

# The Lutheran AMBASSADOR

August 27, 1996

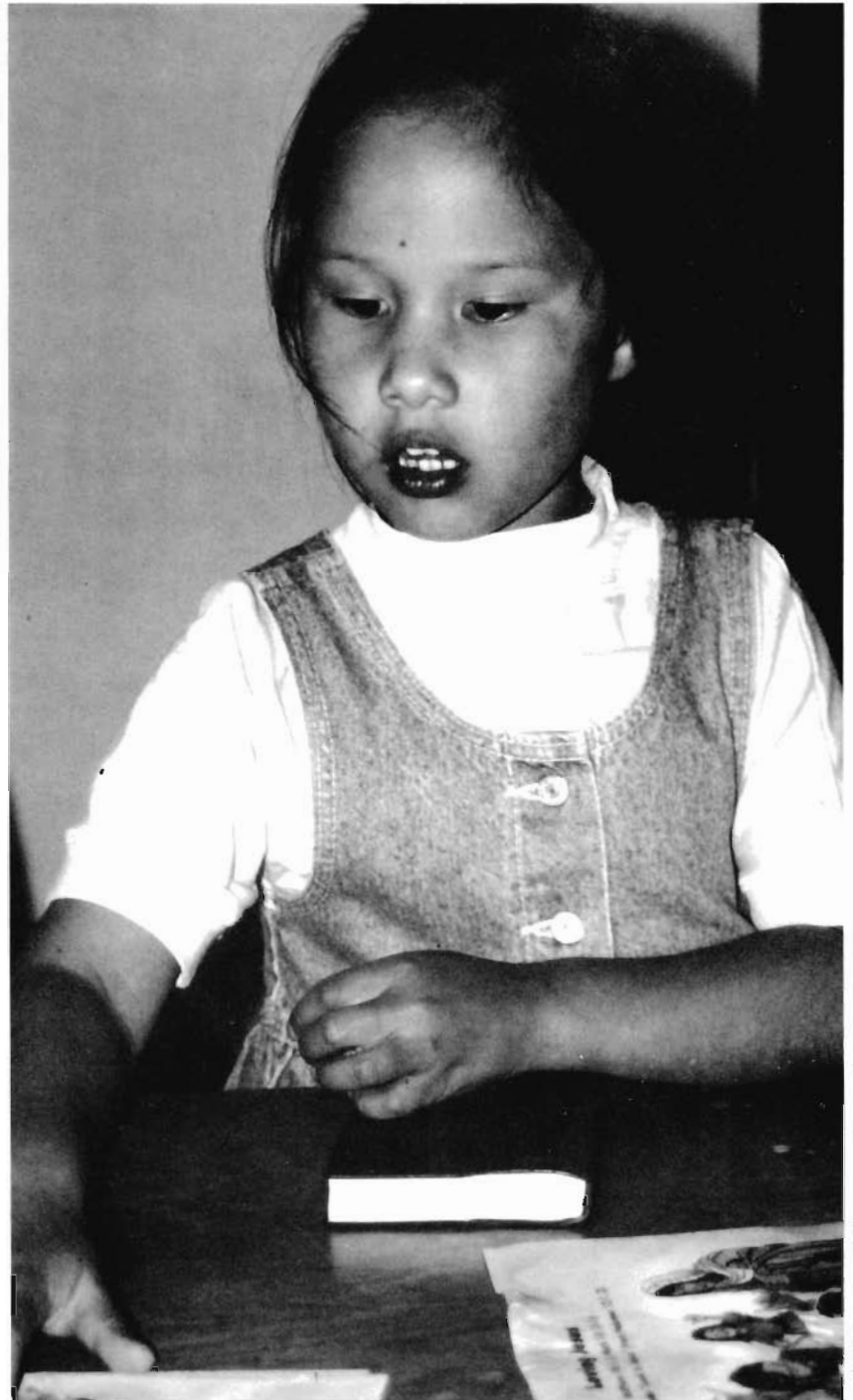
**The**  
*privilege*  
**of**  
**passing**  
**it on**

**Why I teach  
Sunday school**

**Do they really  
need it?**

**Teaching the  
unchurched**

**Bible Camps –  
alive and well**



# THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

August 27, 1996  
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## AN ENCOURAGING WORD

### Joy versus sorrow

*These things have I spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.*  
— John 15:11

**L**ike true peace and love, joy is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). It is the will of God that His people have true joy and that it be complete. Speaking to His disciples, He dwelt on Himself as the true vine and the vital need of Christians to abide in the vine (John 15:1-8).

In the next verses, Jesus compares the Father's love for Him to His own love for us. He then gives the exhortation, "Abide in My love!" Jesus continues, "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love."

This is it! The key to true, lasting, constant joy is abiding and obeying.

To abide means to remain, to live, reside or dwell there in Christ Jesus. "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full (complete)." This is God's will and Christ's desire for His children.

Sadly, too many Christians do not seem to have this joy in their life. For some, they may taste it occasionally, but it is sporadic. Others live in one long, sorrowful experience. Their song is a baneful one as they dwell on one trying circumstance after another. Their disposition and countenance reflect their misery. When God said, "Be sober minded," He did not mean somber.

It is important to understand God's version of joy and not the devil's perversion. The devil would have us seek and embrace joy, or happiness, as the world perceives it. That is a happiness that depends on everything being fun, pleasant and trouble-free.

But it is a mask, a false, superficial appearance of joy or happiness which disintegrates when things go wrong or the going become difficult. The devil loves to catch Christians in this web. Circumstances govern their joy — their very countenance. And why? Could it be they are not abiding in Christ's love and not obeying His commandments?

Consider Paul and Silas bound in a miserable and cold prison. Did they despair? No, rather Acts 16:25 records, "At midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them." What a witness! That is true, constant joy in Christ. Happiness is having Jesus in our hearts and our sins forgiven.

Peter wrote in I Peter 1:8-9: "Whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith — the salvation of your souls." Jesus is the constant and immutable God. When "the joy of the Lord is our strength" (Nehemiah 8:10b), it is unchanging.

The words of a song tell us, "If you want joy, real joy, let Jesus come into your heart." If you have not done so, now is the day.



— Pastor  
Alvin Grothe  
Astoria, Oregon

# SOUND BITES

"We've bumped along in the church so long doing our teaching thing that we've rarely stopped to take stock of our effectiveness. We simply assume that if we're teaching, our flock must be learning. It's a dangerous assumption."

—Thom & Joani Schultz



Since 1972 Sunday school attendance has dropped from 41 million to 26 million. During the same period the general U. S. population grew by 23 percent. The number of churches that even offer Sunday school declined 43 percent during the '80s.

—Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches



"If you have one student involved in Bible study, that is better than nothing. If you have motivated one student to more completely serve and obey God, that is better than nothing. It is the enemy who constantly accuses us of our shortcomings and our shortfalls. God does not call us to multiply our talents tenfold. He only asks that we use the gifts we have to invest in the kingdom."

—Duffy Robbins



"Sunday school teaching is one of the greatest opportunities in the world to serve God. But with that opportunity comes responsibility. Teaching Sunday school is different from most teaching. It involves a supernatural curriculum, the Bible; it involves a supernatural command, the Great Commission; it involves a supernatural unction and endowment, God's call and bestowal of gifts; it involves the supernatural power, the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit."

—Elmer Towns



"Christian education today is entirely too passive. And that's incongruous, because Christianity is the most revolutionary force on the planet. It changes people. Yet frequently we've taken this most revolutionary force on earth and set it in concrete. The average Christian's attitude is well expressed when he sings, 'As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be.' Churches and Christianity often resist the very changes they are meant to bring about."

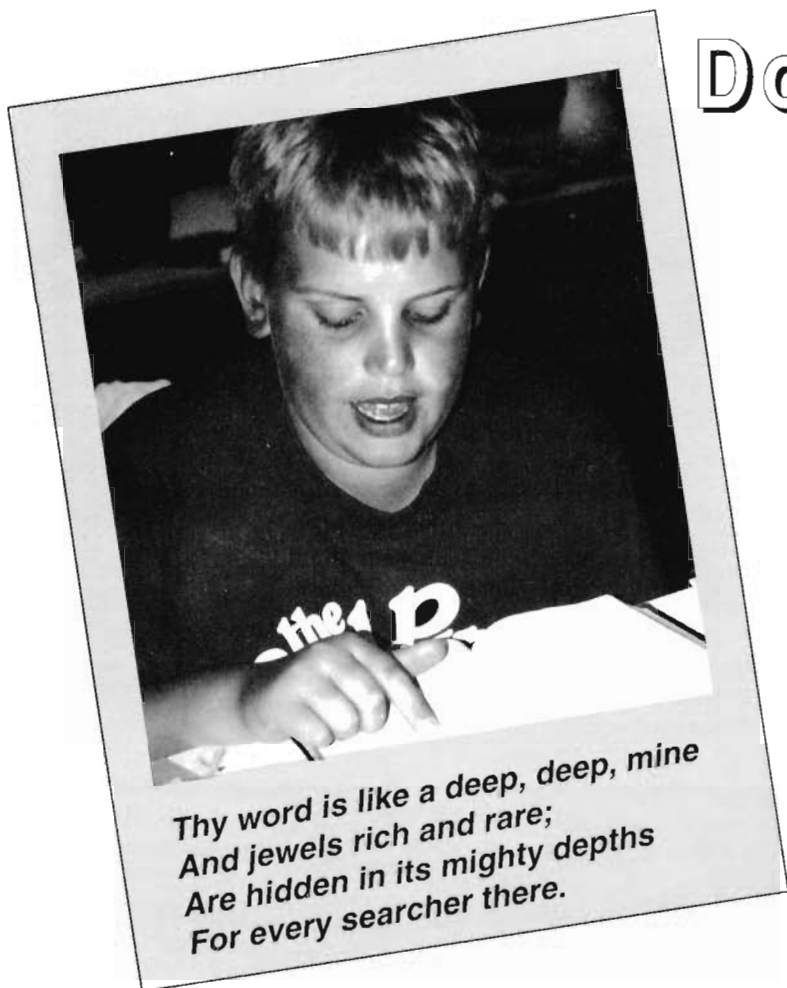
—Howard Hendricks



"The effective teacher always teaches from the overflow of a full life."

—Howard Hendricks





# Do they really

by skilled and dedicated educators and parents, will fulfill this need to help explore more of the deep, deep mine. Sunday school curriculum should provide a solid foundation of the basics of the faith. It should provide preparation for confirmation instruction or give follow-up to confirmation as one moves into adult years.

Sunday school curriculum is usually designed to be age appropriate developmentally. Special effort has been made to identify and respond to general age characteristics and different types of personalities and intelligences. A teacher has prepared to follow through to help connect children to God's Holy Word where God speaks to the child.

Children from Christian homes can surely be blessed by the fellowship and interaction with other children. Sunday school can be a place where a child discovers that others have the same challenges and feelings as he does.

**C**hildren who are blessed to grow up in a Christian home may ask, "Is it really necessary for me to go to Sunday school each week? (At times Christian parents may even wonder if it is a necessary effort.) These children hear Bible stories and learn Christian truths in their homes and other places. Do they really need to go to Sunday school?"

The deep, deep mine of Scripture is there for us to continually explore. We need to be life-long students of God's Word. As a child matures cognitively and spiritually, new insights will come as a text is shared in yet another level of curriculum and by yet another teacher willing to be used by God.

A Sunday school curriculum is likely laid out to provide a healthy, overall exposure to Scripture over the period of the child's growing up years. His exposure at home may not follow a comprehensive coverage. Sunday school curriculum, designed

## Why I

**I** am thankful for the authorities and friends who have encouraged me to apply the Word of God to every area of my life. I am now 18 years old and have been raised in a home where we read the Bible daily. It is also a blessing to fellowship in a church where the Bible is valued as the complete and inerrant Word of God. I began teaching Sunday school two years ago. One of the goals I had was that young people would learn to love the Word.

Last year I taught from the book of Proverbs. As I read passages from it in preparation for the lessons, I found one message throughout: **When we give God and His wisdom first place in our lives He will fulfill our needs in every area.** For example in 2:12, safety from

# need Sunday school?

In addition to encouraging others by one's very presence, children from Christian homes can certainly be a blessing to a Sunday school classroom. If one can come with a spirit to learn and enthusiasm for the cause, he can model that for other students who may not have the support from home. Others can be encouraged to participate and grow when kindness dominates and "put downs" are absent from the social tone of the class. The student is then surely an encouragement to the teacher as well.

Most certainly when children from Christian homes are in tune with Christ in their lives, Sunday school becomes a point of time and place to which one can bring others. Thereby the child learns to be comfortable with one type of missionary work. Prayer is answered as a friend or neighbor comes along to Sunday school to learn from God's Word.

However extensive Christian training in the home and possible school are, the establishment of a routine model for a life

of regular instruction and worship on the Lord's Day is invaluable. Students of God's Word at all ages joyfully gather each Sunday of the year to honor Jesus Christ. The willing discipline gets Christian families on a schedule. They are happier and more secure in the blessings of God and the promises of God's Word.

At the fast pace of our present day culture, varying with where we live, many Christian families are very challenged to find and make time for the Bible study and training at home they would like to see their children have. Schedules squeeze the family altar time from both ends. Sunday school training is scheduled and may provide the most Scripture exposure the child in the Christian family has.

Children growing up in Christian homes where God's Word is taught and revered are indeed blessed. The blessing is greatly increased as they continue the Sunday school dimension of digging in the deep, deep mine of God's Word.

— Mrs. Barb Moland  
Our Redeemer  
Lutheran  
Kirkland,  
Washington



## teach

lure of evil men (peer pressure); in 3:2, long life and peace; and in 3:4, favor and success. I think of the story of Solomon's dream in I Kings 3:5-15, where, because he chose wisdom, God promised Solomon all the other things he could have asked for.

God has given me an interesting age-group of boys to teach — 12 year olds.

When Jewish boys reach the age of 13, they become *bar mitzvah*, that is, Son of the Commandment and now adults responsible to keep the law. This is the age at which our young people are confirmed. It is an age when we must choose who we will serve. Strangely the teenage years are often considered in our society to be years of irresponsibility. Finally, at 19 we become accountable for our actions.

Lamentations 3:27 reads, "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth."

This is my reason for teaching young people — that they might choose to serve the Lord with all their heart. What happens when children are not taught to love the Lord with all their hearts, minds and souls? Judges records the sad story over and over how children of a godly generation fell away. Is it because they were not taught by their fathers to know God?

We as young people have our lives ahead of us. We need to know that if we lose our lives, our plans and our ambitions for Jesus' sake, we will find them again!



— Ben McGunigle  
Living Word Lutheran  
Vernon, British Columbia

*Remember now thy Creator in the days  
of thy youth, while the evil days come not,  
nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt  
say, "I have no pleasure in them."*

— Ecclesiastes 12:1

# Reaching the unchurched

Over the years it has been a wonderful opportunity to teach and help others to teach. I call it, "Being established by the Word." This does not make me an expert, however, some do's and don'ts have been learned.

Teaching is developing the capacity to learn and so in turn, the student might help someone else gain knowledge. What a thrill it is to help a child or an adult find the road to spiritual happiness! Perhaps it will be one of your students who will one day preach the gospel around the world.

As you lead others in becoming established in the Word, you too, increase in the strength and confidence that Jesus provides. Goals are very important for effective teaching. Ask yourself, "Why am I teaching?" I trust it is because you want to reach someone for Christ.

Certainly the power of God's Word is not limited to neat little classrooms, but it is important to check whether or not we appropriately present ourselves if we hope to effectively present the gospel. The truth is that if the church property is

shabby looking, or the classroom dirty and cluttered, or the teacher is careless in appearance and lesson preparation, we will not attract the unchurched.

Studies show that 90% of the first-time visitors are looking for friends and relationships. If the visitor is contacted within 36 hours of the first visit, 85% will return for another visit. If a lay person makes the contact rather than the pastor, they are twice as likely to return. If a visitor finds six or more friends in the first 6 months, 98% will remain in the church. If less than three friends are made, expect that 90% will be gone. Sunday school teachers have a special opportunity to make those contacts with their visiting students.

Attracting people and keeping them is vital. Following are a few hints in teaching the newcomer and the new Christian.

- A mixture of people is important. Have one or two established Christians who can speak but not control the lesson.

- Keep the words simple. Avoid big words like *justification* or *absolution*. You

## Reflections of the Norway Choir tour



The choir outside Stavanger.

Thank you for your prayers while we were in Norway. Many of you had our itinerary and prayed for us each day. We could sense you were supporting us in prayer as we traveled. The Lord graciously answered prayers for our protection, health and in giving us many opportunities for ministry.

The concerts were well attended. In Gilja we were told that the whole valley showed up! Each concert included two student testimonies that were translated into Norwegian by our own Norwegian choir members. One testimony pertained to salvation and a personal relationship with the Lord. The other was an opportunity to share spiritual insights learned recently while at Bible school. Dr. Francis Monseth

# through Sunday school

and I know what they mean but for the new Christian or the unsaved, it will scare them. Some need milk and some are ready for steak.

■ Do all you can to assist the student to find a comfort zone as soon as possible.

■ Avoid homework.

■ Keep a good attitude. Don't be discouraged with the lack of spiritual maturity. Not everyone has the privilege of being reared in a Christian home.

■ A goal is to assist them in establishing a solid foundation spiritually.

■ Ask questions. The variety and level of questions will vary according to the age group you are teaching. Encourage discussion without going off on tangents.

■ Speak in a conversational tone and use your natural vocabulary. Silence can be good. Ask questions one at a time. Use open-ended questions by using the words, "What, why, where, or how?" If you start with "can, do, or should," those words create a closed-ended question.

■ For the non-Christians, don't try to reform them. They must first understand the gospel and have a personal relationship with Christ.

■ Keep the group small — six to eight people.

With Jesus Christ as your teacher, you can do it. You do not have to be a theologian to lead a Bible study. Just be the best Christian, moderator, and guide you can be.

Blessings on you as you have the best year ever.



*The author and his wife, Verna, have been married 42 years. They have four children and 14 grandchildren. They have been in the ministry for 38 years, serving congregations in South Dakota and Minnesota. For five years Pastor Hind traveled as a general evangelist for the Free Methodist Church. For the past eight years, he has been a member of the pastoral staff at Christ the King Lutheran. He was placed on the AFLC Clergy Roster this past June.*

— Pastor  
Everett Hind  
Christ the King  
Lutheran  
Pipestone,  
Minnesota

shared a message from the Word in Norwegian at each concert.

Everywhere we traveled, even in our times of sightseeing, people asked us where we were from and what we were doing in Norway. This gave us wonderful opportunities to share about Jesus and the two years of intensive Bible study at AFLBS.

We had seventeen concerts in 21 days. We sang outside an amusement park and visited with people afterwards, inviting them to the concert. We sang in a restaurant (they did give us a free meal) and outside over the mountain tops at the beautiful Pulpit Rock (Prekostolen).

Every morning on the bus, Dr. Monseth led us in devotions — in English. This helped keep us focused on our own spiritual condition and reminded us of our mission. This was a

great witness to our bus driver.

Several Norwegian students are considering attending Bible school in the near future. I believe we will have more Norwegian students at AFLBS in the future because of these contacts. Pray for that! It is less expensive for Norwegian students to attend AFLBS in the U.S. than it is to attend a Bible school in Norway.

The day of our departure was sad. We left our bus driver standing with tears in his eyes waving to us. We were especially sad to leave our own Norwegian students, Elisabeth Gilje and Solveig Buer. They helped us before and during the tour in countless ways to make this trip a blessing. I pray that this was a good culmination to their two years at AFLBS. We were enriched by their presence.

Our time in Norway went beyond

being a sightseeing trip. The students took this on as a missionary effort and the Lord was glorified. I was proud of our students and their strong testimony for Jesus. Many of our host families hated to see our students leave and gathered around the bus to give parting hugs. I boast in the Lord because of what He has done in their lives.

Continue to pray for Norway that those who love the Lord will continue to grow in Him and that the State Church will come alive. We found many who love Jesus and their prayer houses are growing. Sadly the State Churches are rather empty with few worshippers in attendance on Sunday mornings. Pray for revival in Norway!



— Jerry Nelson  
AFLBS Choir Director





# Your car,

Which would  
you choose for  
your Sunday school  
class this year –  
the kitchen,  
the furnace room,  
or maybe your car?

— Mrs. Marian Christopherson  
New Hope, Minnesota



Many of you know what it is to have makeshift rooms or dingy basement corners for classrooms. Don't allow false perceptions of what is necessary for effective teaching to stifle the possibilities. My mother recently told me she remembers in the 1940s, the Sunday school classes from her church would meet in their teachers' cars because they didn't have separate classrooms. The Holy Spirit was able to teach just as well in the cars as in any classroom. He is not limited by location or space or size. But He uses human vessels to accomplish eternal purposes through you, the teacher.

Because your class has to squeeze into the kitchen is no excuse for not creating a conducive learning environment. Your need necessitates creativity. Abundance often promotes laziness and slothfulness.

"But, I'm not creative," you say! You are creative because God is creative and He created you in His image. Being creative is working hard, using your God-given intelligence in concentrated study with patience and a sense of humor, and lots of rumination. Appreciate what you have and make the most of it. After all, only the best, the finest we have to offer, is appropriate to glorify the Lord (cf. Colossians 3:23-24).

While you teach, your environment is also teaching. It will hinder or enhance your lessons. Perhaps a lighter room with a fresh coat of paint or brighter light bulbs will inspire. Create your own banners or pictures. If this isn't your talent, ask someone else in the church who you know is artistic, or make it a class project and give the students ownership in their class area. The illustrated catechism posters available through the AFLC Parish Education department are beautiful works of art and valuable teaching

**While you teach,  
your environment  
is also teaching.**



# your classroom?

tools for any age, including adults! It's a worthwhile investment for years to come.

People learn by a combination of impression and expression. Impression involves the senses of sights, sounds, smells, feels, or tastes. It is what the learner takes in. He then responds through expression — he thinks, speaks, or acts.

A practical example of impression could be a bulletin board presenting a story, principle, or call to action. Make your own chalkboard out of masonite covered with chalkboard paint (buy a 4 x 8 sheet and cut 32 one-foot squares for personal student chalkboards). Build a diorama — a scene made in an open box. Use flannelgraph, maps and globes, familiar objects, pictures, puppets, books and tape recorders. Many of these tools are inexpensive and can be homemade or done as a class project.

Help your students use their Bibles by using yours! The teacher with Bible in hand demonstrates its significance — the pupils will learn to recognize, to respect, to believe, and to obey God's Word. Teach them how to use and study their own Bibles.

The goal of Christian teaching is maturity in Christ (II Timothy 3:17; Ephesians 4:13; Colossians 1:28). Expression encourages a student to convey in his own thought and words the meaning of the lesson, urging him to apply the truth to his own personal life. Written assignments, discussion, drama, conversation, finger-plays, crafts and artwork, music, projects, and questions all invite expression.

Jesus the Master Teacher, included both impression and expression. He utilized objects, involved His students in them and verbally created pictures for their imaginations. He adapted ideas from His surroundings. His teaching was simplistic and taught from the known to

enlighten the unknown. He challenged application through life change. True learning never ends with the head; it proceeds into the heart and hands as well.

Methods and materials can greatly enhance learning but they must never be used as substitutes for effort or preparation. Behind the learning environment and materials must be the teacher's vital, growing faith, nourished and disciplined in study and in prayer. Like old Mother Hubbard whose cupboard was bare, if the soul is empty there is nothing to share. When the Word of God is living and active in the heart of the teacher, he imparts a living Word to the hearts of his students.

The teacher's prayerful and thoughtful preparation is as vital for one student as for ten. Thank the Lord for that precious eternal soul that has been entrusted to you to nurture. The smaller the class the greater the opportunity to build deeper, personal relationships with each student. Embrace every chance to demonstrate Christ's love to them, small as it may seem. And yes, even if your classroom is in your car.

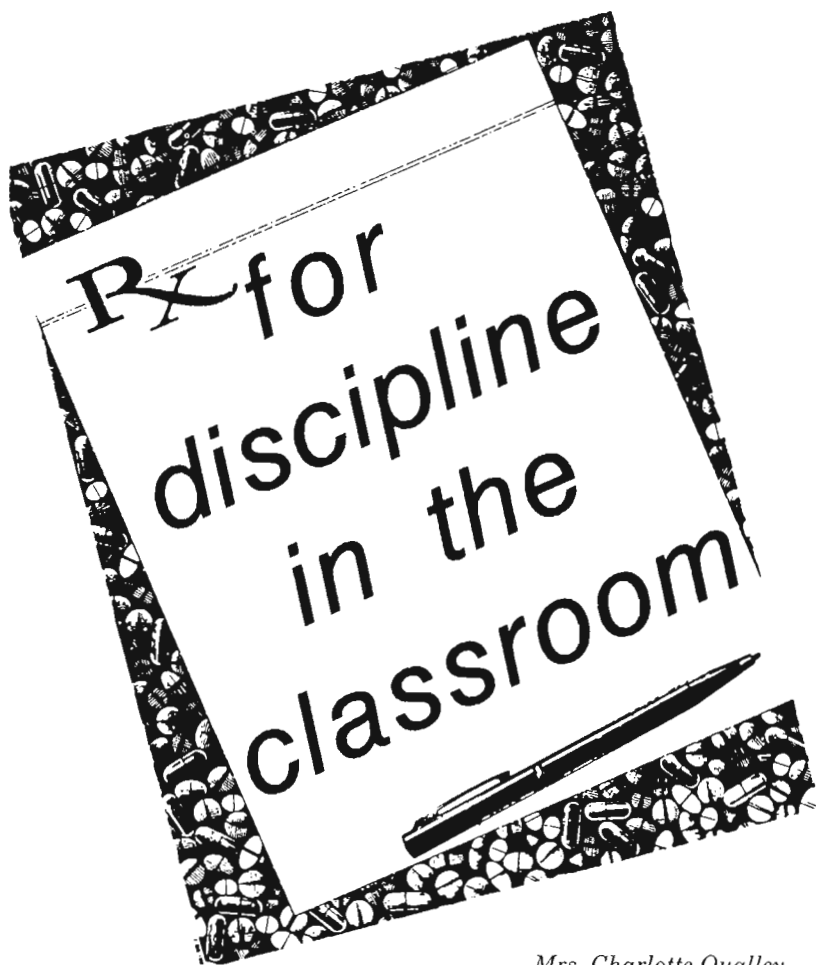
My deepest desire as a teacher is that each of my students know Jesus as their personal Savior, and are continuing to mature in their faith. Thorough preparation and attentive presentation are invaluable because we are handling eternal truth, and eternal souls are at stake. It is a tremendous responsibility to be a teacher, but also a blessed privilege to be a spiritual parent. "I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth" (III John 4).



*The author is an instructor at AFLBS where she has taught piano and has been the Choral Club director for seven years. For the last two years, she has taught the Christian Education classes.*

**Hope for  
the small  
church**

***It will hinder or enhance your lessons.***



— Mrs. Charlotte Qualley,  
member of the AFLC Board of  
Parish Education and Publications  
Brockton, Montana

**Discipline establishes a fence around those we love. It narrows the area of exposure to dangers that can lead us away from the love of God.**

**T**he word discipline in Scripture is defined as: to chastise with blows or with words, to instruct, bind, teach, correct, warn or restrain.

God established discipline when He gave Adam instructions in the Garden. Scripture encourages discipline. Proverbs 22:6 says, "Train up a child in the way he should go." That means to narrow the road that a child should go, set boundaries and restraints in his/her life.

Hebrews 12 speaks of the Lord's discipline for His children. When I read, "For whom the Lord loves He disciplines, ... God deals with you as with sons," I receive a sense of security and comfort that as a child of God I'm given loving discipline. I like verse ten where it says, "He disciplines us for our good that we may share in His holiness." God's discipline (law) shows us our sin and need for a Savior. To share in His holiness is God's grace as we accept Christ's forgiveness and Christ's holiness is imparted to us.

I read further and I discover that "discipline yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness." Now that's a thought — *peaceful fruit*. The undisciplined child is the restless one. Discipline brings the benefit of peace. Godly discipline brings the peaceful fruit of Christ's righteousness.

### **Priorities of discipline**

1. To train and teach the Word of God
2. To bind — hold together with the idea of not being able to get away
3. To restrain from harm
4. To correct when in error
5. To warn when in danger
6. To punish when in disobedience.

### **Guidelines in discipline**

1. Use love always — search our hearts, is there a love and concern for souls?
2. Provide a disciplined environment
  - an orderly classroom
  - an orderly presentation, which requires preparation.

3. Establish limits (rules) for the class  
— keep in mind the age and physical abilities of the students  
— inform students at the beginning of class rules  
— remember the purpose is that the end result may be the salvation of the soul: the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

4. Know each student. Learn to watch for talents and abilities that are given by God and direct in that path (Proverbs 22:6).

5. Be consistent and it'll build respect and security. Expect a child who is not accustomed to discipline to reject, push, pull and shove any restraint you establish.

6. Be in prayer! Remember, it is God who changes the heart.

Discipline establishes a fence around those we love. It narrows the area of exposure to dangers that can lead us away from the love of God. No matter what age we are, we need limits even in our freedom in the Lord. It takes discipline to spend time in Scripture and prayer and in preparing lessons for Sunday school.

Learning discipline is learning to yield to someone in authority. An undisciplined life will find it difficult to surrender to the will of God. "The Lord is my rock (crag or narrow place) and my fortress" (Psalm 18:2). I need a narrow place of safety and security in my life. How about you?

As Sunday school teachers, we accept responsibility and burden for the souls of God's precious children. He said "do not hinder them from coming to me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." Scripture teaches that discipline is not a hindrance, but a necessary part of the training and instruction that brings us to God and keeps us following Him. Hebrews 12:12-13 is our challenge: "Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may ... be healed." May we be faithful in what has been laid in our hands and ask God for strength and direction to do it.



## The teacher

*Lord, who am I to teach the Way  
To little children day by day  
So prone myself to go astray?*

*I teach them knowledge, but I know  
How faint the flicker and how low  
The candles of my knowledge glow.*

*I teach them power to will and do,  
But only now to learn anew  
My own great weakness through  
and through.*

*I teach them love for all mankind  
And all God's creatures, but I find  
My love comes lagging far behind.*

*Lord, if their guide I still must be,  
Oh, let the little children see  
The teacher leaning hard on Thee.*

— Leslie Pinckney Hill

## WOMEN

### WMF In Memoriams

Mayme Jameson, Earlville, IL  
 Norman Holter, Estelline, SD  
 Esther Brekkus, Antelope, MT  
 Louise Starks, Morris, IL  
 Francis Brown, Roseau, MN  
 Anna Gulbraa, Wallace, SD  
 Eleanor Lee, Escanaba, MI  
 Olga Larson, Thief River Falls, MN  
 Harriet Westli, Thief River Falls, MN  
 Minnie Tollefson, Thief River Falls, MN  
 Elvina Sunsdahl, Thief River Falls, MN  
 Delores Grothe, Thief River Falls, MN  
 Evelyn Oseby, Bruce, SD  
 June School, Arlington, SD  
 Marion Mathison, McVillie, ND  
 Evelyn Quanbeck, McVillie, ND  
 Kermit Wolla, Tioga, ND  
 Jay Harney, Tioga, ND  
 Ed Odegard, Tioga, ND

### WMF mission for September Church Extension

Through this fund money is loaned to new congregations and to those who need to expand their facilities. As the loans are repaid, the money is made available to be loaned to another congregation.

## God gives me joy

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*

— Galatians 5:22-23

One of the Psalms that I memorized as a child is Psalm 100. It has always remained a favorite with me. It speaks of joy, happiness, and thanksgiving. Verse one has been special, "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands." Joy, one of the fruits of the Spirit, is to shine forth in my life as a praise to God and who He is.

Joy as defined in the Webster dictionary is: 1. the emotion excited by the acquisition or expectation of good; gladness; delight. 2. state of happiness; bliss.

Life has not always offered me pleasantness, perfect health and fulfillment of wishes. There have been struggles, pain and good-byes. But one thing I do have is the Lord in my life, and because of that relationship I can and do have joy in living! I can have joy in my heart that bursts out into living in a joyful manner.

I have a plaque on my bedroom wall that has my name inscribed on it,

along with the meaning of my name and an accompanying Bible verse, it says, "Carol — Song of Joy — John 5:11, 'These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.'"

I like that on my wall as a reminder of who I am. It's a way in which I can witness to others. People may look at me and could expect to see bitterness at having muscular dystrophy, but with a smile and an encouraging word, I can show them otherwise. My life has meaning. Through the Lord's mercy, I can have happiness and joy to share with others. There is joyfulness that is derived from the Lord and lifts me beyond my circumstances.

I work part-time at a nursing home and as I walk the hallway to the office where I work, I routinely greet residents along the way. At times I stop and have a word with them, squeeze their hand and let them know I care. Many of them need an encouraging smile and greeting. I like to think that my joyful spirit will bring some sunshine in their lives. In this way, along with the Sundays when our family has Sunday service at that home, I can share Christ with these elderly and often lonely people.

Be assured, I do not always show joyfulness in my life. But God is faithful, forgiving, and does restore joy to me. God has given me family and friends who surround me with love and are so willing to extend a helping hand. "For the Lord is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting, and His faithfulness to all generations" (Psalm 110:5).



— Carol Knapp  
 Maranatha Lutheran  
 Willmar, Minnesota



Mrs. Becky Abel has help from two of her children, Andrew and Christina, in leading a chorus. The Paul Abel family is working on deputation during their furlough year. They just returned from a trip into Mexico with a Partners in Mission tour.

## New year begins, new dean to be installed

AFLTS concluded its annual Summer Institute of Theology classes on August 2. Thirty students were enrolled during the two weeks of courses. On September 4, 1996, the seminary begins its new year with four new seminarians scheduled to join the student body.

New AFLBS dean, Pastor James L. Johnson will welcome the Bible

school students to the campus on September 8, at the opening service scheduled for 4 p.m. That service will also be his Installation Service as the new dean. Registration for the Fall Quarter is September 9. Applications are still being processed and the enrollment is expected to continue at about 100 students.

## You can help us at the AFLC schools

Ten percent of your long distance phone bill can go to the Bible school if you desire. The carrier is Lifeline and you may request a form from the school's secretary. Call Wanda at (612) 544-9501.

The campus is in need of a 3/4 ton 4x4 pickup with a snowplow. If you have one you would like to sell or donate to the schools, contact Pastor Lyndon Korhonen at (612) 286-2861.

In response to Resolution #8 under "Schools" at the annual conference, the Board of Trustees and the deans have prepared a prioritized list of requirements not financed to keep our schools functioning.

1. Funds for a full-time faculty.

2. A new van — currently our two vans have over 160,000 and 200,000 miles.

3. Promotional expenses.
4. Maintenance staff position.
5. New books for the library.
6. Snow removal equipment.
7. General repair and maintenance.
8. Computer for yearbook staff.
9. New or good used large lawn-mower.
10. New equipment.
11. Athletic expenses.

## AFLTS receives Lutheran Brotherhood funds

During the second quarter of 1996, AFLTS received \$4,219 from 45 matched gifts through Lutheran Brotherhood's Member Matching Gift program. Their IMPACT Plus program matches members' gifts of \$25 to \$100 per year to Lutheran schools nation-

## CAMPUS

## New AFLBS brochure available

A beautiful four-color brochure on the Association Free Lutheran Bible School is yours for the asking. Money for the project came from a \$3500 grant from Aid Association for Lutherans. To receive your individual or church copy(s), please write to: AFLBS, 3120 East Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441 or call (612) 544-9501.

**Wanda Jacobson**, Minneapolis, Minnesota, has accepted the position as secretary to the new dean of AFLBS, Pastor James L. Johnson. Wanda was the secretary for the former dean, Pastor Don Greven for several years. She continues to serve in the schools' offices along with Vrenda Bengston, librarian and secretary to Dr. Francis Monseth, AFLTS dean. Vrenda has announced her resignation effective in December, 1996, when she plans to be married to Mr. Arlin Holm, a Perley, Minnesota area farmer.

wide. Since beginning this program in 1987, \$105,625 has been received by AFLTS.



AFLBS Majesty I — Wade Mobley, Sarah Olson, Tara Cherney, Heidi Quam, and Tim Jore.



AFLBS Majesty II — Deb Kirk, Michelle Deubner, Lynae Strand, Nathan Stover, and Tom Lumpio. The two Majesty teams along with the two BARNABAS teams and the Ambassadors have concluded their summer of singing and serving around the nation.



## Record attendance at AFLC youth leadership conference

A record attendance of 130 youth plus about 30 staff and counselors packed the Bible school dorms and cafeteria during the week of July 15-19. The evening speaker was Pastor Jim Ritter of Emmaus Lutheran in

Bloomington, Minnesota. His messages were on the theme, "Whatever It Takes." The mornings were spent in workshops and going out on outreach teams to canvas for local AFLC congregations or to the Marie Sandvik in



Brenda Salvevold, Fergus Falls, Minnesota.

### On sharing your faith without an argument

The guy said to me, "But there are a lot of mistakes in the Bible."

I said, "Show me one."

He said, "Well, I don't know where they are."

I said, "Neither do I. Let's continue."

— Nathan Korhonen, 13  
*on sharing your faith without  
an argument*  
FLY Leadership School, 1996



Afternoon recreation included a trip to the Minnesota Twins game where they pulled past the Chicago White Sox, 4-3, in the bottom of the ninth inning. Pictured is AFLC Youth Director, Kevin Olson giving tickets to Mark Haugen and Nathan Korhonen, both of Cokato, Minnesota.





Youth were challenged throughout the week to practice leadership. Pictured are some of the youth preparing to lead the evening worship service.

**Next FLY convention, August 4-9, 1997 in Estes Park, Colorado**

Center, an inner city mission.

Phil Chapman and the Helmer, Illinois, group described the week in these words: "The Holy Spirit was truly moving throughout the week. All in all, we felt this conference was godly, exciting, emotional, fun, nearly tearful, wonderful, and spiritual."

Participants in the conference were asked: "What has been the greatest help and encouragement to you spiritually?" Following are a few responses:

"The workshops, no question."

— Sarah Dyrud

"The examples of the leaders and counselors."

— Jeremy Fugleberg

"To be able to witness for Christ."

— Christian Kjelland

"All of the other Christians that were here who loved God so much."

— Wilder Morey

"The testimonies and the biblical foundation that everything was based on."

— Hannah Moland

"Being challenged to put God

above any possessions and needs that I want."

— Dulcie Winkelmann

"Being reminded that even Jesus was tempted and He didn't fall. With His help we can resist temptation as well."

— April Green

"Praying with my youth group."

— Laura Munro

"The night devotions."

— Brandon Niles



Pastor Jim Ritter

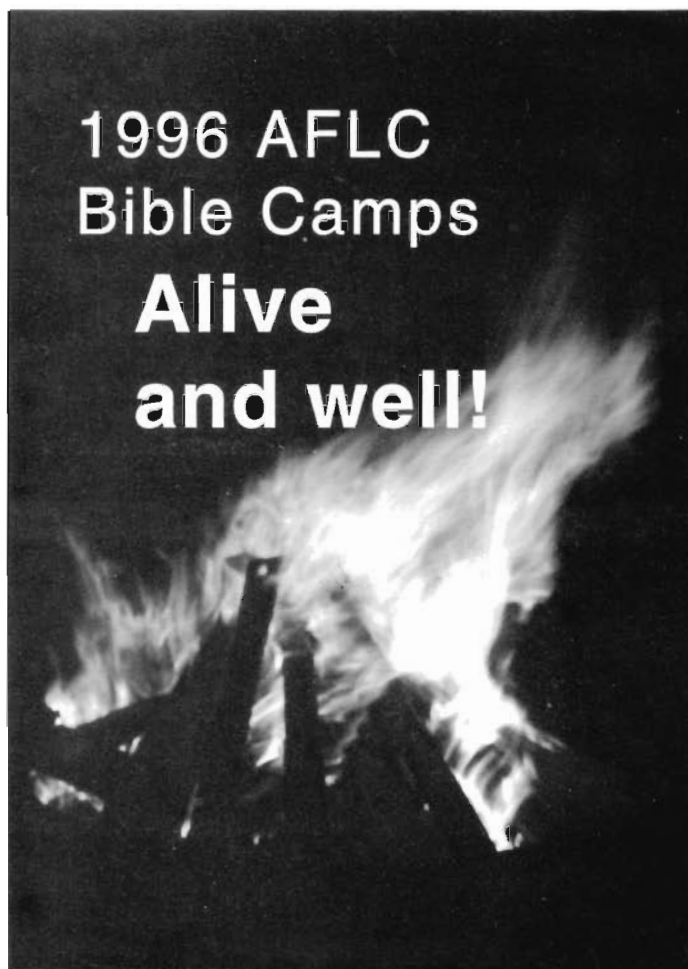


Becky Peterson, Fairbury, Nebraska



Bible camp ministries in the AFLC are thriving. Ask Pastor Kevin Olson, Youth Director, and he'll tell you that nearly everywhere he went it seemed the camps were overflowing and breaking records! He should know. He visited as many camps as possible, often two camps a week. He even called in a report for this article from somewhere in Missouri, after leaving Anadarko, Oklahoma, on his way to Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, to join the Illinois District.

— Pastor Kevin Olson and Solveig Hjermstad

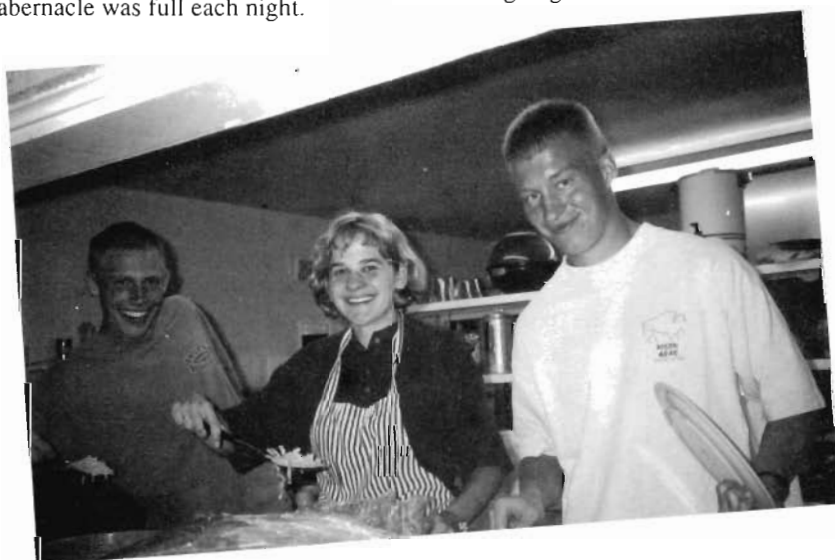


The ARC Family Camp broke records with 430 registered campers. Director Eric Westlake said, "I'm thrilled with the turnout and the spiritual life was very evident. We have a nice mix of a lot of new families (about 30) along with the ones who have been here before." AFLC President Robert Lee was the morning Bible study leader and AFLTS Dean, Dr. Francis Monseth was the evening evangelistic speaker. With area people coming for the evening services, the Tabernacle was full each night.

Nicole left Galilee Bible Camp in Lake Bronson, Minnesota, wanting "to be more bold about my faith in my daily life." And then there was Josh who honestly warned his counselor, "We are going to sneak out; you know we are going to sneak out."

Pastor Tom Gilman, Canton, South Dakota, and Pastor Ken Thoreson, Janesville, Wisconsin, were the speakers at South Dakota's Pickerel Lake Camp. About 130 campers filled the newly expanded facilities. One evening Bill prayed with a counselor: "Jesus, I'm sorry for all the ways I have let You down. I want you to come into my life. I want to turn the keys of my life over to you."

"The BARNABAS teams just seem to be getting better. They are better trained and they know just what to do. In fact, all the teams that come out of our Bible school are a tremendous witness for the Lord and for AFLBS."— A '76 AFLBS graduate grateful that a team spent a week at their district camp.

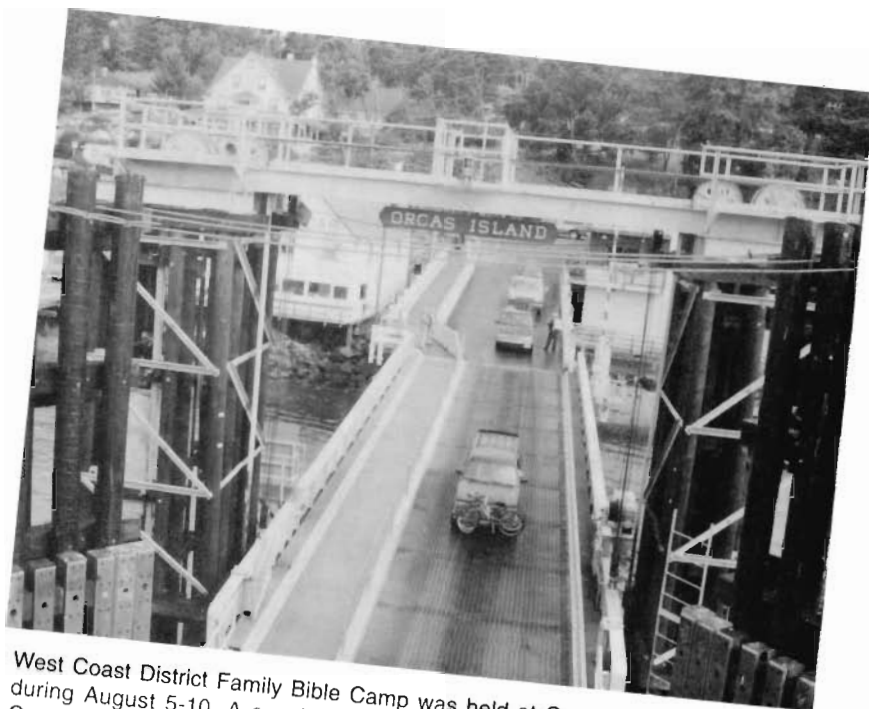


When the Illinois District gathers for their week at Lake Geneva, it's like one big happy family with lots of teenagers. Monica Anderson of West Lisbon Lutheran said, "It's a time for youth of our communities to gather for support and grow in our commitment to Jesus Christ."

Ron Johnson was around when the Lake Geneva camp tradition began. He said, "One of my biggest joys is to see the generation torch being passed on as I watch children and grandchildren grow in the Lord. We like to think of this as a place where we can get away from the stress of daily life ... It really is a little bit of a taste of heaven."

Camp Cherith near Williston, North Dakota, was bigger than ever before with 120 campers from western North Dakota and eastern Montana. Karen Pederson, Tioga, reported that "each congregation takes turns cooking for the day and we almost ran out of food." Missionary Paul Abel was the guest speaker. Many responded to the last evening's challenge to slay the spiritual giants that keep us from following the Lord.

Bill Sheldon's horses and boat rides are the recreational delight at the camp. One teen commented, "Camp gets you back on track spiritually." Another said, "I think it's fun having the variety that family camp offers with different age groups interacting."



West Coast District Family Bible Camp was held at Orcas Island, Washington, during August 5-10. A special recreational highlight featured Pastor Michael Crowell providing airplane rides over the beautiful San Juan Islands. Pictured is the ferry that travels from Anacortes, Washington, to the islands.

Eastern North Dakota's camp moved this summer to Bethany Bible Camp in Bemidji, Minnesota. No one will forget Kristen Antal's solo or the ride on the inner tube behind Ken Anderson's speed boat. During a testimony time, Nathan Stover shared, "I had cancer when I was younger. That experience brought our whole family closer to the Lord. We were forced to depend on His Word, and I think the whole experience was worth it."

The strength of the Christian faith is not our commitment to Christ, but His commitment to us.

— Pastor Dale Mellgren  
Eastern ND Bible Camp, 1996



Pastor Mark Olson, Arlington, South Dakota, gathered the campers for daily announcements at Pickerel Lake Bible Camp.

The largest ever group gathered at the Oakridge Camp in Anadarko, Oklahoma, for the South Central District Family Camp. Missionary Dan Giles was the featured speaker. His children, Ingrid and Dan Jr. shared how the discipline they are learning in tae kwon do (they are working for a blackbelt) is just like the discipline required in the Christian life to face the spiritual battles.

Pastor Randy Nelson, El Campo, Texas, remarked, "This is the one time that we get together as a district and it's important for maintaining fellowship as a district."

# My experience at a Russian English camp

It had been a normal class day for seniors at AFLBS. Pastor Kevin Olson came into our classroom to tell us about two mission trips that were being planned for the summer. One was to Russia to teach at an English language camp. My attention had been caught.

For some time I had been thinking of going on a short-term mission trip. I gathered some information. Then things began to fall into place. While I was on Choral Club tour, Pastor Don Richman of East European Missions Network, called my parents and told them of cheaper airline tickets. Others would be going. Three days after AFLBS graduation, I was on the plane to Amsterdam, Helsinki and finally to St. Petersburg, Russia.

Pastor Don and Mavis Richman were waiting for us. We left that evening for an overnight train ride to Petrozavodsk, a city of 300,000 near Finland in northern Russia.

There I had my first Russian meal of meatballs, noodles with a vegetable salad over them, pancakes and the ever present tea. I stayed for the next two weeks with the Kivelya family. Valto, the father, worked at a factory. Valentina was "my mother" and a teacher at the school where our language camp was held. Ksenya, 18, was the only one in the family who spoke English. We became fast friends and spent much

time discussing the differences between our two countries. They also had a son, Ville, 16. I learned what it was like to live as a Russian with this family. I even got to experience the government shutting off the hot water for the summer.

Our first week was spent preparing for the language camp and visiting area villages. I went to two Finnish-Russian churches and one village that had only heard the gospel once before. These people were hungry for the Word of God. It was interesting to hear their testimonies through an interpreter. Many of the older generation told of their deportation to Siberia. I was amazed to hear how God changed hearts of these people so that they could love those who had wronged them. Many had overcome much hatred and yet, there are those still struggling.

Our camp was called The Friendship Language Camp. It was run much like a Vacation Bible School but had an emphasis on English pronunciation. The Richmans, Jon Bylkas, the Bogott and May families and I were the American staff and Tanya, the only Russian citizen, completed the camp staff. There is a great interest to learn the English language and to learn about God. He blessed the camp even though each of us felt very inadequate much of the time.

The Russian culture is laid back and easy going. We had planned for fifty children but 75 showed up to register and some had to be turned away. The children were 5th to 10th graders with about two years of English already. They could listen to our stories and ask questions about the Bible. It was wonderful to see their interest.

Russian teachers at the school noticed a change in the young people as the week progressed. They became talkative and wanted our autographs and asked us to share personal Bible verses just for them. They even started giving hugs to their teachers which is not common in their culture.

I now see the Russian people as my brothers and sisters, for God has called us all to be His children. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). God found it easy to change my mind and my heart through this wonderful experience.

There is the possibility of another language camp in Petrozavodsk next year. Though many obstacles will have to be overcome, God is in control as He was for the first Friendship Language Camp. Keep Russia in your prayers!



— Tana Blestrud  
Tioga, North Dakota



The author with her host family. Pictured L. to R.: Ksenya, Tana, Valentina and Valto.



Tana with her sixth grade students.



**Arlington, Washington** — Atonement Free Lutheran had a groundbreaking ceremony for a church addition on June 23, the closing day of the 1996 Annual Conference. The groundbreaking for Atonement's first unit took place on the closing day of the 1986 Annual Conference. The addition will provide Sunday School classrooms and expanded worship space. Special out-of-town guests included: Pastor and Mrs. Robert Lee, Pastor Brian Davidson, Pastor and Mrs. Richard Gilmore, Pastor Allen Monson, Pastor Paul Nash, and Pastor and Mrs. Orville Hiepler. President Lee was the first to take a shovel of dirt and represented the AFLC. Mr. Bud Haugen brought greetings on behalf of the West Coast District. Pictured are Mr. Jim Stauffer, chairman of the congregation, and Richard Long, pastor of the congregation since 1992.

## Letters to the editor

**A**t our recent annual conference we voted to call a full-time evangelist. First, let us pray that a man of God's own choice be called to this very important position.

Also, a number of us pledged to the Lord to support this man financially. It was an uplifting time to make the vote and to hear the support.

Now may I prayerfully urge us all to start giving right away. I encourage others to start giving regularly toward his support and to pray for his calling and ministry.

*Pastor Dennis Gray  
Greenbush, Minnesota*

**I** have enjoyed the blessing of being a part of several AFLC Bible camps. I had never considered attending the Wilderness Bible Camp until this year when I was asked to lead the Bible studies. I am so thankful that I went. The camp is an undiscovered jewel for many AFLC people. There are abundant water and electricity hook-ups for RVs and campers. Tents can be put anywhere. A lovely bathhouse and restroom is there along with a rustic

chapel and indoor meeting room. The camp has a leisurely pace and is the first Bible camp I went home from rested rather than exhausted. Our family enjoyed swimming and fishing at nearby lakes.

We also had fun in Moorhead and Detroit Lakes and a wonderful time with Pastor Paul Larson at the AFLC church in Detroit Lakes. Our family had a great time cooking meals over an open fire and working together as the rustic facilities demanded.

We recently bought an old used camper and we plan on returning to the Wilderness Camp again. I believe the camp will host an AFLC gathering over Labor Day weekend. If this was combined with a trip to the Threshing Reunion in nearby Rollag it could be one fantastic weekend for us old tractor fans! I am sure that Pastor Bruce Dalager has details on that weekend. Hopefully other AFLC people can make good use of the Wilderness Camp and discover this unique Bible camp experience.

*Pastor Thomas Olson  
Barronett, WI*

**Pastor Gary and Janet Skramstad**, St. Cloud, Minnesota, along with their youngest daughter, Susan, spent a month this summer in Curitiba, Brazil, visiting Missionaries David and Sarah (Skramstad) Nelson and their three children, Josiah, Samuel and Rachel. Pastor Skramstad serves Redeeming Love Lutheran in St. Cloud.

**Kenneth and Harriet Rolf**, McIntosh, Minnesota, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on June 30, 1996. Kenneth served on the AFLC Board of Trustees from 1982-92, and Harriet was a national WMF officer.

**Paul Kneeland**, Watertown, South Dakota, has accepted the call to serve as youth pastor for the Stillwater and Faith Lutheran congregations in Kalispell, Montana. Paul is on the AFLC Youth Board. He and his family moved to Kalispell the end of July.

**Bloomington, Minnesota** — Last June, Emmaus Lutheran sent 17 youth and five adults to Guerrero, Mexico, where they worked at the Foundation For His Ministry orphanage.

## PEOPLE AND PLACES



**Lisbon, North Dakota** — Pictured is one of the VBS classes held at the local school gym earlier this summer. Sixty-eight children attended this year's VBS sponsored for the second year by a fellowship group in Lisbon.

**Reflectorized road signs** for identifying and pointing toward your church building are now available. They have the AFLC logo, measure 18" by 24" and cost \$40. To place an order or for more information contact Pastor Mike Crowell, P. O. Box 566, Lake Stevens, WA 98258; phone (206) 334-1911.

**Pastor Jan Horne**, Tulia, Texas, has resigned as pastor of Christ Lutheran Church in order to accept the call from Faith Lutheran in Fairbury, Nebraska. He begins his new ministry in September.

**Greenbush, Minnesota** — United Free Lutheran honored Pastor Dennis and Marilyn Gray on Sunday, July 28, at a reception commemorating the 25 years since his ordination.

**Pastor Brian Davidson**, Posen, Michigan, is concluding his year of interim ministry at St. Peter's Lutheran in Metz, Michigan, and on September 1, will begin serving as interim pastor of Northome and Bethesda Lutheran in Mizpah, Minnesota. His new address is: Box 22, Northome, MN 56661; home phone (218) 897-5653 and office 897-5654.

**Helmar, Illinois** — Helmar Lutheran youth have kept a full schedule throughout the summer. June's highlight was an all-night extravaganza at the Steve Larson farm with 100 youth and adults present. Each Friday evening junior and senior high teens meet at the church and have named this program, MAD (Making A Difference) 4 Jesus.

**Pastor J. Christian Andrews**, Palmdale, California, has a new address: 4034 Elwood Ave., Palmdale, CA 93552. Phone: (805) 533-1532.

**Edwin Odegaard** passed away in Redmond, Washington on July 3. He was born and raised in Tioga, North Dakota and was a member of Zion Lutheran Church. He was a charter member of Our Redeemer Free Lutheran Church in Kirkland, Washington. He is survived by his wife, Twyla; two sons, Pastor Stephen of Tioga, North Dakota, and Thomas of Issaquah, Washington; and five grandchildren.

**Mr. Bruce Peterson**, Minneapolis, Minnesota, a 1996 AFLTS graduate, has accepted the call to Ny Stavanger Lutheran, Buxton, and Valley Lutheran of Portland, North Dakota. He begins his ministry later this fall. On September 15, he and his wife, Phyllis, are scheduled to leave for a month in Africa visiting their missionary daughter.

## AFLC Memorials

June 1996

Name	Given by	Department
Eileen Crawford	Valborg Hedman	AFLBS
Anna Overby	Ken/Mary Nash	Home Missions
	M/M Percy Strand	AFLBS
Sophia, Anna and Cora Lee	Ella Rekedal	AFLTS
Eleanor Lee	Pastor Rod/Candace Johnson	AFLTS
	Pastor Orville/Florence Hiepler	AFLBS
	Meredith Bursheim	
	Pastor Steve/Linda Odegaard	
	Pastor Lyle/Mary Aadahl	Schools
	Pastor Les/Jan Galland	
Peter Woken	Albin/Carol Haugen	World Missions
Margaret Koch	Pastor Al/Connie Monson	Home Missions
Evelyn Sundstrom	Dagne Faust	Home Missions
	Ken/Mary Nash	
Goldie Bjugstad	Florence Dimick	AFLBS
	Orrin/Lorraine Nyhus	
David Snipstead	Wesley/Betty Floan	AFLBS
	Ardis/Paul Opegard	
	Friends	



## PEOPLE AND PLACES



Mr. Bob Halvorson was presented this picture in appreciation for his years serving as a part-time youth ministries director for the AFLC. He had served with Pastor Dennis Gray in that capacity. The first full-time youth director is Pastor Kevin Olson who began his ministry early this year.



The AFLC Foundation members met at last June's annual conference in Washington. Pictured to the left is Mr. Mark Johnson, CFP, explaining how individuals can give to the church while still providing for personal retirement with tax benefits. The Foundation's first chairman, Mr. Bob Christian of Newark, Illinois, commented: "When people start realizing what this can do for themselves as well as for the AFLC, it'll start growing and we'll see the benefits for years to come." Pastor Tonnes Pollestad, Andover, Minnesota, was elected to be the Foundation's new chairman.

Elbow, Saskatchewan — Canada's annual retreat seminar will be held again at the Elbow Bible Camp from September 9-13, 1996. Pastor Phil Haugen, Culbertson, Montana, will teach from the book of Isaiah.

Ottawa, Illinois — St. Petrie Lutheran of rural Ottawa, enjoyed "a tremendous VBS earlier this summer," according to Pastor Warren Swanson. The Freedom-St. Petrie parish is preparing to be one of the host parishes for the Lutherans for Evangelism Conference during September 15-18. Pastor Mike Brandt, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, is the speaker. The theme is "Good News for '96" from Romans 1:16. The conference is held in cooperation with five area congregations.

### Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

#### AFLC Benevolences – January 1 - July 31, 1996

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN JUNE	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund . . . . .	\$241,472.00	\$18,105.06	\$114,278.00	47
Seminary . . . . .	122,626.00	8,280.21	44,968.10	37
Bible School . . . . .	184,696.00	24,848.32	83,112.07	45
Home Missions. . . . .	253,270.00	16,198.74	111,180.74	44
World Missions. . . . .	341,257.00	27,770.01	217,197.87	64
Capital Investment . . . . .	24,639.00	2,188.41	9,013.56	37
Parish Education . . . . .	49,289.00	2,177.22	23,401.29	47
Church Extension . . . . .	15,018.00	333.70	5,460.72	36
<b>TOTALS . . . . .</b>	<b>\$1,232,267.00</b>	<b>\$99,901.67</b>	<b>\$608,612.35</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>TOTALS 1995 . . . . .</b>	<b>1,484,851.00</b>	<b>78,350.19</b>	<b>619,216.49</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Goal 58%</b>				

### Youth-led movement gears up for September 18 "See you at the Pole"

**Y**outh will lead the way on September 18 as two to three million people are expected to gather in a spirit of unity to pray on at least five continents.

Junior high, high school, and college students will meet before school on that September morning for See You at the Pole (SYATP). The event has been recognized as the largest youth prayer gathering in history, with an estimated 2.5 million participants worldwide in 1995. Participants will meet at the flagpoles of schools, courthouses, churches, and other locations, not to demonstrate or protest but 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 six years. Early in 1990, some groups of high school youth around Dallas began meeting spontaneously at their schools to pray. Later that year, 20,000 teenagers at Reunion Arena in Dallas were challenged to meet at their flagpoles on a September morning. When more than 45,000 turned out to pray on 1,200 campuses, See You at the Pole was birthed.

By 1995, the movement encompassed every state, thousands of elementary through college campuses, and five continents around the world. Many young people have continued before-school prayer gatherings on a daily basis. Others have used the event as a springboard to launch Bible studies, more than 10,000 stu-

dent-led Christian clubs, and other activities at their schools throughout the year.

See You at the Pole is clearly legal. A broad-based coalition of legal groups met in 1995 to affirm the legality of See You at the Pole and other personal religious expression by students on campus. Their work became the basis for directives issued by Richard Riley, U. S. Secretary of Education, in August 1995 to every school district in the country. See You at the Pole was specifically named in the memo as a protected form of speech, according to the First Amendment of the U. S. Constitution.

More than 75 supporting organizations, including denominations and parachurch ministries, have endorsed the event and distributed information to individuals and churches worldwide.

### Kuwait guaranteed safety of Christian convert

The government of Kuwait has guaranteed the safety of a Christian convert who was declared an apostate by an Islamic court. The religious court's ruling, which could be interpreted as condemning the man to death, led to a worldwide outcry.

The English-language Kuwait Times newspaper quoted government advisors who said, "There is no evidence that he was being persecuted or ill treated, since the government guarantees his personal safety and his right to live."

Robert Hussein, a former Shiite Moslem who converted to Christianity, had gone into hiding and said he feared for his life.

According to the newspaper, a July 3 letter to the foreign ministry from the government's department of legal advice and legislation said, "It (the government) protects the freedom of practicing the rituals of the three heavenly religions, Islam, Chris-

tianity and Judaism, and does not prevent individuals from practicing other religions, including Christianity."

The letter added, "As to what has been said about this Kuwaiti citizen being subjected to persecution and death threats due to his conversion from Islam to Christianity, this is baseless."

Kuwait's constitution guarantees religious freedom, and the government permits Christians to worship openly — unlike many of its Arab neighbors.

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

### Belief in traditional morality is not intolerance

"Defending normalcy is not an intolerant act," Family Research Council President Gary Bauer said after the House of Representatives voted 342 to 67 last July to pass the Defense of Marriage Act. The bill defines marriage as the union of a man and woman in federal law and would allow states to refuse to recognize same-sex marriages. The Senate is expected to take up the measure in September.

Bauer said: "There are many relationships in which love is involved. But marriage is a unique bonding of the two sexes, with the probable expectation of procreation of children. It is the core of civilization and is universally honored. Good men and women of varying beliefs have been subjected to a barrage of name-calling and abuse for simply saying that marriage ought to be the union of a man and a woman and that the law should protect this vital social norm. It is not hatred to prefer normalcy."



## "Give of your best to the Master"

**W**hile in the navy former President Jimmy Carter was asked by Admiral Rickover if he had done his best while at the Naval Academy. He had to admit he hadn't always. Rickover looked at Carter for a long time and then asked one final question — "Why not?"

As we consider Sunday school teaching and other work in the congregation let us ask a similar question — why not do our best?

It is not that difficult to get by. Sadly I know that from experience. I have even received praise from people for efforts that are far from my best.

Satisfying the crowd and receiving their applause is not the mark we are to strive for in our service to the Lord and His Church. We endeavor to give our best, not just enough.

The son of Adam and Eve, "Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock." His brother "Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord." "The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor" (Genesis 4:3-5, NIV). Abel brought fat portions of the firstborn. Cain brought what was available and handy. Abel offered to God the best of what he had. Cain offered some of what he had. Abel's offering pleased God.

We are called to "Honor the Lord ... with the firstfruits of all your crops" (Proverbs 3:9, NIV). As we give to Him of our time, our talents, our energy, our resources, we are not to give Him simply what is handy and convenient. We are to give Him our best, for He is worthy of nothing less.

Caleb is described in the Bible, both when he was young and when he was old, as one who served the Lord "wholeheartedly" (Numbers 14:24, Joshua 14:14, NIV). He gave his all, he gave his best in service to God.

In teaching Sunday school, serving refreshments, cleaning up the classroom, giving rides, handing out invitations or whatever area of service God has called you to, are you doing it "wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men"? (Ephesians 6:7, NIV).

It is tempting to do "good things" simply "good enough." Time is short and the list of things we think we have to do is long. Possibly the list is too long and the question needs to be asked, "What has

God called me to do and to do wholeheartedly to His honor and glory?" The question is not "What are the expectations of the people around me and what is the minimum I must do to meet them?"

Because God is holy, mighty and gracious, He deserves nothing less than our best. The good news is that He expects nothing more.

The Lord does not call us to do any more than what He has equipped us for. He does not compare us to others and then erect a certain standard that we must obtain. That is what we so often do. We look at one congregation and their programs, another Sunday school and their resources, a fellow Christian and their achievements and abilities and think, "It is necessary to be like them in order to be pleasing to God." We do not have to match the accom-

plishment of the congregation across town. Our Sunday school does not have to reach the standard set somewhere else. It is not required that we measure up to our neighbor in order to hear God say, "Well done."

Jesus said "well done" will be heard by the "faithful servant" who has "been faithful with a few things" (Matthew 25:21, NIV). We have each been given "a few things." Have we been faithful with them? Have we made the best possible use of them, with the help of God? God expects nothing more than that.

A pop song of some years ago expressed a burden shared by many. "I guess my best wasn't good enough," lamented the singer. Our best isn't good enough to satisfy the demands of the law, but Jesus' best is. When we receive God's best in Christ, we can rejoice that now our best is good enough. It won't be good enough for the world. It may not impress the crowd. It may not seem much compared to what others are doing. But our best effort at faithfully serving the Lord is acceptable to Him when we are in Christ.

Let us do as the hymn writer encouraged us: "Give of your best to the Master, Nought else is worthy His love; He gave Himself for your ransom, Gave up His glory above: Laid down His life without murmur, You from sin's ruin to save; Give Him your heart's adoration, Give Him the best that you have."

Let us give our all because He gave His all. And let us take comfort in the fact that He gave His best and in that we can rest.

— Pastor Craig Johnson

**"Satisfying the crowd and receiving their applause is not the mark we are to strive for ..."**

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SOMETHING TO SHARE

## Sharing Christ through congregational family camps

*You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.*

— Deuteronomy 6:7

**G**et the coffee going!" a sleepy camper calls out at the crack of dawn. These words are often the first heard at family camps. And yes, they are a vital part of church ministries. A growing number of people are enjoying the AFLC district family camps as well as church-wide camps at Lake Bronson and Lake Park, Minnesota and at the ARC in Osceola, Wisconsin. Untold number of lives have been changed as a result of the camping ministry.

Some of our congregations have established their own camping traditions. Has your congregation sponsored a family camp? It is a special opportunity for outreach and for strengthening the families in your congregation. You can select your own appropriate time and theme. Our Wadena annual family camp is referred to as "The Wilderness Walk in Worship."

After setting up the tents and campers on Friday, a campfire

service will enhance the mood of the camp. A late evening activity may include stargazing and remembering that "He telleth the number of stars; he calleth them all by their names" (Psalm 147:4). Pathfinding has been used to explain how great God is, but also how personal He is as well. In the preceding verse, the psalmist declares, "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds." The very God who created the stars created us and has called us to a relationship with His Son Jesus.

Cooking duties may be uniquely met. We assign each meal to a different family. Saturday morning features at least one Bible study. The afternoon is spent resting and participating in the organized recreation for all ages.

Following supper, another campfire service offers the family campers an opportunity to share Bible passages and a testimony of what God has and is doing in their lives. On Sunday, an out-

door worship service concludes the weekend family camp.

Congregational family camps, though smaller than regional ones, strengthen families in the local congregation. It offers greater participation because of proximity and time. Families get their spiritual batteries recharged, visions for the local congregation are often revealed, unchurched neighbors may be more comfortable at camp rather than entering the church doors, and people are drawn closer to each other and to Christ.

How wonderful and beautiful it is to have an outdoor Bible study in a wilderness setting. Experience it with your church family! And in the morning, please pass the coffee!



— Pastor Todd  
Klemme  
Zion Lutheran  
Wadena,  
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