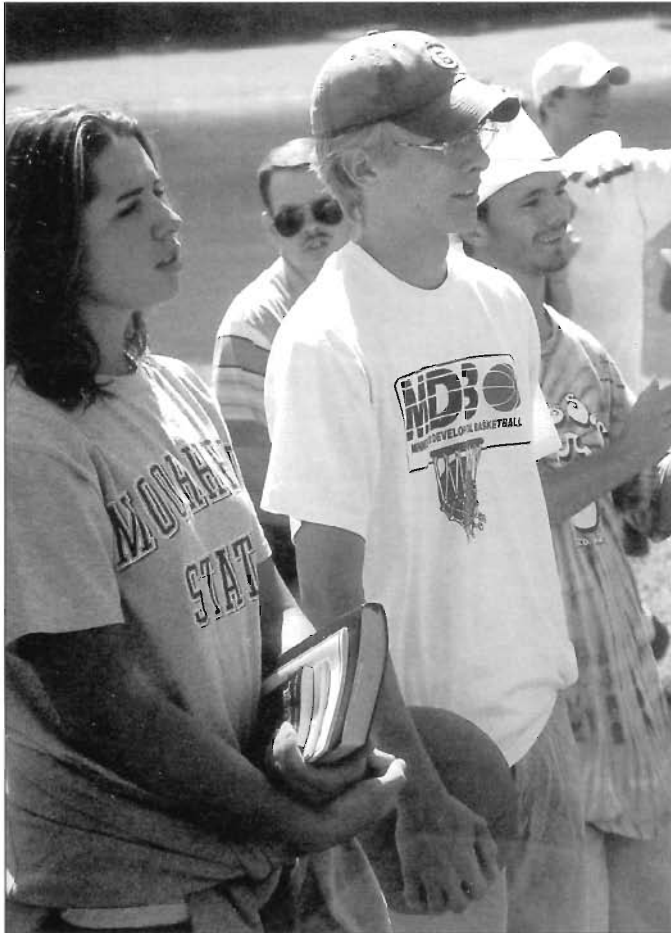


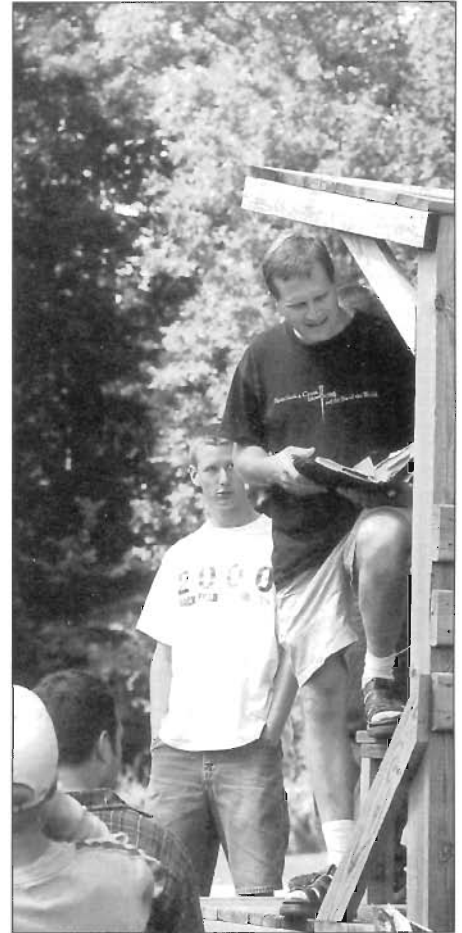
THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

August 29, 2000



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THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

August 29, 2000
Volume 38, Number 11



The magazine of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, 3110 East Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441. 763-545-5631

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The Lutheran Ambassador

(USPS 588-620 ISSN 0746-3413)

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

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For subscription changes and information:

The Lutheran Ambassador, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441. 763-545-5631.

Subscriptions rates:

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

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

\$18.00 a year, International

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

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

AN ENCOURAGING WORD

A rose-opening day

"Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these" (Matthew 6:28-29).

Many of you have probably been on the receiving or giving end of some roses.

Let me ask you a silly question. When you got the roses, did you immediately begin to open up the rose buds yourself? Did you peel back the petals so that all your roses would look as if they were in full bloom? Of course you didn't. That would ruin the rose. Yet, that is exactly what many people do with their lives every day.

Each day is a rose with the potential to beautifully open up. The problem is that so many try to open the rose themselves. The result is that the person's day does not end up looking as beautiful as it could. No man, woman, child, or scientist has been able to bring about the actual process of roses opening. Only God can do that. Therefore, your day cannot possibly look its best without God being directly involved in it.

How often have you rushed off to take on your day without spending time with the One who can make your day beautiful? How many of you go about your daily activities as if you are in charge and do not seek God's direction? How many of you stop short of God's best for you because you're afraid of letting go or of the commitment it might demand? Perhaps you question, "What if God wants me to do something that I don't feel comfortable with?"

If any of these describe you, then you are, in essence, trying to open up your own rose. Dear reader, the rose of your life will never be as beautiful as when God is allowed to open it.

In chapter 10 of Luke, Martha

was distracted with all her preparations as she was busily fixing a meal for Jesus. Notice that she was distracted with all her preparations. Even though what she was doing was a good thing (making a meal for Jesus), she was trying to open her own rose. She complained to Jesus that her sister was merely sitting at Jesus' feet while she was left all alone to prepare the meal. By the way, complaining is a big part of one's life when trying to open your own rose. But Jesus answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only a few things are necessary, really only one, for Mary has chosen the good part (literally means the best part), which shall not be taken away from her." Mary was at Jesus' feet submissively listening and learning.

The point being made is that apart from a close, daily relationship with Jesus Christ, where you actually take time to tune into His agenda, you will not experience God's best for your life. Without Christ in clear focus, each day is as if you are trying to open up a rose yourself. Do you really think you can open the roses better than God? I've tried it enough times to know the answer is "No!" Why not kneel at Jesus' feet and confess your sin of going about your day without Him? Why not let Jesus teach you His ways every day? Then you need not worry about your day nor think your day was a waste. Instead, you can be sure that, no matter what, your day was a rose-opening day. And not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these.

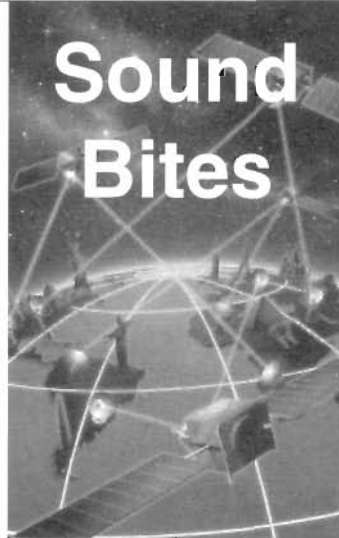
— **Pastor Tim Johnson**
Resurrection Free Lutheran
Beltrami, Minnesota

The teacher's own attitude toward his ministry is very important. If he recognizes

1 teaching as genuine service for Christ which must meet high standards, he may see variety as one of those standards of excellence toward which he must constantly be striving.

—Kenneth O. Gangel

Sound Bites



2

How tender I feel toward the wounded children, the blind or deaf, or overweight, or retarded or cerebral palsied, who believe themselves to be cursed by God and man. Somehow, we must make a new effort to reach this generation with a message of confidence and hope and love and respect.

—Dr. James Dobson

Which are the people who have influenced us most? Not the ones who thought they did, but those who had not the remotest

4 notion that they were influencing us. ... We always know when Jesus is at work because He produces in the commonplace something that is inspiring.

—Oswald Chambers

You can be both a human voice for God's Word and a human model of God's ways

3 as you teach Sunday school. Your job is to teach Bible content and help plan application, certainly. But your methods and attitude while you teach can be wonderful tools through which you model God's ways, too.

—Stephen Wamberg and John Conaway

Only an experience of grace and free justification can create a heart that does good out of delight in God himself, out of delight in goodness itself, and out of love for our neighbors in themselves. Without the gospel, we can *restrain* the human heart,

but not *change* the human heart.

—Tim Keller

6

Our kids are confused about what truth is and who defines it; they are uncertain about what truths are absolute and what makes them absolute. Consequently, they are making conditional decisions, choosing what seems to be the best alternative at the time, without reference to any fundamental set of precepts or underlying principles to guide their behavior.

—Josh McDowell

Qualities that marked Jesus

— Marian Christopherson
AFLC Parish Education Director

Jesus is called the Master Teacher. Much more than a great teacher, Jesus is the eternal Son of God and our Savior from sin. But as human teachers of the divine Word, we can learn from many qualities that Jesus demonstrated in His earthly teaching.

In his book, *Teaching as Jesus Taught*, Roy B. Zuck presents several qualities to emulate Christ's teaching. "Skillful teachers have personal and spiritual maturity, mastery of their subjects, consistency of life and certainty of what they are teaching. They are humble, spontaneous, and flexible, clear in what they are communicating. They portray enthusiasm and a sense of urgency in their teaching. Variety is a keynote in their pedagogy. They often seem to have more to share than time allows. They love their students and show compassion and empathy for them. Being sensitive, they are careful not to hurt the feelings of their pupils. And they always help students see how to apply truth to their lives."

Maturity

Jesus grew "in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Luke 2:52). As God's creation we are stewards in the nurturing development of our minds and bodies. But most importantly, Paul exhorts us to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (II Peter 3:18). Through regular Bible reading, study, and prayer, God's Spirit helps the Christian teacher to grow to maturity in Christ.

Mastery

Jesus knew his subject. He knew the Scriptures and quoted them in ministering to others. Jesus also knew the three languages of the people with whom He communicated: Aramaic, Hebrew, and Greek. Somewhat similarly, effective Christian teachers today know the Scriptures and take care to communicate clearly in a language their students will understand. "This fact challenges teachers today to know their subjects well, to prepare thoroughly...."

Certainty

Many were amazed at Jesus' teaching. He taught as one having authority. He never spoke tentatively, timidly, or apologetically. His authority was from God. As believers our authority comes from God, and we can be confident in the power of the Word as it is proclaimed and taught (Hebrews 4:12; II Timothy 3:16-17).

Humility

For the Jews and Greeks of Jesus' day, submission and service were dishonoring qualities. Yet "Rather than proudly seeking acclaim and praise from people ... Jesus demonstrated humility and urged his followers to do the same." Teaching is an act of serving — humbly guiding others not to oneself but to Christ and His Word.

Consistency

Jesus' actions always matched His words. He practiced what he preached, unlike the Pharisees whom He reproached for saying one thing but doing another. By the power of the Holy Spirit, the Bible teacher models Christlike character both in and out of the classroom, being a doer of the Word and not a hearer only (James 1:22).

Spontaneity

"Many times (Jesus') lessons came as 'teachable moments,' as unplanned, spontaneous occasions when the teaching was determined by situations that arose." Jesus maintained openness to questions and interruptions and always responded with an appropriate answer. Educator Lois LeBar observes "just about half the teaching incidents in the Gospels were initiated by learners themselves ... When they begin, we may be assured of their interest, attention, and personal involvement." Teachers can be prepared to respond by knowing the Word of God (I Peter 3:15; II Timothy 2:15).

Clarity

Jesus spoke to communicate, not to impress. When in your teaching you come across words or terms your students do not understand, are you careful to explain them?

as an outstanding teacher

"By thoroughly preparing your lessons, thinking through what you will say and the vocabulary you will use, you can enhance your communication skills."

Urgency

Jesus told the disciples that the fields were "white for harvest" (John 4:35) and instructed them to work for "the night is coming when no man can work" (John 9:4). "Now is the day of salvation" (II Corinthians 6:2). The good news of all Jesus has done for us compels us to excellence in our teaching, making the best use of each class session to direct all students to Christ the Savior and the forgiveness of new life He freely offers.

Variety

Jesus' teaching included object lessons, parables, lectures, and creative questions causing listeners to think on matters of eternal consequences. Ask yourself, What method may best communicate what I want to teach? What means will stimulate students to think and to grapple with the Bible text? Will this lead students to the cross of Christ and the good news of the gospel?

Empathy

"Compassion ... always characterized

Jesus' ministry. He loved his students and responded to each one with care and concern" (cf. Matthew 9:36; 20:34). The Apostle Paul also had a deep affection for the people in the churches he visited (Philippians 1:3-8). When Christ lives in us (Galatians 2:20), He gives us a love for others (II Corinthians 5:14-15). Teachers demonstrate the love of Christ by showing a genuine interest in students' lives in and out of the classroom.

Relevancy

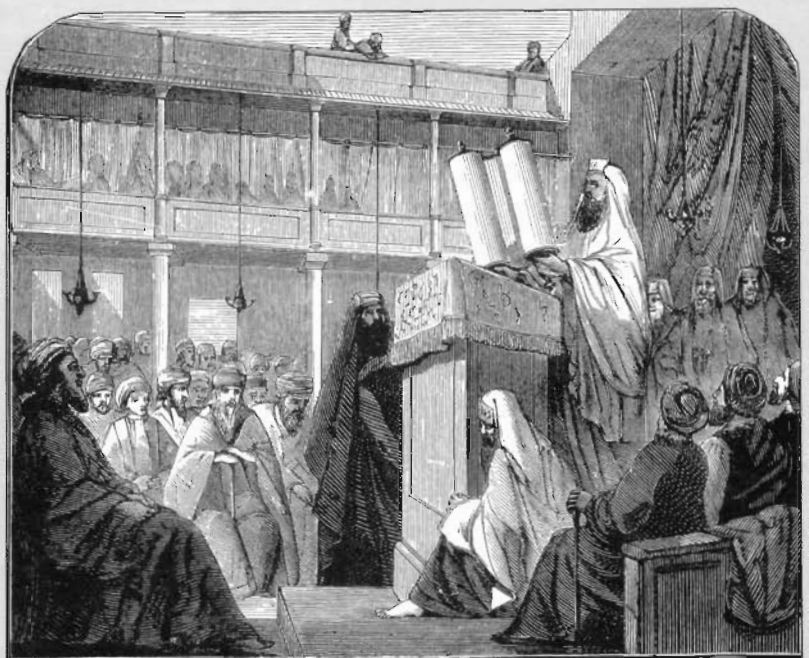
"(Jesus) never taught something that had no pertinence to life or to reality. Like an arrow hitting its target with flawless precision, his teaching hit its mark, and penetrated his hearers' souls." The Word of God is relevant to all people because it deals with real needs. The Word teaches that all are sinners and in need of God's grace for salvation and sanctification and daily Christian living. The Bible teacher can be confident that God's Word is never out of date and that the Holy Spirit will apply it appropriately to each heart.

Jesus is the Master Teacher. And He has chosen to teach others through you. Ask Him to develop these qualities in your teaching, and pray that the Holy Spirit will draw all your students to Christ.



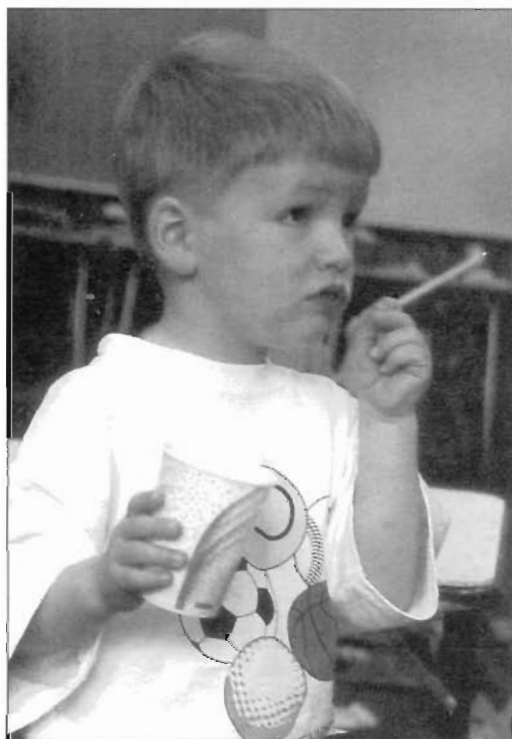
And it came about that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them, and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were amazed at his understanding and His answers.

— Luke 2:46-47



Keeping on keeping on

—Kathryn Greene
Trinity Lutheran
Grand Forks, North Dakota



a veteran superintendent and song leader shares

It's been quite a few years. Little ones with whom I sang "Jesus Loves Me" in our Sunday school when they were three-years-old, are adults now. So what motivates me to keep doing this? Is there some satisfaction in what has been accomplished?

As I finish my time with the students each Sunday morning, I can't really see what has been accomplished that day. It is not like painting a room or baking a pie and thinking, "There,

that's finished, and it turned out well."

In fact, I may never see, in this life, just what my work in Sunday school has accomplished. Oh, certainly, I have rejoiced to see various ones who have grown up attending our Sunday school now showing evidence of a living faith. But was it what I said or did that made the difference? And if there was a significant or even crucial impact, that person may not even remember it.

There is motivation, however, an underlying one and an ongoing, more immediate one.

The underlying motivation is, as Paul said, "Christ's love compels us" (II Corinthians 5:14). If I had not been convinced of the truth and importance of what God has done for me in Christ, why would I bother to tell children the stories of Jesus? But God has led me to see the futility of life without Him,

and the centrality of Jesus in remedying my desperate condition:

my lostness — He is the Way and carries me;
my uncertainty — He is (and tells me) the Truth;
my deadness — He is the Life, in Him I live forever;
my sin — His righteousness, now mine by faith.

My despair is turned to joy knowing that God really is good and He is on my side! "God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation" (II Corinthians 5:19). I'm still on the job with Sunday school because that seems to be what God has given me to do in His great ministry of reconciliation.

The ongoing, more immediate motivation has to do with the joy mentioned before. As I seek ways to best display the Lord in words spoken and sung in Sunday school, I am made rich. Joy comes again as I see Him and His working through Scripture and song.

But there are the times that I feel dull and unmotivated. Then I must say to my Lord, "Do you still want me to do this? If so, help me to proceed in your grace, by faith. It's your Word they need. It's You they need. Help me to speak your truth and lift up Jesus even when You do not make your presence known with the joy that has delighted me before."

I don't dwell much on trying to be enthusiastic and exciting. That would be an act, and one that I probably couldn't do well. If the children see excitement and enthusiasm in me, may it only be the by-product of God's grace. Enthusiasm that I work up has no power. It is the Holy Spirit working through the Word and Sacraments that builds God's kingdom.

Children receive the benefits of Jesus' death for them when they are baptized. The faith planted in them then is sustained and grows as they hear God's Word. That's what Sunday school is for. It also allows their faith to express itself as they praise and thank God in song and prayer. And if any have turned away from God, He uses that same Word to draw them back to Himself in repentance and faith.

So, may God give us grace to faithfully teach His Word in Sunday school, relying on Him to equip and motivate us for the task, as long as He wills that we do it.



Teaching is learning

—Will Olson
Our Redeemer Lutheran
Kirkland, Washington

The call to teach

One day the call comes. I am asked to teach a Sunday school class. What is my reaction? What questions come to mind? What should my response be? One thing is certain: this is opportunity knocking — opportunity to sacrifice, to serve, to learn, to grow, to share. And yes, perhaps opportunity to struggle through difficulty.

My limitations

Thoughts of personal limitations or commitments immediately leap to the fore: “I don’t know enough about the Bible. I really don’t have enough time. Others are better qualified. I taught last year.” And perhaps these statements are true.

But what does God’s Word say to these objections?

“But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you; for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me” (II Corinthians 12:9, NIV).

A rewarding step of faith

Agreeing to teach Sunday school is an act of faith, an affirmative response to God’s call. God is in effect saying, “Who will teach?” And I am replying, “Here am I, use me!” When we respond in faith, the Christian life becomes an adventure. As I face the challenge of teaching God’s Word, my inadequacy cries out for help, and then, while teaching, I realize that God is supplying that which is needed (Ephesians 3:20, 21).

God is faithful

God has promised His Word will not fail in its purpose (Isaiah 55:11). We can rest on this promise. As a steward of God’s Word, the Sunday school teacher is to be faithful in preparing and teaching (I Corinthians 4:2), and then to trust God for results.

A stimulus to pray

Not only does teaching Sunday school keep us in the Word with all its blessings, but the desire to be a good steward keeps us in prayer, that we may teach effectively (Ephesians 6:19).

Other things

I’ve learned thus far

➤ To depend on the Holy Spirit as I prepare and teach (John 14:16, 17).

➤ That one doesn’t need to know all the answers to lead a Sunday school class.

➤ The essence of the art of teaching is to help the students discover for themselves the truths of God’s Word. We observe the master Teacher at work in Luke 24:13-32.

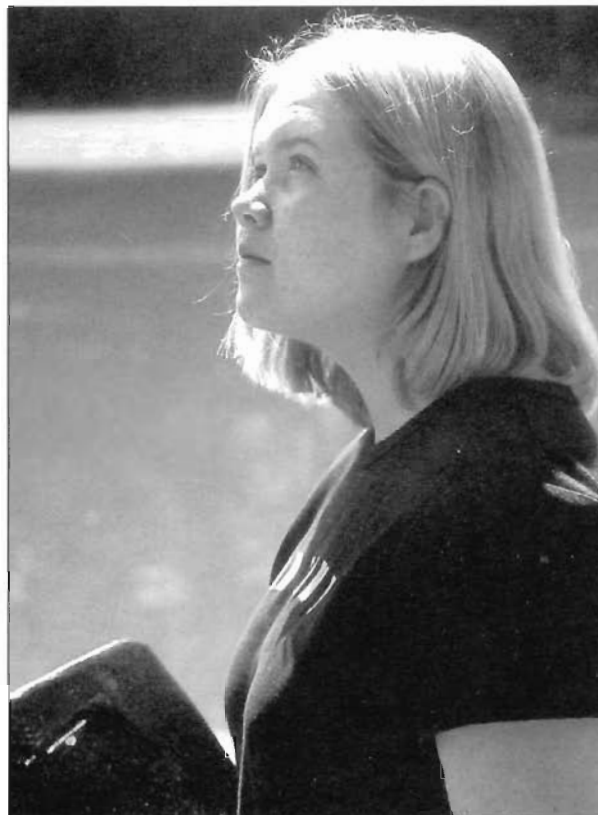
➤ There is a deep and abiding joy in serving Him who gave Himself for us.

➤ The Bible is our greatest treasure. To share it is a sacred privilege.

➤ To pray for the students, that they may grow in grace and knowledge (II Peter 3:18).

➤ The best fellowship and friendships are built around the Word of God.

➤ In Sunday school the Word of God is sown in hearts and lives. Only eternity will reveal the harvest, as God makes grow that which we plant and water (I Corinthians 3:6). Just think, the next Sunday school class could include a young Martin Luther or young Billy Graham, or maybe even a



Disruptive behavior?

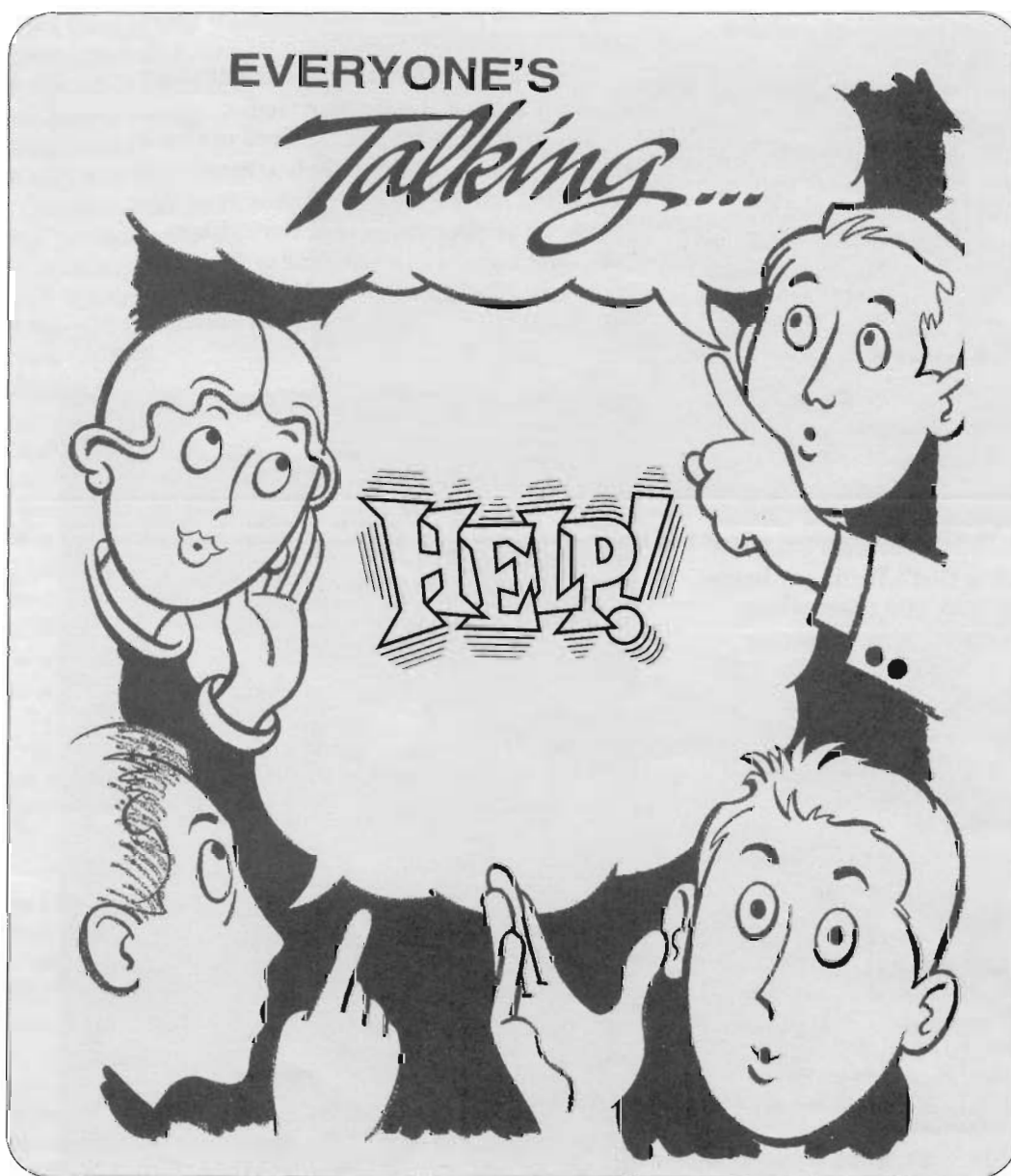
— Gwen Berge
Medicine Lake Lutheran
Plymouth, Minnesota

*“The heart is deceitful
above all things, and
desperately wicked;
Who can know it?”*

— Jeremiah 17:9

You can probably recite the verse to the left, but do you believe it? The philosophy “man is good” is so prevalent in today’s society that we can internalize it without realizing. Children need clear limits lovingly enforced. When you prepare to teach a group of children, do you anticipate their need for limits and correction?

God knows that we all need discipline, and He lovingly provides it. “If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a Father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers,



No problem

then you are illegitimate and not sons” (Hebrews 12:7-8).

A teacher must examine one’s own discipline philosophy when preparing to work with children. Is discipline something you owe to the children, or something you do only if you have to? Even “church children” need to be reminded and motivated to demonstrate appropriate behavior. If you love them, you must be prepared to guide them.

“I am a special gift from God, please treasure me as God intended you to do, holding me accountable for my actions, giving me guidelines to live by and disciplining me in a loving manner,” wrote Charles Swindoll in *Seasons of Life*. Explain rules, rewards and consequences on the first Sunday and work throughout the year to build a positive relationship with each student.

Behavior guidelines are important because they ensure respect for the teacher, students and God’s Word. They let students know what is expected of them, creating an environment that is safe and secure. You may choose rules, rewards and consequences before your first class, or you and the children may create two or three together. Rules should be clearly observable and apply to behavior, not the completion of memory verses or other work. For example:

“Keep your hands and feet to yourself”

“Stay in your seat unless you have permission to get up”

A statement such as, “Leave toys at home,” is a good principle, but not a necessary rule. Common sense dictates that the teacher simply hold the toy until class is over. Many teachers will be able to manage their class simply by using such logical consequences. They may rarely have to refer to their list of rules and consequences. For more challenging groups, however, rules are necessary. For class time when several children are exhibiting inappropriate behavior, group rewards are effective. Motivate children to listen to the Bible story by offering an incentive such as a picnic at your house. You may decide that if all students can listen to the story, without distracting a neighbor, they can earn the “P” in Picnic. Next week they will have the opportunity to earn the “T” and so on.

As you explain the guidelines, reassure the children that you know they can follow them and that you can’t wait to “catch them being good.” Let them know how much you

look forward to noticing good behavior. In addition to praise, you may choose simple rewards such as stickers or being class helper.

After the explanation of rewards, briefly tell students what will happen if they choose not to obey the rules. The following is one possible progression of consequences:

First time a student breaks a rule:
Warning.

Second time: Sit by teacher.

Third time: Stay after class and talk to parents.

A student who continues to disrupt class, so that others are not able to learn, may have to be gently taken to the parents or Sunday school superintendent. If this is necessary, emphasize how much you look forward to their return when they are ready to follow the guidelines.

When we consider how to train and build relationships with children we should look to Jesus’ example. The disciples knew that Jesus truly cared for them. Students who come to your Sunday school class must know that you love them.

Secular educators realize that relationships are necessary to motivate students to learn and behave. In “Assertive Discipline,” Lee Canter writes, “Students don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.” Let the children in your class know you care about them by smiling and greeting them by name. Ask them about their summer, find out what they like to do. Take interest in them as individuals. Consider spending time outside of class with especially challenging students. Call a child who has been sick or absent. Visit children at home. Canter suggests these relationship building methods for students who are disruptive. Christ’s model shows us that we must build a relationship with each child in our class regardless of whether or not they exhibit challenging behavior.

Teachers who faithfully train and pray for children deserve great thanks. They have a tremendous privilege and challenge. Matthew 18:10 reminds us that the angels of little ones are continually before the face of the Father in heaven. What a joy it is to help guide His children to know Him better. James 1:5 states that God will give wisdom when we ask for it. There is comfort knowing God will grant help and guidance for the Sunday school year ahead.

“There is comfort knowing God will grant help and guidance for the Sunday school year.”



So you are not teaching?



— *Carmen Gustafson*
Our Saviour's Lutheran
Thief River Falls, Minnesota

Not long ago the following question was posed to me, "If teaching isn't my gift, can I still contribute to my congregation's ministry?" That question has followed me around, never far off from my conscious thinking, causing me to evaluate myself and the various areas of teaching I have been involved in over the years. I also thought of the times I was not actively teaching in some ministry of my congregation. In light of Jesus' command, "Go therefore and make disciples," how have I contributed to my church's teaching ministry?

We are, as Christians, called the body of believers. In a physical body all the parts are essential to the effective, healthy functioning of that body. So also is that true of us as a community of believers. First John 1:7 tells us who walk in the light of Christ that we are to have fellowship with one another. What does that have to do with the question posed to me? Fellowship implies a positive working together. How do I fit into this picture?

If I do not teach a class, then how do I contribute? I believe God's Word clearly directs all of us to pray. Prayer is our toll-free access to God. What a wonderful tool we have to access the very throne of God. As a prayer warrior for our church and its many areas of ministry, we become part of a great power line. We can pray for those who teach. Ask for a list of all the students in your church's youth ministry. Pray for families. Pray specifically by name for needs and people. God will direct our prayers.

Hand in hand we can all be in God's Word. Be involved in your church's Bible study opportunities (men's, women's, youth). By so doing we are being an example that shows that Christianity is real and alive in our lives. As adults we lead the way for our young people. Do they see the things of the Lord as being important to us in our everyday lives? Do we live in such a way that pleases Jesus?

There are many areas of service available to us if we make ourselves available. Maybe you have a gift for music, or could be a part of the church's Christian education board, or perhaps have some great ideas for activities. How about the gift of giving encouragement? A card, a note, or a positive word goes a long way to lift the spirits of anyone in this busy world. First Thessalonians 5:11 tells us to "encourage one another."

A vital need of all Christian education is always financial support. Ask God to direct your giving, because He knows the needs.

The Bible tells us in II Peter 3:11, "You ought to live holy and godly lives." In

Seeing God's Grace

"When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad" (Acts 11:23a).

Grace is God's riches at Christ's expense, His free gift to the undeserving, resulting in justification and sanctification. It is a disposition in the heart of God, not anything substantial that could be weighed or measured.

Yet the above verse of Scripture tells us that Barnabas "saw" the grace of God. What did he see?

He saw what God was accomplishing through the ministry of the Word. He saw that many were turning to the Lord in faith. And he was glad.

It's great to see the grace of God, isn't it? We have been privileged to do so in many ways through our AFLC and its ministries. The summer months are filled with camps and conferences, as well as the regular scheduled services of our congregations. Seminary students have commenced their year of internship, and most of the Bible school's students have served on summer teams or in other ministry capacities. Souls have been saved and saints strengthened, at home and in other lands, as free congregations press on to become living congregations. Souls have been united in a spirit of one accord, committed to the common endeavors that have been entrusted to our fellowship by the Lord.

Are you glad to see what God is doing?

This portion of the book of Acts shows us other signs of God's grace at work. It can be seen in "Preaching the Lord Jesus" (11:20), and in the fact that Barnabas called Saul of Tarsus to serve with him in a partnership of the gospel (11:25), recognizing that this was not his work but the Lord's. It can also be seen in the generosity of the believers as they shared of their means according to ability for the relief of the starving brethren in Judea (11:29).

The fervent prayer of the church (12:5) might be noted, too, as visible evidence of God's grace. Perhaps one of the strongest signs of all is the reality of His presence in times of persecution (11:19, 12:1-4).

"And he exhorted them to remain faithful to the Lord with a steadfast purpose" (Acts 11:23b). This is our need, too, if we would continue to see the grace of God at work in our midst. Faithful and steadfast. By grace alone.

— *Pastor Robert L. Lee*

II Timothy 2:15 it says, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved." That tells me that I apparently must have an influence on others. If I have an influence that can, and does, affect others, then am I not also teaching? The lessons I teach are seen as others, especially children, watch me. Does my life reflect the awesome light of Jesus Christ? Our lives are being watched whenever we interact with others. You may have heard someone's life referred to as an "open book." I pray that each of us who believes in, and claims the name of Jesus, might be an open book which exemplifies

the saving gospel of Jesus Christ.

God gives good gifts to all. Therefore, we need to seek God's direction as to what gifts He has given us. Then we must be obedient to His will and put into practice that which He has given us. You can pray. You can encourage. You can give financially as God leads you. You can be there when the children present a program or participate in a service. Our interest in a teacher or a child shows them that we care. As we care for one another we also become accountable to each other in our Christian walk. May God be glorified in how ever He calls each of us to serve.



Some virtues of volunteering

(Another article featuring viewpoints on education)

Having children in public schools, and being involved with them in various ways has given us an opportunity to be “salt and light” in our community. Our children have been witnesses to both their teachers and peers by just being Christians, and by innocently expressing their beliefs. (We have never warned them to be careful about doing that, but rather encouraged them to just say what they believe.) We and our children have been an encouragement to the Christian teachers our children have had. By making sure that we’re seen very much as allies, and not adversaries of our children’s teachers, schools, and educational system, they are much more likely to listen to us when we do have suggestions or criticisms.

Our public educational systems are extremely powerful institutions, shaping the minds of each successive generation. We would rather not hand those institutions, and that shaping (funded by our tax dollars), entirely over to unbelievers. Being an influence in the public schools benefits not only our own children directly, but our entire society, which, in turn, also influences how our society treats us.

Being in the public schools also helps our children learn how to be “in the world, but not of the world.” Most Christians, unfortunately, wind up with only Christian friends, and generally tend to become isolated from unbelievers. In the public schools, getting along with, being friends with, relating to, and witnessing to non-Christians has become natural to our children.

— **Dr. Jonathan Strand**
Sherwood Park, Alberta



I really enjoy having the one-on-one contact with the children of our community that I am able to have through volunteering in the local public school. It provides me with a way to get to know the children in my son’s and daughter’s classes and lets me get to know their friends.

By volunteering I have been able to develop relationships with other children in the community. Getting to know the children in school makes it easier to talk to them when you meet them outside of school and can open doors to inviting them to vacation Bible school and other church-related activities.

You can share Christ’s love with the children when you volunteer, maybe not with words, but with actions. So many of the children are starving for attention. By volunteering you are showing them you care. When I work in my youngest son’s classroom there are many children



that come to me just looking for a hug. They want me to help them as much as I can.

Volunteering is a great way to encourage the Christian teachers in our public schools. We are letting them know we support the work they are doing.

An opportunity we have in Upsala is teaching release time classes. For an hour and a half each Wednesday afternoon children (with parent’s permission) are released from their classroom for religious instruction. Through this program we are able to witness to the children and help them grow in their Christian walk.

— **Jeannette Benson**
Upsala, Minnesota

Testimonies of being involved as “salt and light” in public schools

Volunteering in schools is a wonderful way to have a positive impact on children’s lives. It is very easy to complain about what we think is happening in public schools. Yet, by only sitting outside and griping we contribute to the general antagonism toward public schools. There are so many children to educate and only comparatively few people to educate them. This problem is compounded by all the extra duties dropped on educators in the name of education reform. Budgets dwindle and teachers and staff at public schools must scramble to meet all the needs of the students.

Classroom parents, crossing guards, first aid parents, library volunteers, field trip people, and people to read one-on-one with struggling

readers are some ways people can help at the school near my home. These opportunities are not restricted to parents. Several retired educators volunteer at the reading times because the need is so great.

The benefits to a volunteer are many. You have the opportunity to make a child’s day just by greeting them by name with a smile. Some kids, more than we realize, don’t think they are valued by grown-ups in their lives. It is also very exciting to see the “light” go on in a child’s eyes when they grasp the concept being taught.

Being a volunteer helps build relationships. Teachers love to see people involved. At school, my kids would run up and say “Hi, Mom!” and give me a hug. While they are

New teeth for Trapper Jack

Our church here in Naknek, Alaska and other friends have been involved raising money to help a man in our area we call Trapper Jack get some new teeth. I got the bill for the teeth, \$1,000. The dentist gave a \$100 discount. Yesterday the final offering came in to bring us up to \$1,000 exactly! God has provided teeth for a man who had no hope of getting them.

Jack is thrilled to be getting teeth. He wants to help pay for them but the reality is that he will barely make enough money halibut fishing to pay his \$500 land rental fee for the spot he has his shack on. When I told Jack that my Christian friends were going to help him get teeth he gave me a goose he shot and some carrots that someone dug out of the dumpster at Naknek Trading and he thought were "perfectly good."

It seemed that getting Jack some teeth so that he can get proper nutrition was the right thing to do. Now he can eat and he has at least that pleasure and need fulfilled. Jack has the health and strength to make it another year and that is one

more year for us to show him the love of God and tell him the old, old story of Jesus. Little by little he lets me share my faith with him.

Every night my son Josiah prays for the struggling single men of our area. He prays for God to help Trapper Jack, Terry the Weed, Paul the Carpenter and now Arnold, the fisherman who is staying in former missionary Oscar Brown's old house. We have a special burden for these men.

The Fourth Annual AFLC Chaplain's Seminar will be held September 27-29, 2000 at the ARC. This year those pastors who serve as police chaplains will be invited to join the seminar along with institutional and military chaplains.

Chaplain Jim Vogt from the Hennepin County Medical Center will be the guest speaker. He has been staff chaplain there for 10 years and is currently working on a specialized master's degree in conflict resolution.

The theme of the seminar is "Looking Beyond the Obvious for Answers." If you are serving as a

When I worked with Oscar Brown at the rescue mission in Cordova, Alaska I was critical of his extremely merciful attitude toward such men. But now I feel much the same way as Oscar did, especially as I find out how hard their upbringings have been in comparison to my good childhood. Please pray that these men would be able to receive the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord and be saved.

—**Pastor Tom Olson**
Naknek, Alaska

police chaplain, contact Chaplain Kerwin Sletto for more information: 815-434-1130.

Pastor Gabriel Mercado, Nogales, Mexico, continues to suffer with health problems while still serving the congregation in Agraristas de Obregon. Along with his medical bills, his financial stress is increased with his van needing a new transmission.

Triumph Lutheran Church at 429 E. Patagonia Hwy., Nogales, AZ 85621 has an account set up to assist Pastor Mercado.

still in primary grades they still like to see you around. It is also nice to hear a, "Hi Mrs. Grothe!" from all the kids that I worked with.

When you spend time in school with the kids, helping the staff, you are building relationships, earning the right to be heard, and seeing what the real picture is. You also come away with a sense that you have done something very beneficial for the community.

—**Lois Grothe**
Astoria, Oregon



"Christians belong in public education because that's where the most people are and that's where the poor are," says Maribeth Vander Weele, inspector general for the Chicago public school system. Vander Weele, author of *Reclaiming Our Schools: The Struggle for Chicago School Reform*, investigates waste, fraud, and mismanagement and recommends legislative initiatives to improve the system.

"If we are going to be judged at the end of our lives for how we helped the poor and the fatherless, then we should go to where the poor and the fatherless are," says Vander Weele, a Wheaton College graduate and an award-winning reporter on public education in the early 1990s for the *Chicago Sun-Times*. "The neediest people in our society are in

our public schools. They need exposure to Christians."

Charles W. Lyons, senior pastor of Armitage Baptist Church in Chicago's Logan Square neighborhood, has worked with local public schools for more than 25 years. He finds talk of exiting public education utterly unacceptable. "There are half a million people in the Chicago public school system — bigger than the population of many cities," Lyons says. "When you consider the influence of a system that big, how can we possibly justify abandoning it? Jesus called us to be salt and light in the world. This is a mission field."



—excerpt from "Chicago Hope: How Christians are transforming public education" by Verla Gillmor, *Christianity Today*, September 6, 1999.

Volunteers build hanger in Alaska

For ten days last June, the population of Naknek, Alaska swelled as workers from the AFLC and other interested churches arrived to build an aircraft hangar and complete some repair projects for the Lutheran Mission Society. The AFLC has two missionary families, Tom and Sharon Olson and Henry and Linda Mohagen serving in the Alaskan peninsula. The workers included eleven men from Kalispell, Montana; Ferndale, Lake Stevens, and Kirkland, Washington. They were joined in Naknek by retired Brazil missionaries George and Helen Knapp, Emery and Judy Otnes, Fergus Falls, Minnesota and AFLBS students, Amber Nelson and Andrew Bartholomew.

The mission trip was organized by Pastor Mike Crowell of Mission Aviation Training Academy, Arlington, Washington, in conjunction with the Lutheran Mission Society and churches of the AFLC Pacific Northwest District.

Naknek's months of sub-zero weather and high winds made the construction of the hangar vital for more efficient and broader outreach throughout the peninsula. Pastor Crowell said, "What a blessing to see the working together of several organizations for the furthering of God's Kingdom! We experienced both the joy of work, as well as participating in the beauty of God's creation in Alaska."

Follow-up trips to Naknek are in the works. Contact either Pastor Tom Olson at (907) 246-6624 or Pastor Mike Crowell at (360) 403-3100.

Pastor Rao Dasari, 61, Plymouth, Minnesota passed away on July 20, 2000 of cancer. He was born on September 12, 1938 in Intur, A.P., India. From 1977 to 1986, he served on the faculty of the AFLC Schools. At the time of his death, he was working with the Wisconsin Lutheran Synod and their mission in India.



Pastor Henry Mohagen takes off for his first mission flight in Alaska.



The mission plane and Pastor Mohagen in Naknek, Alaska.



The hanger is nearly complete.

Minnesota congregation celebrates 100 years

Finlayson, Minnesota — St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church celebrates their 100th Anniversary on September 17, 2000. The 10 a.m. worship service will be followed by dinner and an afternoon program of sharing and fellowship.

Nestor Korpi recently compiled a history of the congregation. "The observance of the 100th anniversary gives us a sense of pride as we see the beacon of light that has been maintained. We are also humbled as we consider the many sacrifices made by the forebears of this congregation."

Two fires the church sustained destroyed some of the early records so some of the history is a compilation of recollections from various sources.

Miners, loggers and railroad workers settled the area southwest of Duluth and many became farmers. On April 16, 1900 a constitution was written and St. John's Evangelical Lutheran was formed. The congregation affiliated with the Suomi Synod, with headquarters at Hancock, Michigan. Heikki Servala served as the first pastor. He lived in West Duluth and served a large area, traveling by train. Services were often held on a weekday afternoon, still, attendance was good.

The first church was dedicated

in 1902 and sixteen years later it was destroyed by fire. The second church building was dedicated in 1920. For nearly fifty years, worship was held in that sanctuary. Services were conducted in the Finnish language until the 1950's when English gradually became in full use. In 1965, the congregation joined the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations.

On May 20, 1970, lightning struck the church building and it was reduced to ashes. Services continued at the Pine Lake Township Hall with Lyle Twite as lay pastor. That summer the "Miracle Church," as it is called, was rebuilt with almost all volunteer labor. On November 11, 1970, a former lay pastor, Clifford Johnson of Esko, Minnesota, conducted the dedication.

Mr. Korpi's historical review concludes: "We of the latter generations of St. John's must remember the rich heritage we have received from the labors of so many. As we offer ourselves to His service, it is because of His great love, mercy and strength He has provided. All praise, honor and glory are due our heavenly Father as worship continues in St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church."

Illinois congregation joins the AFLC

Morris, Illinois — Grace Lutheran Church, 10025 N. Route 47, Morris, finalized its decision recently to withdraw from the ELCA and affiliate with the AFLC. A call committee has been organized to proceed in the search for a pastor.

Minot, North Dakota — Bethel Lutheran is celebrating its 25th Anniversary the weekend of September 23-24, 2000.

Pastor Roy Johnson, Ortle, South Dakota, has resigned as pastor of Ortle Free Lutheran and Calvary Lutheran in Wallace in order to accept the call from the Norland and Roseau Lutheran Parish in Roseau, Minnesota. He expects to begin his new ministry on October 1, 2000.

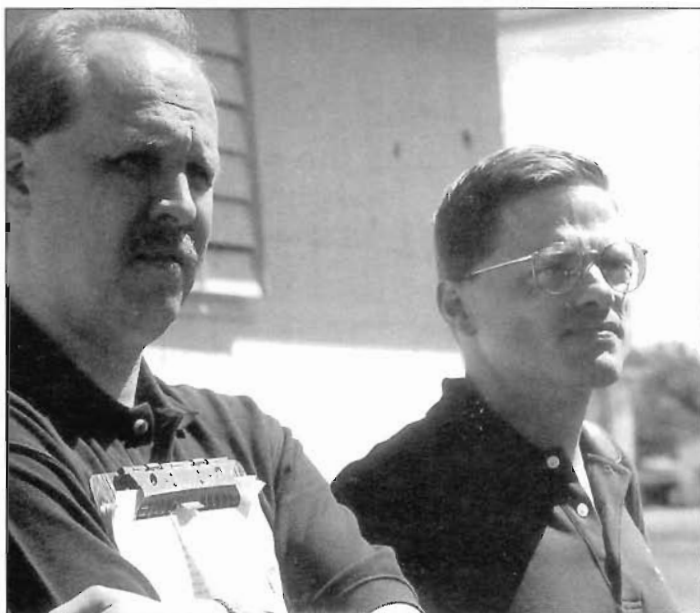
The Free Lutheran Seminary, Plymouth, Minnesota begins its new year on September 6, 2000, with nine first-year students. At the July 14, board of trustees meeting Ken White, Buffalo, Minnesota was accepted as a special student. Mr. White is a prison chaplain. Several students are taking a few classes with expectation to be full-time students in the future. Also being offered are Monday morning classes specially designed for part-time students.

The Association Free Lutheran Bible School expects to enroll 140-145 students by September 6, when their fall semester classes begin. Mark Johnson, dean of students, requests prayer, "Especially pray for the annual fall retreat at the ARC September 8-10. It's a real time of soul-searching for our students as we start our year."

Five or more students are preparing to begin their year of study at the Ministry Training Institute, the new third-year missions program at AFLBS. Missionary Todd Schierkolk is heading this initial year's program. MTI offices are housed in the old dean's office in the women's dorm.



Argyle, Minnesota — Our Savior's Lutheran recently broke ground for a 2,200 square foot addition. It includes a sanctuary that will seat over 200 parishioners and an overflow area for special occasions. Three large Sunday school rooms will be added in the lower level along with a community room. The 102-year-old congregation had building additions in 1973 and 1991. Pastor Ken Thoreson serves the congregation along with Alma Free Lutheran in rural Argyle.



Pastors Lloyd Quanbeck and Alan Arneson of the AFLC youth board listened as final instructions were given to the youth before going out to share their faith. Pastor Quanbeck reported, "The youth came back and some were discouraged by their conversations, or lack of conversations, with nonbelievers, while others were ecstatic about what God had done through His Word as they shared it."



One evangelism team posed outside their van before going to Wild Mountain Waterslide in nearby Taylors Falls. Tauren Deatherage said, "I never realized how many people there are out there that didn't know about Jesus until we went out to witness to them. I realized this week that God is trying to use us to help them."

Youth conference trains



Eva Tolosky said that she appreciated the leadership conference because "all the AFLBS kids are so encouraging. It proves to me that being a Christian can actually be fun. I didn't know that before"

I walked with some of the nearly 180 youth, counselors, and trainers to the little lake on the west side of the Association Retreat Center grounds. It was Friday morning, the next-to-the-last day of the Leadership Training Conference. I saw one young lady spin around to a group walking behind her and excitedly asked, "Are you guys ready to go?" The answer quickly came, "Yes, I've been waiting for this all week."

For a moment I thought, "Guess they're just ready to go home."

I was wrong. Another voice from that group said, "I'm going to the Stillwater marina. Where are you going?"

Immediately I realized there was something special these teens were looking forward to. I had just arrived at the end of the July 17-22 conference geared to develop and equip youth to be leaders for Jesus Christ. My curiosity was high as I gathered with them at the lake.

Pastor Kevin Olson, AFLC Youth Ministries Director, stood on the lifeguard stand and related how

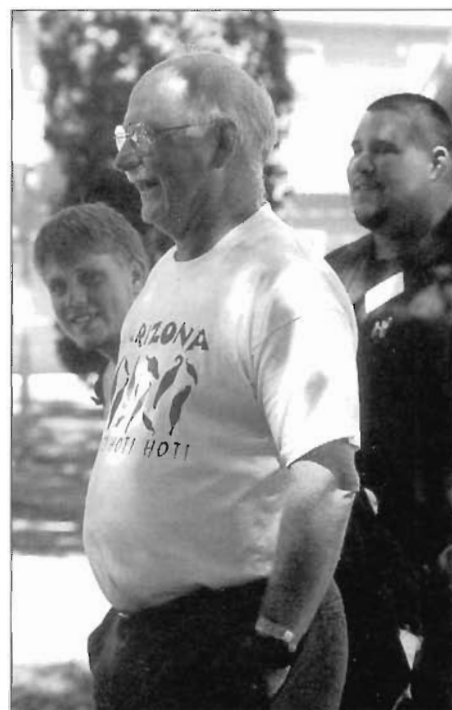
Jesus had gathered His disciples by the shore of the Sea of Galilee before sending them out to proclaim the gospel. I sensed the earnestness in their faces as they listened and prayed. When the group dispersed for lunch, I started asking questions.

AFLC Evangelist/Director Jim Rasmussen had "E.D. Trainer" on his name tag. I learned he was one of sixteen evangelism and discipleship trainers working with the youth that week along with 20 counselors and guest speakers such as: Tim Berntson and Jeremy Larson of Valley City, North Dakota; Pastor Tim Johnson of Fertile, Minnesota; and Pastor Mark Olson of Tioga, North Dakota. Thursday evening retired missionary to Mexico, Pastor Richard Gunderson, challenged the youth if they know Christ as their personal Savior, they have an obligation to share Christ with others. He added, "Live your life in the joy of the Lord with no regrets."

AFLC President Robert Lee shared each morning at the 7:45 devotions on the theme verse from



Students gathered by the lake before departing to their evangelism sites. The leadership conference is held every other year. Plans are underway for next summer's Free Lutheran Youth Convention in Estes Park, Colorado, July 16-21.



Pastor Richard Gunderson was always ready to share a good time with the youth.

for evangelism

I Peter 3:15, "In your hearts, set apart Christ as Lord, Always be ready to give an answer." Pastor Alan Arneson, Badger, Minnesota, and the camp dean said, "Yes, we had the fun stuff of rock climbing, ball games, canoeing and other water sports. We also aimed to stretch the youth by asking them to do some things they haven't done before. We taught them how to personally do inductive Bible study using the Gospel of John. Bill Faye's pamphlet, 'How To Share Your Faith Without An Argument' served as the guideline for preparation to go out that Friday afternoon to Wal Mart, the Stillwater marina, parks and nursing homes and seek opportunities to verbally share their faith."

Pastor Lloyd Quanbeck, Minot, North Dakota, and chairman of the youth board which sponsored the week, said he was surprised by the role-playing training sessions he led. "I didn't expect such enthusiasm from the youth. They are eager to learn."

Each evening ended with an afterglow led by Pastor Tim Carlson



Pastor Rodney Johnson points his evangelism group to their new location. Wendy Berg summarized the week, "God has given me more confidence, and He has helped me to understand the importance of evangelism. He has also helped me to understand why I need to stay in His Word and keep Him number one in my life."

of Wheatland, Iowa. He summed up his thoughts on the week with a smile and said, "This is a practical camp. It really helps youth to be leaders and share their faith. Second, the afterglows were amazing. The youth themselves were telling of Jesus, not just about their lives, their great youth group at home or their wonderful youth leader. I was overwhelmed by how they shared the Word of God."

Lunch ended and the small groups with their E.D. trainer filled

the vans and left for their designated evangelism locations. I remembered the exchange I had overheard a couple of hours earlier while walking to the lake. This really was the climax of the week. They had been preparing and praying to go out and tell the saving message of the cross to a lost world. That's what the Leadership Training Conference is all about.



— Solveig Hjermstad

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Wilderness Camp, Lake Park, Minnesota enjoyed record attendance during its annual Bible Camp on July 11-16, with 115 adults and 41 children registered. The nine sleeping rooms constructed in the new chapel building were all used by people without tents or campers. Teachers were Sarah Olson and Pastor Phil Haugen and the evening services were conducted by Dr. Jonathan Strand of Sherwood Park, Alberta.

The Wilderness Camp is also scheduled to host a Labor Day Weekend Retreat, September 2-4, 2000. It will begin with supper on Friday evening and conclude with a Bible study on Monday morning. People interested in going to the steam engine day at nearby Rollag will have time to do that. The Wilderness Camp has minimal facilities offering indoor washrooms, the sleeping rooms and a chapel area. For more information call Pastor Bruce Dalager at 701-772-1218.



Glyndon, Minnesota — Pictured are recent new members at Maranatha Free Lutheran. Pastor Dale Finstrom (far right) serves the congregation.

Medicine Lake Lutheran Academy, in suburban Minneapolis, is seeking a director of business and finance. The primary objective of the position is to direct the financial and operational aspect of the school, and to manage the support service relative to administration, buildings and grounds, and information systems. MLLA is seeking an individual with strong administrative, interpersonal and team skills who has a mature and consistent relationship with Jesus Christ. Please send resume to Mrs. Beverly Enderlein, Medicine Lake Lutheran Academy, 3414 Louisiana Ave. N., Crystal, MN 55427.

Pastor Bill Goodman, Bemidji, Minnesota, has announced his retirement effective October 1, 2000. He has been serving Trinity, Landstad, and Sell Lake Lutheran Parish in Shevlin, Minnesota since 1990.

Pastor Michael Crowell, Lake Stevens, Washington has accepted the call to be part-time pastor of New Hope Lutheran in Snohomish, Washington. He will continue to be director of Mission Aviation Training Academy headquartered in Arlington, Washington. Pastor Ted Berkas concludes his interim pastorate at Snohomish in September.

AFLC Memorial Gifts

Department given to —
In Memory of

AFLTS

*Rudolph Berntson
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*Raymond Bergstrom
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Mabel S. Anderson

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences (7 months) — January 1 - July 31, 2000

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN JULY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$252,865.00	\$18,377.41	154,432.08	61
Seminary	118,291.00	7,595.44	57,823.00	49
Bible School	164,270.00	8,760.04	87,945.64	54
Home Missions.	262,125.00	12,722.11	138,197.85	53
World Missions.	239,968.00	8,345.20	85,670.37	36
Capital Investment . . .	15,226.00	972.63	5,849.94	38
Parish Education . . .	69,480.00	3,533.16	40,920.21	59
Church Extension . . .	25,285.00	655.58	13,833.42	55
TOTALS	\$1,147,510.00	60,961.57	584,672.51	51
TOTALS 1999	1,013,386.00	77,785.04	568,037.35	56

Goal 58%

Evangelism Department income for July was \$2,965.73.

Youth Ministries budget for the year is \$37,300. Receipts at the end of July are \$7,646.45, which is 20% of the budget.

Give them Jesus

In the introduction to her book, *Just Give Me Jesus*, Anne Graham Lotz talks about the many trials she has faced recently. In thinking of them she writes, "My duties and responsibilities at times seem overwhelming and my schedule is overfilled. But I don't want a vacation, I don't want to quit, I don't want sympathy, I don't want money, I don't want recognition, I don't want to escape, I don't even want a miracle! ... just give me Jesus."

As in many of our congregations a new Sunday school year begins and we contemplate what to share with those whom we have the privilege of teaching, our lesson plans could be filled with many good and helpful things. But let's be sure we give them the best. Just give them Jesus!

The Apostle Paul knew he needed Jesus most of all. "But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings" (Philippians 3:7, 8, 10, NIV).

It is good if our Sunday school students know the order of the books of the Bible. It is nice if they know something of church history and the background of our church body. It will be helpful for them if they know what the Bible says about the social issues of the day. But having all of this knowledge alone will not save them. It won't make them right with God. They need to know Jesus. Nothing else compares to the greatness of knowing Him and being in a personal relationship with the One who died on the cross and rose again.

Paul's prayer for the Ephesians is an appropriate prayer for each Sunday school teacher to pray. "I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better" (Ephesians 1:17, NIV).

My chief goal for the students in my Sunday school class is that at the end of the year they will know Jesus better. I have other things I would like to see happen, but that one goal is over all the rest.

Wanting students to know Jesus better does not mean we only teach from the Gospels. All of the Bible,

both the Old Testament and the New, points to Jesus. He is the center of it all.

After His resurrection, Jesus walked with two men on the road to Emmaus and taught them from the Scriptures, showing that it all pointed to Himself. "And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself" (Luke 24:27, NIV).

We learn about ethics by looking to Jesus and seeing how He conducted Himself. Observing Him teaches us what is right and wrong and what we should do.

We grow in our ability to relate to others by studying how Jesus relates to people. He is the perfect role model.

Our values are impacted by learning what Jesus values. We look to Him and find what we ought to treasure.

We become wise by growing in our knowledge of the One who holds all wisdom.

In order to learn how to combat evil, possibly some limited amount of time needs to be spent considering the schemes of the forces of evil. Far more time, however, should be spent contemplating the power of Christ and the victory He won at the cross. The better we know Him, the stronger we become.

Direction comes from knowing the One who is "the way and the truth and the life" (John 14:6, NIV).

Joy comes from growing ever closer to the One who came that we might

"have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10, NIV).

Peace is found in the Prince of Peace who said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" (John 14:27, NIV).

Martha was a friend of Jesus, but a troubled friend. She was "distracted by all the preparations that had to be made." Sunday school teachers and entire congregations can get distracted as well. Many good things need to be done. A lot of important things should be taught. But Jesus lovingly told Martha, "You are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." Mary "sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said" (Luke 10:39-42, NIV).

May our Sunday schools and all the teaching ministries of our congregations be times of listening to Jesus. We all need more of Him.

— Pastor Craig Johnson

"My chief goal for the students in my Sunday school class is that at the end of the year they will know Jesus better."

SOMETHING TO SHARE

Nesting

“Oh, look at the nest!” The sight of a nest usually brings a quick gasp followed with a pleased sigh. Whether it is nestled into its leafy coverage or you’ve found it fallen alongside the path, it is an object of wonder and amazement. Close examination shows its careful weaving, often of a variety of materials, along with its mud binding and often some of the parents’ down. And you always hope to see just a small remnant of a shell, bearing witness to what had been the nest’s purpose.

And you wonder, how can something so small, attached only to a simple limb, be such a valuable haven?

What is a haven? A haven is defined as a harbor, an anchorage, a place of refuge, and a sanctuary. Indeed, a nest certainly bears these qualities for the birds. With great care a pair of birds search for the perfect place to anchor its nest. Instinctively they know that the spot for anchoring their nest will provide its stability. This spot must also be in a harbored area, providing the shelter necessary for the protection of the bird family during its time of brooding and nurturing. And as the chicks grow, mature, and eventually leave the nest, it is their place of refuge in times of unfavorable weather and their sanctuary from predators.

“The builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself.

For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything” (Hebrews 3:3b, 4).

God has planned that a Christian, whether as a single adult or as a couple, shall build a home. With great care a Christian should intend to weave a sturdy home. The fibers of Bible study, fellowship, prayer, worship, and service are interwoven and anchored in our faith. Opportunities to learn, gain understanding, and use our abilities blend into and bind this weaving to make an even stronger home.

This home, built upon God’s principles, is to be a nurturing base. Home is where sons, daughters, nieces, nephews, grandchildren or friends can seek counsel. It is where they can ask questions freely; where they can feel safe, knowing that those who would desire to bring harm to them are not allowed. It is where they know they won’t be teased or put down, and where they are allowed to be themselves. It is a place where they know they are loved.

When something is regarded as highly useful for a specific purpose, it is deemed valuable. What more valuable place is there than a Christian home? Here the truths of the Scriptures can be presented and taught. Here we can feed in the Truth and grow in understanding. Here mature Christians can instruct and guide family and friends in the ways of the Lord. Here is encouragement to put others first and learn to serve. Here is where a new faith’s first unsteady

steps are encouraged and nurtured for growth until it is firm and ready to stand on its own.

While a young bird doesn’t return to the nest, it does become a participating member of the flock. It is taught their ways and always bears the characteristics of its species. A young Christian, too, becomes a member of the flock. He learns more about God, for not only himself, but also in relation to the whole flock. He gains deeper understanding and learns skills beneficial to the entire flock. Yet, a Christian has the benefit of being able to return to his home. Generation after generation, Christians have borne the characteristics of a home built on God. Such homes bear witness of Psalm 90:1, “Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.”

Whether it’s the majestic haven of the eagle or the tiny weaving of the hummingbird, a bird’s nest is valuable and bears witness to its Creator. Does your home bear witness as a valuable Christian haven?



— Mary Christenson
Calvary Lutheran
Fergus Falls, Minnesota