "Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith" (Hebrews 13:7, NIV).

For myself personally, I will remember Pastor Strand's pleasure that I was looking to the Word to hear the call of God to go to seminary. God speaks through His Word. It is the Word we look to for direction and guidance.

I will remember Pastor Strand reminding me after I began as editor of this magazine that "the Ambassador is the voice of the congregations, not the departments." Pastor Strand's body may have spent a lot of time in the headquarters building, but his heart was in the congregations.

I will also remember Pastor Strand talking about Gary Gaetti, who at that time was playing baseball for the Minnesota Twins and had recently testified to accepting Jesus as Savior and Lord. Pastor Strand was hoping Gaetti's batting average would improve. "It looks kind of bad, the guy becomes a Christian, then right away he can't hit a thing."

From a distance, because of his position, Pastor Strand maybe seemed intimidating to some, but upclose you discovered he was a human being who liked normal things like baseball.

Most are impacted by the world around them. Some impact the world. Pastor Strand was one who made an impact. He made a difference in lives, in congregations and in our church body.

He was more interested in truth that was lasting, than feelings that were temporary. He wanted to see growth that was solid, rather than showy. He was more concerned with being right than being liked. He was willing to be controversial rather than abandon his convictions.

He was a man used by God, with confidence in the Word and courage to take a stand. For the ways God used him we give thanks. From the ways God used him we can learn.

We feel a little on our own for one of our leaders is gone. But we remember that the One he pointed us to, the Leader of Leaders, is with us always (Matthew 28:20) and has promised to never leave us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). So we look back and give thanks and learn, and we go forward, praying for strength and wisdom that we also might be ones who make a difference to the glory of God.

— Pastor Craig Johnson

"Most are impacted by the world around them. Some impact the world"

SOMETHING TO SHARE

Begin with prayer

How can we be most effective in sharing Christ with the lost of our world? There are many excellent outlines for clearly explaining the gospel to a friend. Some have used a key tract effectively, and more recent years have shown the impact of audio-visual means such as the *Jesus* film. However, I'm growing in an awareness of the importance of a few key items that have their place before the gospel is ever shared with another person.

In the analogy of "sowing seed," what softens the soil so that the seed can be planted effectively and fruitfully? Without question the Word of God is the means that ultimately softens the soil, particularly the law which shatters the hardness of a person's heart, makes him or her aware of the desperate need for peace with God, and turns the needy soul to Christ and the gospel of forgiveness.

But today I have in mind one factor that should precede even our declaration of the law — **prayer**. As perfect as He was in all of His speaking, Jesus Himself conducted His ministry on a foundation of regular prayer (Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16; 6:12; 9:28-29).

Likewise, the testimony of the Apostle Paul was that his ministry was rooted in regular, fervent prayer for those to whom He ministered. To the Romans he writes (1:9), "For God is my witness ... that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers."

Prayer is an awesome mystery! According to God's design, when we pray, God is moved to act in response. It is not that we are involved in "divine arm-twisting." He simply waits to see that we carry a burden for the same things that are a concern to Him. When we pray "according to His will" (1 John 5:14), we are simply responding in obedience to the burden that He has laid on our hearts and He moves into action.

So, begin your effective witnessing by praying for those whom God lays on your heart. Let me suggest three means:

1. Make a prayer notebook that reminds you to pray for a number of different people on various days of the week. In our home we are using a three-ring binder, dividing it into the days of the week, and gradually building lists. Monday is for leaders in national government; Tuesday — for leaders in state, county, and

local government; Wednesday — the suffering Church; Thursday — Christian ministries, including the AFLC; Friday — local persons of influence; Saturday — our church, area churches, pastors; Sunday — special needs God lays on our hearts.

2. Make a specific list of the lost that God brings into your life and pray for them on a daily basis.

3. Do "prayer walking." As you get out for regular walking in your neighborhood, turn that time to rich spiritual benefit, too, by praying for your community, the neighborhood around you, and the people living in the specific homes you pass.

As we pray, God will soften our hearts to people's needs as well as work on the hearts of those for whom we pray. Nothing is more exciting and rewarding than to be given an opportunity to share Christ with someone in a setting that we know was prepared by God in answer to our prayers. That is how God intended witnessing to happen.

So let's pray.

— Pastor Rick Long
Atonement Lutheran
Arlington, Washington