

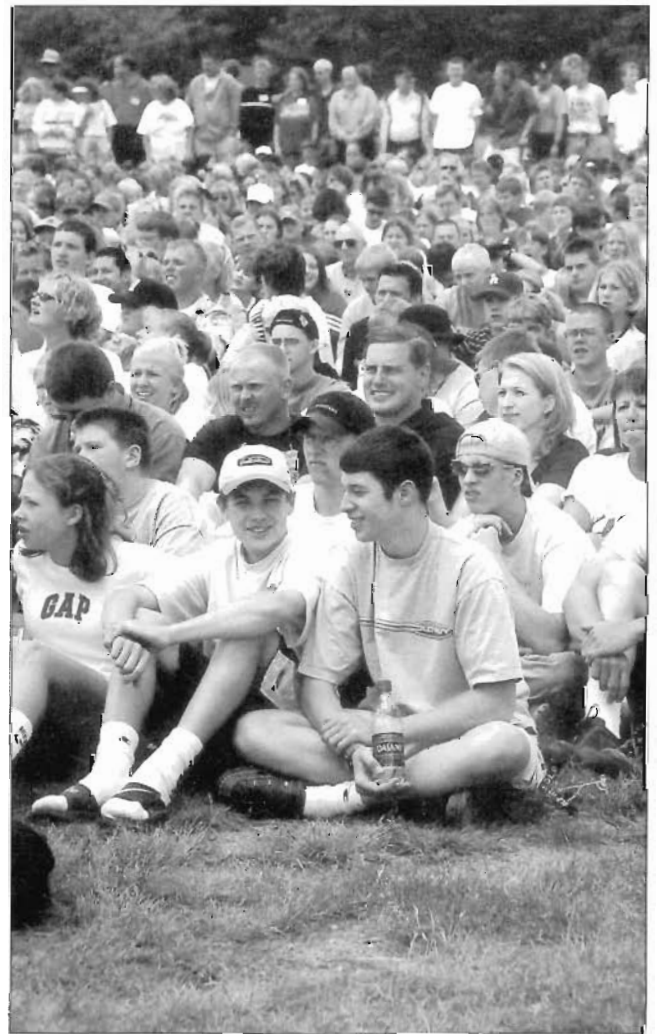
The Lutheran AMBASSADOR

August 3, 1999



Two big gatherings, One great God

The AFLC Annual Conference
and Free Lutheran Youth convention



THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

August 3 1999
Volume 37, Number 10



The magazine of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, 3110 East Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441. (612) 545-5631

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

COVER

The five men ordained at the 37th Annual Convergence: Rev. Craig Benson, Salem in Radcliffe, Iowa; Rev. Kenneth Hart, United in Greenbush, Minnesota; Rev. Gary Haug, assistant at Emmaus in Bloomington, Minnesota; Rev. Jason Holt, associate at Calvary in Fergus Falls, Minnesota; and Rev. David Johnson, associate at Faith in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Over 1500 youth and adults met at Colorado's Estes Park YMCA for the Free Lutheran Youth Convention.

Photos by Solveig Hjermstad

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. 612-545-5631.

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

Thanks be to a faithful God

"Behold, children are a gift of the Lord; the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them" (Psalm 127:3-5).

It was the birth of our first child and the probing question of a friend that caused me to examine this portion of Scripture. The question I had been asked was this, "How do you dare to bring children into a world like this?" It was the early '70s, and compared to today, those days did not present the same kind of problems and temptations that our children now face. As I pondered the question of my friend it was not a question of how my wife and I dared, but what does the Word of God say about this matter?

The verses of Psalm 127 speak of children as a gift, as a reward and as a blessing. I believe that the promise of these verses is as valid today as it was when it was first recorded. However, we should not take a single verse of Scripture and draw our conclusions or form our convictions from it alone. We need to look at the whole of Scripture to know what our God says in regard to the precious gift of children.

When God created Adam and Eve He commanded them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it." Adam and Eve were faithful to that command and God blessed their home with two sons, Cain and Abel. Anger and jealousy in the heart of Cain soon took over and he murdered his brother, Abel. The parents at that time could have decided against more children, but Scriptures tell us that yet another son was born to them. His name was Seth. Genesis 5:4 tells us that Adam had other sons and daughters. Why? Because God had said, "Be fruitful and multiply."

Bringing children into the world and rearing them to love and fear God is a difficult and sometimes overwhelming task. God knows that, and so He has given us specific instructions as to how to

carry out our responsibilities. In Deuteronomy 6:1-9, He admonishes us to teach and to be an example when we sit in our house, when we walk by the way, when we lie down, and when we rise up. Again, in Ephesians 6:4 we are admonished as fathers, "do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."

Considering these admonitions and the promise of Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it," my wife and I could in good conscience add to our family another son and a daughter.

Then in the winter of '79 our oldest was stricken with encephalitis. A long hospital stay, large hospital and doctor bills, and a son who was severely brain damaged were some of the shocks and trials of the following months. Had we failed? Had God failed to keep His promises? Indeed not! In the months and years that followed we found Him faithful to all His promises. Among them was the promise of Romans 8:28, "All things work together for good to them that love God and are called according to His purpose."

Yes, God is faithful and children are a blessing!



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

sound bites

– From the 1999 Annual Conference –

1 All of our building, whether it is the planting of new congregations or strengthening of older ones, must be firmly established on the one divine foundation that stands forever. This foundation is Jesus Christ.

– Pastor Robert Lee
AFLC President

The Word of God is the *vehicle* by which God the Holy Spirit picks us up and carries us on the road unto eternal life.

4 The Word is not simply a help for salvation, but it is a necessity: it is the means of grace.

– Pastor Phil Haugen
AFLC Board of Parish Education
Chairman

2 If we don't keep our focus on Jesus Christ and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, we can plant seeds and water all we want, but without God giving the increase, it just will not grow.

– Al Brazier
AFLC Partners in Mission
Outreach Coordinator

3 The grace that God bestows is extraordinary, but the means He uses are ordinary.

– Marian Christopherson
AFLC Parish Education Director

In our attempt to grow congregations and to grow the AFLC, let us carefully examine our motivation and our methods to be sure that "Christ, and Him crucified" is the thrust of our preaching, teaching, and our outreach.

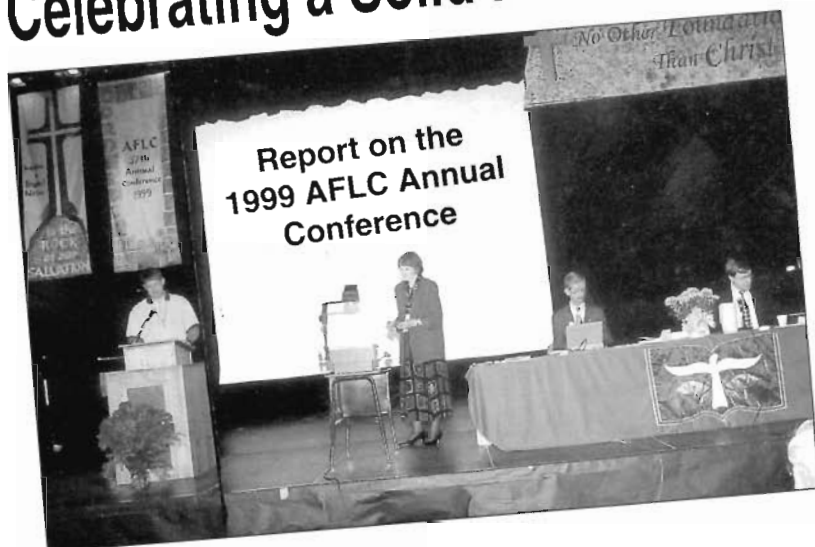
– Pastor Ken Moland
AFLC Coordinating Committee Chairman

6

The future is our friend if our foundation is in Jesus Christ.

– Pastor Mark Olson
Arlington, South Dakota

Celebrating a Solid Foundation



— **Pastor Craig Johnson**
Editor, *Lutheran Ambassador*



Loren and Sharon Tungseth of the host congregation, Calvary Lutheran of Fergus Falls, coordinated conference preparations.



Ruby Abel, wife of retired Missionary John Abel of Hitterdal, Minnesota.



The conference sessions were held at the Fergus Falls Middle School.

The “spiritual powerhouse” of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations took place June 16 to 20, 1999 as the 37th Annual Conference was held in Fergus Falls, Minnesota. The registration for the time of spiritual renewal and discussion of the business of the church totaled 541.

Remembering what is the Foundation

Each evening of the Wednesday through Sunday conference was spent in worship and praise. The opening service of the conference began with an extended time of singing. A mass choir that had come together for the conference shared in song at the service under the direction of the conference’s host pastor Rodger Olson. The evening message was given by Pastor Mark Olson of Arlington, South Dakota, speaking on the conference theme of “No Other Foundation than Christ,” taken from I Corinthians 3:11.

Other evening services focused on missions, a laymen’s service one night and a youth service another evening.

Each morning of the conference, at 11:30 a.m., the conference took a break from discussing business to spend extended time in prayer. Breaks for prayer also occurred at other times throughout the conference.

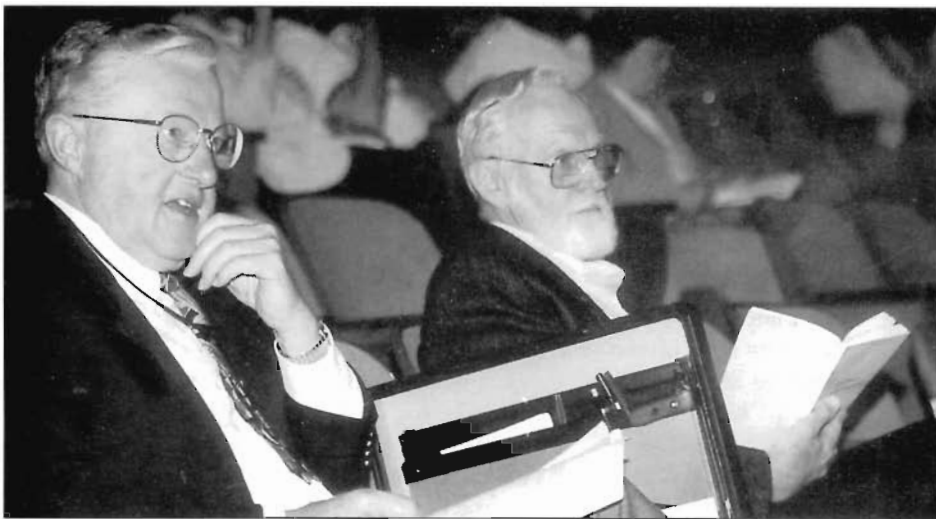
The conference closed with worship services as well. On Sunday morning a communion service was held at the host church, Calvary Lutheran of Fergus Falls. A second service later that morning featured the ordination of five men into the ministry.

Building on the Foundation

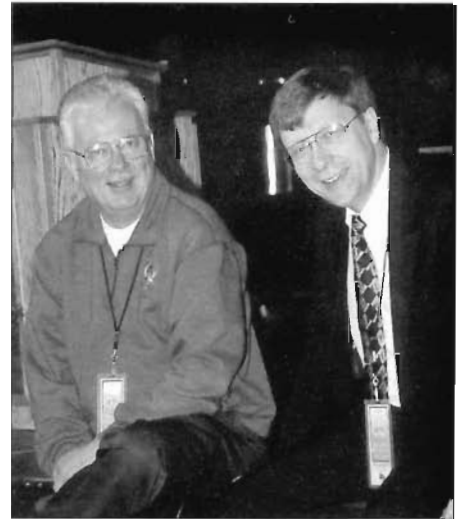
The president of the AFLC, Pastor Robert Lee reported to the conference that “God continues to build His church through the AFLC, and we give Him all the glory.” He also expressed, “What an encouragement, too, when the final financial report for 1998 showed an average of 101% support for our ministry goals!”

One aspect of the position of president of the AFLC is to be “a pastor to pastors.” In addressing that area Pastor Lee spoke of how “Living congregations need living pastors who share their vision for reaching the lost. The pastor is called to be both a servant and a leader, and it is sometimes difficult to maintain the necessary balance between these two characteristics.”

In an effort to meet some of the needs of pastors, a series of “Shepherds’ Prayer Summits” will be held, subsidized by an Aid Association for Lutherans grant.



Ernie Miedema, Valley City, North Dakota and Roland Meyer, Paxton, Illinois served as parliamentarians during the conference. Mr. Miedema is traveling this summer on behalf of the AFLC to assist with individual estate planning. He is the former director of development for the AFLC. He may be reached at 701-845-1829.



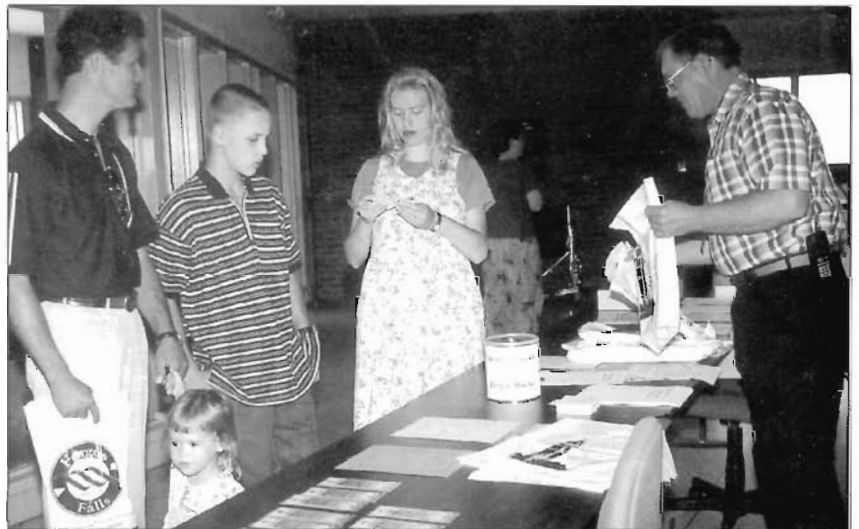
Pastor Gene Sundby, AFLC-Canada president, chatted with AFLC President Robert Lee during a coffee break.

In his report to the conference as chairman of the coordinating committee, Pastor Ken Moland reported on the six new congregations that have been placed on the congregational roster of the AFLC during the past year: Community of Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, Omaha, Nebraska; Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Lincoln, Illinois; St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lovi, Cranberry Township, Pennsylvania; Word of Truth Lutheran Church, Burleson, Texas; Trondhjem Lutheran Church, Volin, South Dakota; and Living Water Christian Church, Parker, Colorado. Three congregations withdrew their affiliation from the AFLC: Christ Lutheran Church, Savannah, Georgia; St. Matthew Lutheran Church, Mountain Home, Arkansas; and St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Branson, Missouri.

During the time of making resolutions the conference recognized that "a number of our congregations are experiencing pastoral vacancies." It was then resolved "that we pray the Lord of the Harvest to call forth spiritually alive men to become servant leaders as pastors so that Christ may continue building 'free and living' congregations in the AFLC."

Regarding the Association Retreat Center in Oseola, Wisconsin, the conference resolved "that we thank God for the many people served, for the building renovations completed, and for the new gym/auditorium building erected ... that we praise God for the over 200 souls converted to Christ at the ARC during the past year."

(continued on next page)



David and Robin Jameson and their family from Freedom Lutheran near Ottawa, Illinois received their packets from the registration table.



Two members of the coordinating committee, Marlin Benrud and Pastor Les Galland.



Pastor Kenneth Moland, Kirkland, Washington, led the morning prayer hours.



Pastor Rodger and Helene Olson of Fergus Falls, Minnesota led the opening music for many of the sessions.



Millie Strand, Remer, Minnesota, the widow of the late Pastor John Strand, the first AFLC president.

CONFERENCE

Much of the building of the present and the future of the church body goes on at the AFLC Bible school and seminary. The schools are currently in the midst of the Vision 2004 project. The first phase involves seminary student housing units. The units are slated to be completed September 17. People were encouraged to pray that the completion may be earlier — in time for the arrival of new students.

A positive vote during the past year

by the city of Plymouth, Minnesota, opens the door for much more construction to go on at the campus. In response to that, the conference resolved "that thanks be given to God and to all individuals who were moved to support these plans, and ... that all congregations and individuals carefully consider how they may support the Vision 2004 project."

The conference also resolved to give prayer support to the third year pilot program, Mission Training Institute, which is to begin on the Bible school campus this fall. The program has come about because of student interest in missions and evangelism training. Pastor James L. Johnson, dean of AFLBS, expects five to 15 students to enroll.

The Parish Education Department of the AFLC reported the reprinting of "Romans: A

Devotional Commentary" by C. O. Rosenius. This is the first in a new ongoing series of books called the "AFLC Heritage Series." The department also told of a wide selection of materials that has been added to its inventory during the past year.

Expanding the Foundation

AFLC World Missions Director, Pastor Eugene Enderlein, shared with words and video about his trips during the past year to each of the four mission fields of the AFLC: Brazil, India, Mexico and Portugal. As he spoke of the need to pray for more workers on the mission fields, he challenged the conference to consider, "Would we be ready to send out the 21 kids at AFLBS who are interested in missions?"

The chairman of the world missions committee, Vernon Russum, shared of his recent trips to Brazil and Mexico and encouraged others to make similar trips to the mission stations.

Elections were held during the conference to expand the missions corporation from 50 to 100 members. This was done in an effort to provide more people to draw from for serving on the home and world mission boards.

Trips to Mexico are led regularly by the Partners in Mission Outreach. A newer bus for the outreach was purchased in April. Thanks was given for money received, even during conference, to help toward paying off the bus.

Another group in the area of missions came into being during the past year. This group is called F.L.A.P.S. — Free Lutheran Association of Pilot Supporters. This group's initial project has involved the refurbishing of a plane donated to the work of AFLC Home Missions. The plane was dedicated during the annual conference and is slated



Conference tellers kept busy collecting and counting ballots.



Missionaries David and Sarah Nelson and their family.



Members of the Free Lutheran Association of Pilot Supporters (FLAPS) board beside the plane dedicated during the conference. Left to right: Ralph Peterson, Bob Dietsche, Pastor Mike Crowell, Pastor Tom Tuura, Lavon Bohling, and Eldwyn Van Bruggen.



Jon and Jennifer Dryburgh and their family, Grand Forks, North Dakota, by the Cessna 150 plane to be used by Jennifer's parents, Pastor Henry and Linda Mohagen in their ministry in South Naknek, Alaska.

Plane for mission in Alaska dedicated at conference



The dedication service for the Cessna airplane was held early one morning outside Calvary Free Lutheran. Pastor Harvey Jackson, Hatton, North Dakota led the group in singing.

to be used in the work in Naknek, Alaska.

The report of home missions also shared regarding the "evangelism blitz" that took place in Gilbert, Arizona. A new work has begun in that suburb of Phoenix and 29 volunteers traveled there last fall to help in outreach to the community.

Pastor Jim Rasmussen, the AFLC Director of Evangelism/Evangelist, reported on his first year in the new position. He stated his need of having others praying for him: "Prayer is the key to evangelism. I, as your Director of Evangelism, need your prayer support daily. I cannot function as God's servant for one day without your prayer covering."

In the area of outreach and ministry to youth, the youth board's desire to expand ministry to those of college age was mentioned. Ministry to youth is on the heart of

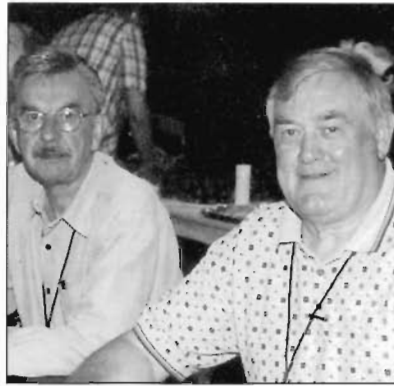
many AFLC congregations, evidenced by what AFLC Youth Ministries Director, Pastor Kevin Olson described as "record-setting months" this past January and February "as 16 churches inquired about having a person help their congregation lead the youth ministries and reach youth for Jesus Christ. Ten of those inquiries have been for full-time positions."

Elections held during the conference included the re-election as vice president of Pastor Elden Nelson of Kandiyohi, Minnesota and as secretary, Pastor Brian Davidson of Plymouth, Minnesota. Amery Free Lutheran extended an invitation to hold the 2000 conference at the ARC in Oseola, Wisconsin. An invitation was given to hold the 2002 conference in El Campo, Texas.





Pastor Elden Nelson, AFLC vice president and Gene Quist, chairman of the commission on evangelism.



Two newly elected board members are Pastor David Skordahl, Dalton, Minnesota, of the coordinating committee and Clyde Lundgren, Bethel Park, Pennsylvania of the world missions committee.



AFLBS summer ministry teams assisted with about 70 vacation Bible school children at Calvary Lutheran during the conference sessions.



1999 Annual Conference election results

Vice President — 1 year term

Pastor Elden Nelson, Kandiyohi, MN

Secretary — 1 year term

Pastor Brian Davidson, Plymouth, MN

Coordinating Committee — 5-year term

David Skordahl, Dalton, MN

Schools' Board of Trustees

— 5-year term

David Borg, Cokato, MN

World Missions Committee

— 5-year terms

Pastor Tom Tuura, St. James, MN

Clyde Lundgren, Bethel Park, PA

Home Missions Committee

— 5-year terms

Halvor Knapp, Kandiyohi, MN

Pastor Tony Stockman, Brandon, MN

Board of Publications and

Parish Education

4-year term: Loiell Dyrud,

Thief River Falls, MN

5-year term: Jan Strand, Kenyon, MN

Commission of Evangelism

— 5-year term

Gene Quist, Bloomington, MM

Youth Board — 5-year term

Jon Dryburgh, Grand Forks, ND

Christian Academic Education Board

— 5-year term

Bonnie Handsaker, Radcliffe, IA

Pension Board — 5-year term

Glenn Espe, Thief River Falls, MN

Stewardship Board — 5-year term

LaVern Thompson, Fergus Falls, MN

Budget Analysis Committee

2-year term: Robert Knutson, McVile, ND

3-year term: Brent Peterson, Brookings, SD

Colloquy Committee — 1-year term

Pastor Michael Burke, Ishpeming, MI

Pastor Jon Benson, Upsala, MN

Pastor Joel Rolf, Valley City, ND

Pastor Bruce Dalager, Grand Forks, ND

Pastor James Fugleberg, Fargo, ND

FAR LEFT:

Pastors Del Pamer, Shakopee, Minnesota, and Brad Hoefs, Omaha, Nebraska.

LEFT:

Grace Loftsgard, (standing) Bonnie Van Bruggan, and Adeline Monson, all of Calvary Free Lutheran, Gilbert, Arizona.

Nominating Committee for the 2000 conference

Eastern North Dakota — Jon Dryburgh, Grand Forks

Western North Dakota/Eastern Montana — Wayne Deubner, Brockton, Montana

South Dakota — Dr. Robert Kohl, Brookings

Lake Superior — John Keinanen, Cloquet, Minnesota

Northwestern Minnesota — Loiell Dyrud, Thief River Falls

North Central Minnesota — Oliver Landsverk, Fosston

Southwest Central Minnesota — Darrell Weers, Fergus Falls

Nebraska/Colorado — Lavon Bohling, Hebron, Nebraska

Minneapolis — Marcus Erickson, Albertville, Minnesota

Central Tri-state — Paul Handsaker, Radcliffe, Iowa

Northern Michigan — Richard Schauland, Marquette

South Central — Pastor Tim Hurley, Ponca City, Oklahoma

Southwestern — Vinton Bruflat, Chandler, Arizona

Pacific Northwest — Jon Galland, Everett, Washington

Eastern — James Taylor, Bethel Park, Pennsylvania

Illinois — Stan Dale, Ottawa, Illinois



Women's Missionary Federation Executive Secretary Cheryl Aakre with Sonja Dahl and her sister, Joan Korhonen of Cumberland, Wisconsin. Sonja expects to begin R.N. classes this fall at Minnesota's Winona State University. She served two years at the Miriam Infant Home in Brazil and had to return to the United States because of visa restrictions.

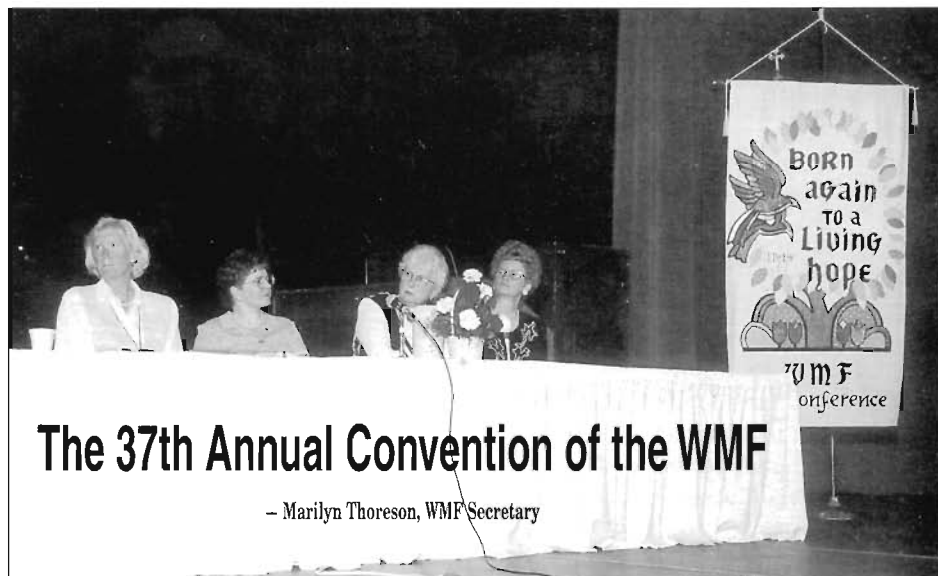
The Women's Missionary Federation of the AFLC held their convention on June 16, 1999 at the Fergus Falls Middle School in Fergus Falls, Min-

nesota. "Born Again to a Living Hope" from I Peter 1:3 was the theme. Phyllis and Maribeth Svenson of the host congregation, Calvary Free Lutheran, made the beautiful banner for the 265 convention goers.

Pastor Rodger and Helene Olson opened the day with Psalm 34:3 and a time of praise and worship in song. Miriam Klemme, Starbuck, Minnesota led the prayer hour. Missionary Sarah Nelson shared some of the joys and challenges from her family's first term in Brazil. She thanked the WMF for the valuable mission house they enjoy while on furlough.

A trio from Maranatha Free Lutheran in Willmar, Minnesota sang followed by the morning Bible study led by Cheryl Skordahl of Dalton, Minnesota. She also introduced next year's Bible study entitled, "Spiritual Shape-Up," an exercise in the Word, by Kathy Klenner.

A trio from Bethel Lutheran of Grafton, North Dakota sang during the offering for home missions. The



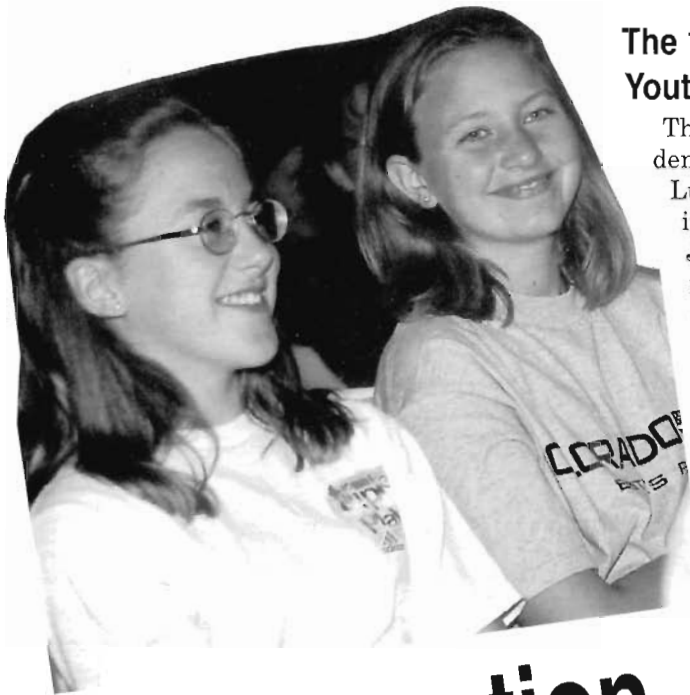
The 37th Annual Convention of the WMF

— Marilyn Thoreson, WMF Secretary



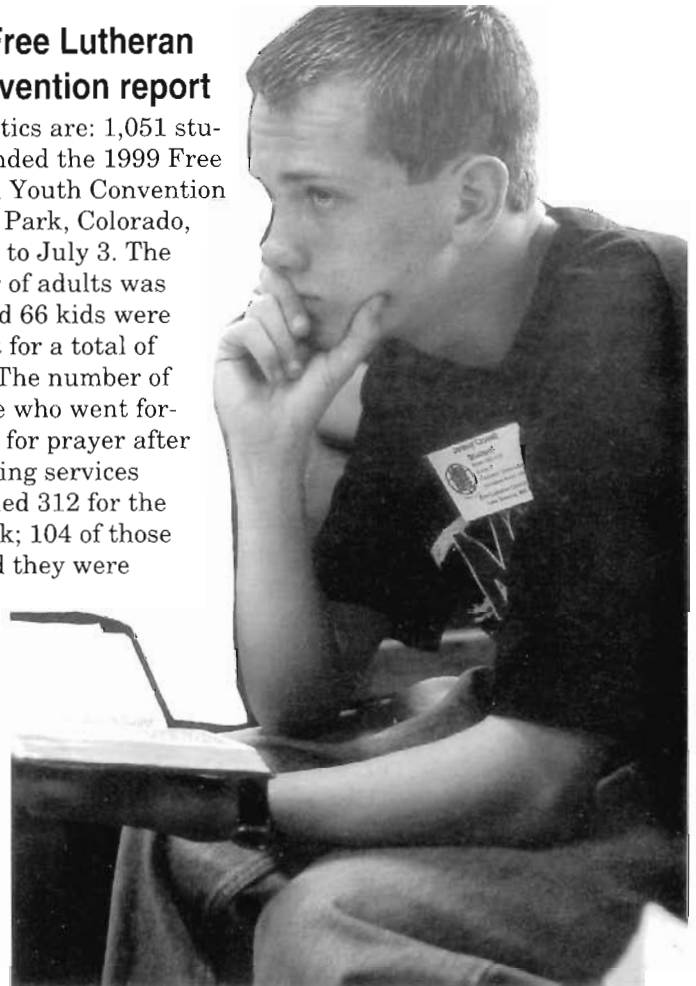
Faith Nelson and Cheryl Skordahl.

business meeting was led by President Faith Nelson. Greetings from Brazil were read from Heidi Quam, Paul and Becky Abel, and Carolyn and Connely Dyrud. It was announced that the new short-term assistant to replace Heidi Quam will be Anna Mattson, a 1999 graduate of AFLBS. Election results were: Faith Nelson, president and Mary Pollestad, 2nd vice president (both incumbents). Tammy Vukonich of Amery, Wisconsin, (continued on next page)



The 1999 Free Lutheran Youth Convention report

The statistics are: 1,051 students attended the 1999 Free Lutheran Youth Convention in Estes Park, Colorado, June 28 to July 3. The number of adults was 405, and 66 kids were present for a total of 1,521. The number of people who went forward for prayer after evening services totaled 312 for the week; 104 of those said they were



A convention with much more!

— *Pastor Craig Johnson*
Editor, *Lutheran Ambassador*

WMF REPORT

was elected treasurer, replacing Jeannette Benson who had served two terms.

Before the afternoon speakers, Edie Gudim led the memorial service giving honor to those gone on to glory. Laurel Johnson led the first workshop encouraging ladies who have enjoyed many years of service to remain steadfast in the heritage we have in Christ, the AFLC and our WMF, while imparting to the younger ladies the mission of ministry. Jeanne Brandt led the second session from Titus 2. She encouraged the younger women to simplify and prioritize their lives, be teachable, get involved and reach out to be mentored.

Lori Engevick of St. Cloud, Minnesota sang "My Life is in Your Hands," followed by closing prayer by Faith Nelson.



Anna Mattson, Greenbush, Minnesota, will be leaving for Brazil in September as a short-term assistant.



Idella Lundeen, wife of retired AFLC Pastor Mauritz Lundeen, Brandon, Minnesota, at the Thursday WMF breakfast.

receiving Christ for the first time. Counseling specialists were available during the week, and they dealt with 35 specific issues. Those are the statistics, but there was more to this convention that gathered around the theme of "More to This Life," taken from John 10:10.

There was worship.

Praising the Lord with over 1,500 people, many of whom are enthusiastic teenagers, led by a well prepared group of musicians, is a unique and powerful experience. Worship was also the topic of workshops as teens were encouraged to engage in worship as participants and not merely spectators; seeing it as a matter of



the heart seeking after God, responding to God's call.

There were friendships — some begun and some renewed. At a Bible camp at the ARC a couple years ago, Kadi Johnson of Circle Pines, Minnesota made a



friend in Julianne Borg. "She showed me how fun being a Christian could be. Her attitude made me want to be like that," said Kadi. She now encourages others at conventions such as this to "meet new people, take time to get to know them."

The value and power of friendships in Jesus that Kadi has learned, was discovered and demonstrated by many at FLY '99.

There was repentance. Many at Estes Park hadn't lived a lot of years, but they still had hearts full of guilt. Some were convicted of their rebellious attitude toward their parents and toward God. Some had wandered far from the Lord, and they wanted to come back. But they were carrying a lot of baggage. Thankfully, it was baggage Christ could deal with.

Tim Nelson of Eagen, Minnesota went forward to rededicate his life to Christ. "I admitted a lot of things I've done wrong. I got things off my chest for the first time," he says. "It feels good not having to worry about the sins I've committed. God has helped me see that if I ask for help, I will get it."

God demonstrated His ability to watch over things the night Tim went forward. In the

counseling area, a pastor was asked to come over and pray with Tim. No one but God knew that the pastor asked to come over was Tim's own pastor — Pastor Al Pinno. It was more than coincidence. God was at work.

There was healing. In their young lives many of the youth have already had to face some very difficult situations. More than one testified of having to deal with the suicide of a parent. Some have had close friends die in car accidents. Others have encountered serious diseases in their families and in their own lives.

The first night of the convention, a young man who was a friend of Cassie Bernall, one of the teenagers who was shot in the April 20 shooting at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, shared about the prayer group that had begun the day after the tragedy. In the midst of the pain, God has been demonstrating His power and love.

The Lord was bringing needed healing to hurting young people. One teen spoke of being "thankful for a second chance." Pastor Jason Holt of Fergus Falls, Minnesota, who was working with the counseling part of the convention, spoke of the deeper issues that some kids were confessing and receiving help with. "We saw some amazing things that the Lord did. It was encouraging to watch so many times the Lord brought counselor and student together," said Jason.

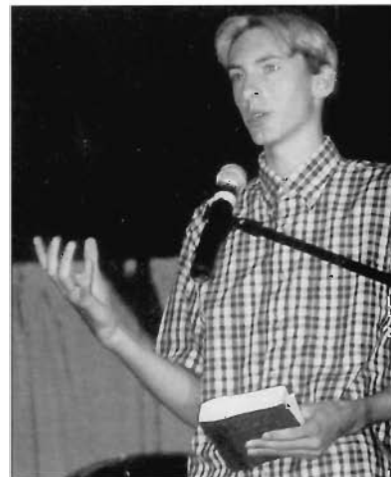
There was salvation. People who came to Colorado not having a relationship with Jesus Christ, left changed people. They could now say, as one testified, "It's the most awesome and glorious thing to be one of God's children."

Faith Lutheran of Shakopee, Minnesota brought 20 youth to the convention. They saw eight kids come to Christ for the first time. They were "getting serious about God," according to Esther Palmer. "It's going to draw us closer and make us a group and not just individuals. It's totally God."

There was commitment to serve and not fall away. One young person was inspired by one of the speakers to say, "I've marked my Bible, but now I want my Bible to mark me." Another said, "I want to do whatever He wants me to do."

A large part of that commitment was a desire to see others come to know Christ. The youth were challenged during the week

(continued on next page)





The youth and chaperones from Argyle, Minnesota posed for one more picture before boarding the bus for their long 28-hour ride home.



J.R. Cornish of Lake Stevens, Washington captured the 1,521 attendees of the '99 Free Lutheran Youth Convention on video.

YOUTH CONVENTION

to see the impact they could have on their churches, families, schools, communities and world, if they truly lived for the Lord. That commitment began at FLY '99 as a number of youth shared testimonies calling on others at the convention who were apart from the Lord to come to Jesus.

There was the building up of youth groups. One evening after the service, youth groups from the individual churches met together. Many spoke of the power of that time and the hope it gave them as they looked to the future. "That's where the real, ongoing work happens," was a comment shared by one as they reflected on their local youth group.

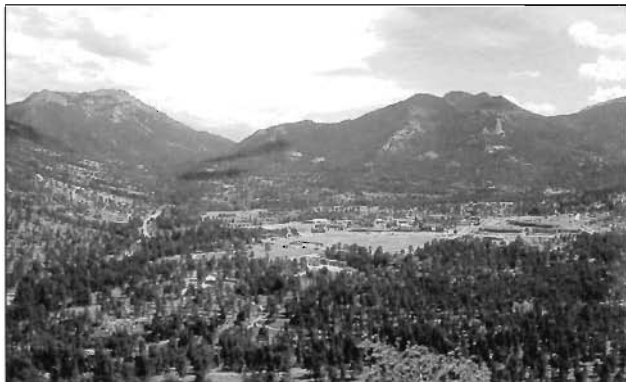
There was a lot of fun, playing basketball, volleyball and miniature golf, hiking in the Rocky Mountains, swimming, taking on the challenge of inflatable games, and just spending time with friends.

There was a lot of work. Registering and finding rooms for 1,500 people is a task most of us would not want to be faced with. During an evaluation and comment time, however, time and again people commented on the smoothness of the registration process and expressed their appreciation for the quality of the organization. FLY President Bob Halvorson described it as "a team effort with one focus of pointing people to Jesus." In reflecting on the convention he also said he was "amazed at how the Lord's Spirit moved and lives were changed for eternity."

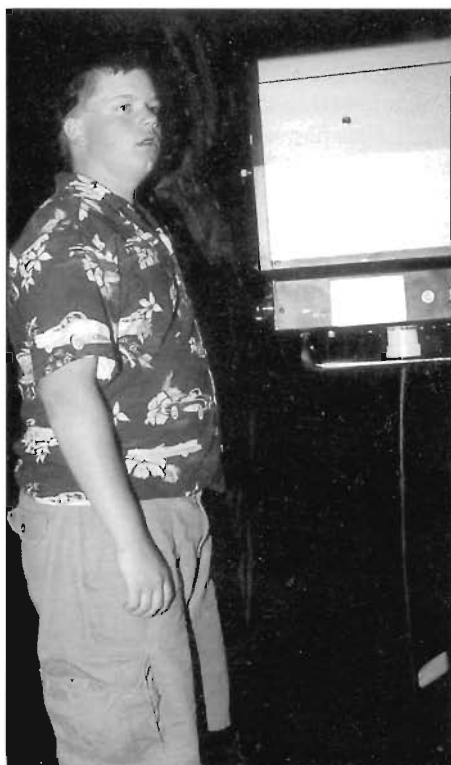


Wes Patterson, 2nd vice president of the Free Lutheran Youth. During the Friday afternoon business session, Pastor Jason Holt, Fergus Falls, Minnesota was elected to that position. Brooke Schrage, Wheatland, Iowa was elected as secretary, replacing Holly Roed.

There was more than just that one week. The goal was to make a difference in lives for more than just a few days but to instead make changes in the direction of lives and eternal destinies. Much stress was placed on the importance of daily devotions — students spending time each day in God's Word and in prayer. God's Spirit, working through His Word, can make it possible for the impact of FLY '99 to last not just a week, but for all eternity.



The hikers who made it to the top of the mountain enjoyed this view looking down on the Estes Park YMCA campground.



Matt Herset, Kalispell, Montana, operated one of the lights during the large group sessions in the Longhouse.



FLY President Bob Halvorson (leaning forward) and security personnel watched the afternoon recreation games and kept an eye on the mountain hikers. Halvorson was re-elected for another two-year term as president. Wade Mobley, first vice president, and Jeremy Erickson, devotional life secretary, were also re-elected to the FLY board. The 2001 FLY convention is scheduled for Estes Park from July 30 to August 4.



Pastor Steve Papillon, Wadena, Minnesota, led a workshop on "Forgiveness."

The youth and counselors from Rancho San Diego Lutheran in El Cajon, California.

Our first time

Rancho San Diego Lutheran

Boy's counselor, Steve Schaffer
Girl's counselor, Suzan Cresto



Our pastor, John Kent, attended FLY '97 just about the time our church began. In January of this year we began fundraising for FLY '99, with two of our youth scheduled to attend. By the time June arrived, nine youth were signed-up, and two adults agreed to accompany the group. Over \$6,000 was raised to send everyone, primarily through the effort of our Aid Association for Lutherans volunteers and a very supportive congregation.

Monday — First Impressions

The excitement of the nine youth was contagious, even with the apprehension of two who had never flown before. Everyone was on time, the shuttle met us as planned, and the weather was ideal. We were in Colorado!

The kids settled in and Steve and I went to the counselors' meeting. Among other things, we were told about altar calls and "serious" counseling issues. I was having some reservations and feeling slightly inadequate. We saw many young, enthusiastic counselors. Steve and I are in our forties and realized that even a little hill and a few flights of stairs had us gasping in the high altitude. Were we up to this?

That evening we attended our first FLY worship service. The music made our hearts soar. I have a terrible voice and found myself singing at the top of my lungs without inhibition. As we left the service, the girls decided to start a youth choir to introduce the dynamic praise music to our church, and the boys (caught up in the moment) agreed!

During the evening, a true story was told about a child jumping on a trampoline trying to reach his father who had been killed in a car accident. This made a tremendous impact on everyone, and was our first indication of the depth of messages that were yet to come.

There were two young men sitting in front of us, each with well-worn Bibles. When it came time for prayer, one of them tried to inconspicuously wipe away a tear. His buddy leaned over and quietly said, "You OK?" The response was a shrug and a non-committal reply. This young man and his pain remained with me throughout the convention. Who was he? Why was he suffering? I desperately wanted to put my arms around him and hug him, but knew that I would just break down crying.

Many of our youth had never witnessed an altar call, and watched in silent awe to see what would transpire. I whispered to Steve that maybe it was too soon for this — my own insecurities flagrantly surfacing. Obviously this was not the case as many young people came forward. Our youth were not about to budge from their seats, but as might be expected, before the week was through, each of them would indeed accept the call and kneel before the Lord.

As that first evening service concluded we knew without a doubt that each one of us was there for a specific reason. Although we had attended church together for years, Steve and I had actually only spoken together for a few minutes before this trip began.

By the end of this first day we each felt the bonding of commitment to our youth, and were filled with a sense of urgency to impress upon these teens the importance of living a God-centered life.

During the week Curt Cloninger became a favorite as he used his incredible gifts to make us laugh. One of the boys in our group later said, "Curt showed me the Jesus I was committing my life to." Pam Stenzel was another speaker we heard several times, and the girls in particular spent the remainder of the week quoting some of her statistics as well as her thought provoking statements such as, "She marked her Bible but her Bible never marked her. What a shame!" Pam's trademark, "But I lo-o-ove you," became our own inside joke. Serious messages had been conveyed, accepted, and firmly planted for the future.

Throughout the week I learned that it was acceptable to hug and cry, even among the guys. The adults as well as the youth seemed to cry often; tears of joy and sadness, and often intermingled tears of raw emotion as lives were changed before our eyes. We later heard many testimonies of choices, gratitude, commitment and rededication.

There is more to this life! Amen.



Pam Stenzel



Curt Cloninger, Atlanta, Georgia, shared several monologues during the week.

The Knock

Like a lone wolf
I cry out
Across the barren land

Waiting for someone
To come
And take me by the hand.

My heart is hard
And cold as ice
Though fire burns within

My hatred has consumed me
And my hunt
Will now begin.

I loved them so
But now I know
They're no good for my life.

Why can't I stop this hatred
And this anger
And this strife.

I now hear someone calling me
I hear it
Clear as day.

They're softly singing
Beckoning
Summoning me by name

I know the Voice
That's calling me
I once belonged to Him

But even though I hear it
My future
Still looks grim.

He's God and Savior
Merciful
Knocking on my door

And if I choose to let Him in
He'll be my
Saving Lord.

I slowly let the door
Swing ope
And gaze into His eyes

His lovingkindness
Comforts me.
And I can see no lies.

I don't know why I
Strayed before or
Why I left the flock

But I'm glad I
Opened up the door
When I heard Him knock.

— by *Rebekah Henrickson*
Fergus Falls, Minnesota

(Shared at the *FLY 1999*
Praise/Talent Show)

Diary of a teenager at the FLY convention



— Sarah Rolf, 15
Grace Lutheran
Valley City, North Dakota

Sunday, June 27

I can't believe it! The awesome week that my youth group and I have waited for has arrived. We've been fundraising for the last two years. I know that if it is only half as good as the last convention in '97, it will have been well worth it. I hope to see old friends, meet new ones, and above all, grow closer to my best friend - Jesus.

Monday, June 28

Arrived at the 8,000 foot high Estes Park YMCA camp tired. Charter buses aren't the world's most luxurious sleeping places! Nevertheless, I was wide awake during the powerful message that Pastor Dan Klug gave to us at the evening service. He spoke on the week's theme, "More To This Life."

Tuesday, June 29

The day began with breakfast followed by prayer groups and discussions with my counselor Lidia Herrera. She is a wonderful inspiration and encouragement to me.

The first session was led by Pam Stenzel. The important message that she gave to us was "Sex Has A Price Tag." Satan tries to deceive the world with three main lies about sex. They are: we can't control our urges and hormones; it's OK to have "safe or protected" sex; and if two people truly love each other, it is acceptable. When people don't wait for marriage they suffer severe consequences.

For the second session, we were split into groups for workshops. I attended one entitled, "No Doubt About It." The purpose of the workshop was to help us to know for sure whether or not we were saved. The Tuesday evening service was about the Prodigal Son with the message given by Pastor Steve Lombardo. God is just like that prodigal's father, with His unconditional love for every rebel that comes home. Some of us have a rebellious spirit like the Prodigal Son. The wonderful promise is that God will welcome us back even though we don't deserve it at all!

Wednesday, June 30

The highlight of the day had to have been the evening service. Pastor Jim Johnson, dean at AFLBS, gave a sobering message on "The Reality of Hell." We studied some verses in Revelation 20. We

will consciously survive death, and then we will stand before the throne of God. We will stare into the book, and those who don't find their name there and who don't know Jesus will be thrown into hell. Those with their name in the book who know Jesus as their Savior will go to heaven!

After the message there was an altar call. It was so cool to be sitting in front, because I saw the faces of those who would one day join me in heaven, singing praises with the angels, at God's feet!

Thursday, July 1

Today I had the opportunity to chose morning electives. I went to my counselor's session where she shared her testimony about how Jesus rescued her from the occult and witchcraft. I was humbled by God's great love and power to save.

Another elective I had the privilege to attend was for "PKs and MKs" (pastor's kids and minister's kids). I was encouraged by Pastor Mike Brandt who led the session.

Friday, July 2

After devotions, the elective I went to was by Jeremy Erickson on worship. There were forty-four electives to select from during those last two mornings.

My second session was called "Friend To Friend Evangelism." It was led by AFLC Evangelism Director Jim Rasmussen..



Jon Greven of Calvary Lutheran in Gilbert, Arizona, led an elective on knowing God's will for your life. Jon is an F-16 pilot.

As I look back over this whole week, I ask what the greatest blessing has been for me. Was it the first classes and meals? (Including eating every type of chicken imaginable!) Was it perhaps recreation? No, not quite, even though there was great fun and fellowship. I believe the greatest blessings were to worship God through uplifting choruses and reverent hymns, learning directly from God's Word, and being strengthened in my faith through the messages!

Praise be to God for all He has done for me!



Meet the Youth Ministries Training Team

The AFLC Youth Ministries is taking a bold new step this fall as we send out a Youth Ministry Training Team with the purpose of helping congregations to revitalize their youth ministry programs. The three team members have unique talents to offer as they assist your congregation and youth. Applications to work with your congregation are now being accepted. Consider hosting this team in your church. For more information and an application contact Pastor Kevin Olson at (612) 545-5631.

Eddie Britz, Houghton, Michigan, graduated from AFLBS in 1993 and from Northwestern College in 1996. He is a graphic design major and created our youth ministry logo. After college, Eddie took a call to Wheatland, Iowa to assist Pastor Tim Carlson



At the recent FLY convention, Pastor Kevin Olson, AFLC Youth Ministries Director introduced the new Youth Ministries team: Brenda Stilley, Jason Norlein, and Eddie Britz.

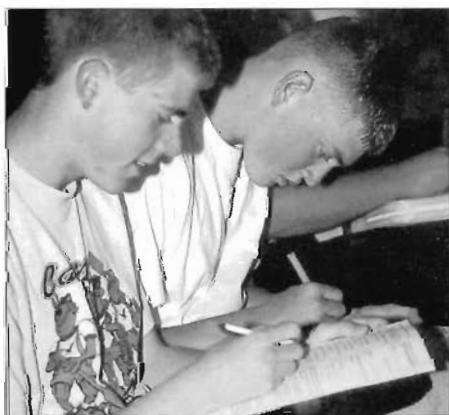
with his pastoral duties and to work with their active youth program. Recently he returned from a short-term mission trip to Spain.

Brenda Stilley, Bethel Park, Pennsylvania, has spent the last eight years with youth ministry at Ruthfred Lutheran Church, the last four years as the full-time youth director. The youth group started small and has grown numerically as well as spiritually. She has worked with grade school through college ministries.

Jason Norlien, Coon Rapids, Minnesota, graduated in 1998 from

the University of Minnesota with a major in child psychology and youth studies. He attended AFLBS this past year. He has been working with the seven-member youth group at Maranatha Free Lutheran Church for the past three and a half years and feels a call to full-time ministry in the future.

As you pray for the team please pray in particular for the provision of a vehicle for the team to travel in. Pray also for the congregations that are considering having the team come to work with their youth ministry for a week.



Large group workshops on "family matters" were led by Audrey Gilmore and Karen Peterson for the senior and junior high tracks.



Some of the worship team members during an evening afterglow.

— by *Missionaries*
Connely and Carolyn Dyrud.
Campo Mourão, Brazil

Delivered in a paper box

It was a chilly fall day in Brazil last April 25. Someone walking by the back door of Campo Mourão's city hall heard a baby crying and discovered a paper box sitting by the door. Opening the box revealed the crying, wet baby girl wrapped only in a ragged sweater. Apparently a frightened mother had placed the baby in the box taken from the garbage bin nearby.

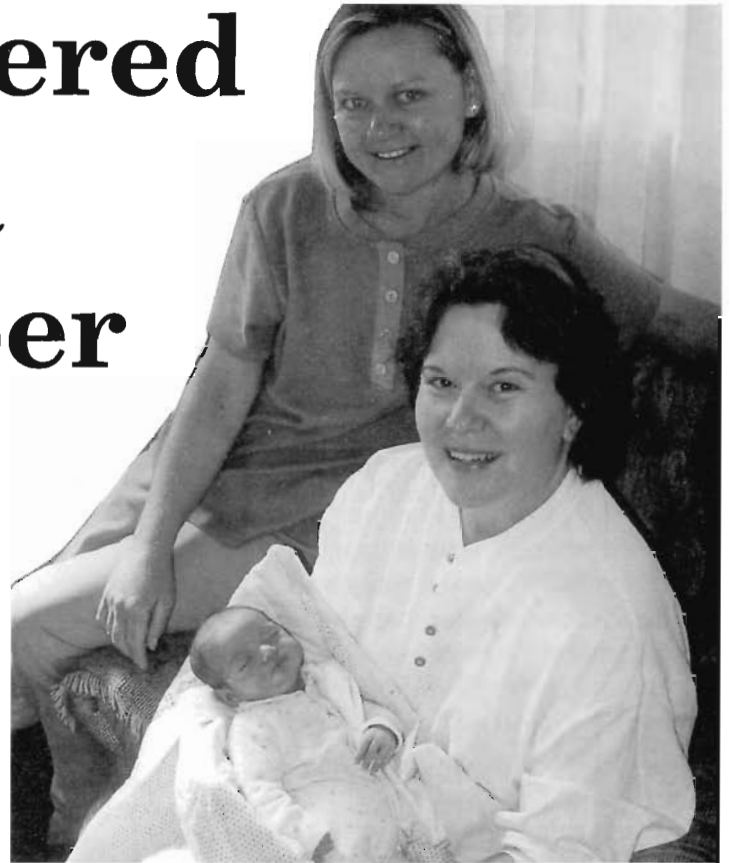
Campo Mourão police brought the baby to our Miriam Infant Home. The case remains under investigation as the police are trying to find the mother of the abandoned baby. If she is found, she could get up to two years in prison.

The incident was reported in area newspapers as people were shocked to hear of such inhumane behavior still occurring in our community. The newspapers mentioned that the baby was placed in the Miriam Infant Home, maintained by an evangelical church. We thank God for this ministry sponsored by AFLC congregations in the USA, Canada and Brazil, working together to give hope to these helpless little ones in a cruel world.

Meanwhile, the children at the home named the healthy and beautiful baby, Victoria, because she survived such a hopeless beginning.

When the AFLC began the mis-

**Irani, the house
mother at the
Miriam Home,
and Carolyn
Dyrud holding
baby Victoria.**



sion in the early 1960s, Brazil was under a strict military regime. We planted churches and trained Brazilian pastors in our Bible school and seminary in southern Brazil, near the city of Campo Mourão. About ten years ago the local government asked us to help them take care of the problem of the abandoned children, a problem spiraling out of control. Though this is a complex and worldwide problem, Brazil's trouble is magnified by its

huge size. There are over 175 million people moving from a rural, stable population to a changing, urban population in less than 20 years. This is catastrophic.

The Miriam Home is not an orphanage, but a home that has helped hundreds of children from newborn to age eight. At any given time we are taking care of over twenty children, now that we have opened the second floor of the home.

Many of these abandoned children return to family or relatives after months or years in our home. If no solution appears, the child is adopted by a Brazilian or international family.

Let's keep working together as local congregations, WMFs, Sunday schools and individuals. Remember that your support, prayers and financial help is vital to keep this work going and growing. There are months that go by when this area of God's work is low financially. We need your full support for the missionaries and in all of the three areas of the AFLC work in Brazil — teaching, preaching and compassion.



Fargo, North Dakota — Sonja Dahl posed with the quilts made by the St. Paul's Lutheran WMF, before the quilts were shipped to Brazil.



May we help you?

During the next few years there will be the largest transfer of wealth that this nation has ever seen as the World War II generation passes on their wealth to their children through inheritance. Many of you will be in that transfer.

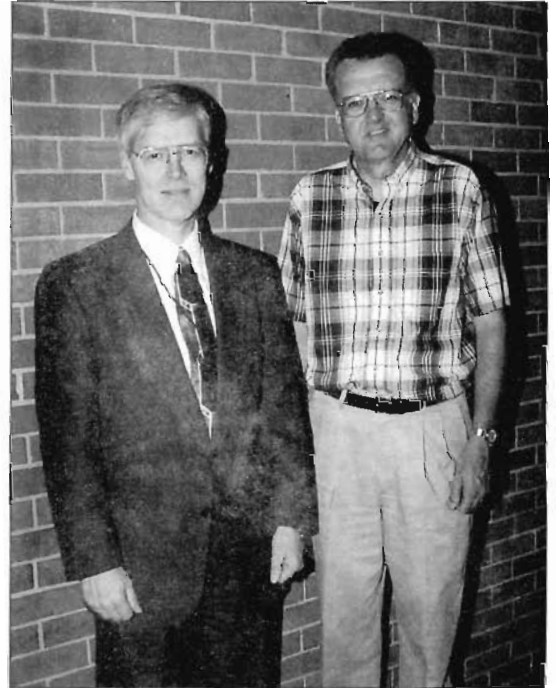
Nearly every day by the mail or phone, you receive pleas for support from alumni associations, religious ministries, service organizations, etc. So what do you do?

Studies indicate that only a few of you have planned how to deal with your giving and transfer of wealth. It is estimated that 70% of the people of majority age have not done any type of wealth transfer planning. The 30% who have planned do not understand what they have done and do not realize that with some additional strategies they could pass on more of their wealth to their family and/or the charity of their choice.

Whether you have started planning or not, we at the AFLC Foundation would like to share with you. We are confident that we can help you maximize your estate planning so that you can pass on more of your assets. Being a good steward requires planning and wise counsel.

Please contact Mark D. Johnson of the AFLC Foundation (1-800-950-2109) for further information.

The AFLC Foundation is a means of giving to various departments of the AFLC including the AFLC schools' Vision 2004. For information on that contact Pastor Tonnes Pollestad at 612-412-2004.



Mark D. Johnson, development coordinator and AFLC Foundation president, James Rolf.



Ethel Thompson and Coco Erickson, Fergus Falls, Minnesota, checked out the new WMF display.



The recently purchased Partners in Mission Outreach bus was at the conference. A group, including teens from Ruthfred Lutheran in Bethel Park, Pennsylvania, traveled to Mexico in July for the bus's inaugural trip.

God is moving Vision 2004 forward

Since groundbreaking for the seminary student housing units on May 22, things have been moving quickly. We hope to have the first unit ready for occupancy this fall.

Many shared their questions, excitement and concerns with us at annual conference. We love to hear from you! We are here to serve. You can contact us at 612-412-2004 or e-mail at vis2004@afcl.org.

It is a burning passion to continue this ministry of our schools, as they have always been dedicated to the teaching of the Word of God. We are glad to be a part of making the continuance a reality from a physical standpoint with the building project. God bless you for standing with us in prayer. We praise Him for the



way He has stirred hearts to support this endeavor. We ask each church and each individual within the AFLC to truly pray, asking God what He would have them do to support this expansion financially

and then provide the means and ability to carry it to completion. We need everyone working together. Please pray for the entire project.

— **Pastor Tonnes Pollestad**
Director of Vision 2004

Introducing the AFLC Heritage Series

The AFLC Board of Parish Education announces the beginning of a new series of books published by Ambassador Publications.

The AFLC Heritage Series consists of writings that reflect the Lutheran, pietistic, and Scandinavian heritage of our church fellowship. The writings in this series are of theological, historical, biographical, or devotional content, and include new works, books previously published and those not previously translated.

The first book published in the AFLC Heritage Series is now available. "Romans: A Devotional Commentary," by C.O. Rosenius is a verse-by-verse meditation through the book of Romans, appropriate for daily devotions. A copy of this book was given to each AFLC congregation at the annual conference, made possible by a grant from Aid Association for Lutherans. Additional publications for this series will be prioritized by the parish education board and printed as funds are provided.



AFLC Parish Education

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard • Minneapolis, MN 55441
phone (612) 545-5631 • fax (612) 545-0079
www.afcl.org • parished@afcl.org

Infant Baptism

J.N. Kildahl



Born not of the will of man, but of God.
John 1:12-13

NEW!

Infant Baptism

by J. N. Kildahl

Infant Baptism by J.N. Kildahl is a 25-page booklet on the scriptural basis for Christian baptism answering the questions:

- Who needs baptism?
- What was the practice of the early church?
- How much water is needed?
- Why baptize infants?

Naknek, Alaska — Cari Mowbray from Onalaska, Wisconsin worked for two months this summer at the Lutheran Mission Societies' radio station, KAKN and helping with the youth in the Naknek community. She was joined by Carla Mattson, Greenbush, Minnesota, and Heather Olson, Astoria, Oregon. Pastor Henry and Linda Mohagen, Towner, North Dakota have the call to serve in South Naknek. They have hopes of beginning this ministry full time later this next winter. Pastor Tom Olson and the Mohagens expect to use the Cessna 150 plane dedicated at the Fergus Falls conference to travel between Naknek and South Naknek.

The Lutheran Mission Societies 78th Annual Convention will be held August 13 to 15 at Dell Lutheran Church in Frost, Minnesota. Pastors Olson and Mohagen are both planning to attend and will be sharing about the work in Alaska. All those interested in learning about the work are invited to attend. For more information and for directions to the church call the host church pastor, Joe Oker, 507-878-3337.

Pastor Wallace Jackson, Perham, Minnesota is serving as the interim pastor of Zion Lutheran in Tioga, North Dakota.

Missionaries Todd and Barb Schierkolk and family, Aguascalientes, Mexico left in July for the States for their furlough year. They will spend the fall with Barb's parents in Salem, Oregon, and will be visiting the AFLC churches in the Pacific Northwest district.

Missionaries Jonathan and Tamba Abel, Campo Grande, Brazil praise God for the new preaching point with more than 50 coming regularly and for the two national workers helping in the ministry — Valdecir and Luis and their families. They are praying for four families in the church who struggle with the effects of drugs and demon possession.

Deshler, Nebraska, — After meeting for nearly 12 years in a storefront building in downtown Deshler, members of Abiding Word Lutheran moved into their new worship facility on May 23, 1999. Dedication services are set for August 15, 1999. The congregation is served by Pastor Jerome Nikunen.

Bemidji, Minnesota — Trinity Lutheran, located 11 miles northwest of Bemidji, is celebrating their 100th anniversary on Sunday, August 8, 1999. AFLC President Robert Lee will speak at the morning worship service.

Dr. Francis Monseth, has resigned as the part-time pastor of Medicine Lake Lutheran, Plymouth, Minnesota. He has served the congregation for the past four years while being the Free Lutheran Seminary dean.



Pastor James Rasmussen, AFLC Director of Evangelism led the workshop for associate evangelists during the annual conference.

Send a representative from your congregation to a one-day evangelism workshop. Learn about Faith Studies International evangelism tools.

August 13, 1999
Chanhassen, Minnesota

For information
call 612-545-5631.

Cost — \$20.00
Limited registration



Onalaska, Wisconsin — Pictured are the members and their children who recently joined Christ is Lord Free Lutheran Church. A highlight of that day's service was the baptism of five of the children, all adopted into one family.

AFLC Chaplain's Conference

September 30-October 2, 1999
at the Association Retreat Center,
Osceola, Wisconsin

Workshops led by:
Chaplains Walter Beaman, Harvey Jackson, Stephen Odegaard, Jerome Nikunen, and Larry Severson.

Register by September 8.
For more information contact Chaplain Kerwin Sletto, Ottawa, Illinois
815-434-1130.

AFLC Memorials

Department given to
In memory of....

Home Missions

Norton Lodahl
Delores Wikstrom
Pastor Merle Fagerberg
Roland Durkee
Donna Bowder
Roddy Bacon
Ervin / Bernice Adolf
Irene Adolf
Marilyn Hurley
Florence Torson (legacy)
Olive Ward (legacy)

AFLBS

Pastor Richard / Leone Snipstead
Vernon Ranger
Darlene Miller
Roland Durkee
Milton Kvanbeck
Norton Lodahl
Genevieve Cutler
Pastor Merle Fagerberg
Olga Jordahl (legacy)

General Fund

Roland Durkee
Raymond Knutson

Youth Ministries

Robert Thompson
Roland Durkee

AFLTS

Pastor Merle Fagerberg
Gusta Bahr
Pastor Ernest Langness
Jacob Meyers
Rosie Johnson

World Missions

Roland Durkee
Marilyn Hurley
Pastor Merle Fagerberg
Olga Jordahl (legacy)
Helen Bergeson (legacy)

Evangelism

Pastor Merle Fagerberg

Vision 2004

Randy Strand

Ministry Training Institute

Carly Dietsche

Helmar, Illinois — Several youth from Helmar Lutheran and their pastor, Jeff Swanson, traveled to the Rosebud, South Dakota reservation during June 18-26 where they spent time primarily with children, loving them and sharing the light of Jesus with them. The mission was sponsored by Cup of Cold Water Ministries. The group then traveled to Estes Park, Colorado, where they joined about 60 other youth and chaperones from the Helmar and Newark churches.

Elizabeth Bowman from Helmar joined Matthew Greven and Lisa Osmond from West Lisbon Lutheran in nearby Newark to share Christ with churches in Hungary during the summer months. This team is representing the Hauge Foreign Mission.

Pastor LeRoy Flickinger,

Newfolden, Minnesota, has resigned effective July 20, as the pastor of Westaker and Bethania Lutheran churches where he has served the last eleven years. His future plans are indefinite at the time of this printing.

Lay Pastor Lyle Twite,

Bagley, Minnesota, resigned as pastor of Alida and Rice Lutheran churches effective June 1. He continues to serve Grace Lutheran in Bagley. He had served the three-point parish since 1987.

Faith, South Dakota — The community and the pastor of Bethel Lutheran is featured in the chapter on "Faith" in the recently published book, "States of Mind," by Brad Herzog (John F. Blair, Publisher, 1999; available at www.blairpub.com or Barnes and Noble Bookstores). The author and his wife were on a 10-month, 21,300 mile journey across America when they spent an afternoon discussing "faith" with Pastor Wayne Hjemstad, at that time the pastor of Bethel Lutheran. The author writes, "I later admitted to myself that perhaps I was testing them (the pastor and local priest). Maybe I wanted to see if they could answer the tough questions, juggle the generalities, reconcile the contradictions. Here, in the middle of nowhere, I found them to be articulate in their defense, unwavering in their convictions, and eager to preach to a skeptic, as opposed to the choir" (p. 303).

"States of Mind" is the account of their philosophical, historical, and conversational journey across the country. The author was a cynic and wondered why. Did he and Generation X represent the real America or was he merely out of touch? He and his wife sought to answer questions such as: "Is there harmony in Harmony, California, honor in Honor, Michigan and faith in Faith, South Dakota?" Walter Cronkite wrote, "Brad Herzog has taken a unique idea and developed it into an interesting volume."

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard

Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences (6 months) – January 1 – June 30, 1999

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN JUNE	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$234,385.00	\$25,230.55	125,067.14	53
Seminary	110,296.00	8,443.59	58,524.23	53
Bible School	147,674.00	9,755.38	84,588.66	57
Home Missions.	238,152.00	15,181.74	106,038.65	45
World Missions.	190,909.00	12,029.84	68,168.58	36
Capital Investment	14,065.00	450.70	2,697.10	19
Parish Education	56,854.00	5,572.05	34,901.43	61
Church Extension	21,051.00	1,472.78	10,266.52	49
TOTALS	\$1,013,386.00	78,136.63	490,252.31	48
TOTALS 1997	1,278,758.00	100,042.48	580,450.47	45

Goal 50%

The Evangelism Department received \$2755.00 in June.

The common thread

Two conferences, two themes, one common denominator. The theme of the AFLC Annual Conference was "No Other Foundation Than Christ." The Free Lutheran Youth met around the theme of "More to This Life." The thread that ties both of these themes together is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The gospel is the only foundation we have. The gospel is also what gives more to life: more of what is truly worthwhile and valuable.

What is the gospel? In I Corinthians 15:1-4 Paul says, "I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."

Paul touched on a lot of issues in his letter to the Corinthians. They are all important. But as he concludes his letter he says basically, "This is the gospel, this is foundational, this is most important: Christ crucified and risen again."

The gospel is not instructions on how to live a Christian life. It is not warnings of certain things to avoid. It is not telling people how to become a Christian. Those have their place, but they are not the gospel. The gospel is the good news of what Jesus has done. It is that wonderful message of Jesus and the Cross and the Resurrection.

At times we say the gospel is the foundation of our life, yet in everyday living we center our lives on other things and try to build on them, hoping they will sustain us.

We receive good advice, we learn good rules, we try to remember them and build our lives on them. But in time we forget the advice. We fail to keep the rules, and our foundation crumbles.

The foundation of the gospel is solid. It is not based on what we do but on what Christ has done. It withstands the tests of time. I fail, but Jesus never fails to forgive. I forget, but Jesus never forgets me. I fall short of what I should be. Jesus continually amazes me the more I learn of who He is and what He is like.

Sometimes our congregations also can talk about

the gospel being our foundation but we try to build on other things. We look to our programs to make us strong. We think we'll have a great church if we have a great building. If we just have a dynamic teaching series on what people need to do, we'll be okay.

We ought to have more teaching series on who Jesus is and what He has done. Telling people what to do without telling them what God has done leads to frustration and discouragement. It is the gospel that is "the power of God" (Romans 1:16, NIV).

The gospel has the power to give us more to life: more joy, peace, hope and love than the heart can hold and the mind can comprehend. We cannot generate that power and create "the more" on our own. We can't simply eliminate the bad things and do the good things and then it will come. "Are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?" (Galatians 3:3, NIV).

Yes, sin must be repented of. Obedience to God's Word is called for. But the fact is the world's leader in self-discipline will not find "the more" on his own. The person with the purest life won't find it either, if he isn't trusting in the gospel. The more to this life is found when we balance consideration of God's commands with contemplation of what God has said in His Word about what Jesus has done.

We ought to spend more time thinking and talking about the goodness of God than we do about the evil in the world. "Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or

praiseworthy — think about such things" (Philippians 4:8, NIV). Articles, messages and conversations on how bad everything is around us wear me out and leave me discouraged. It must do the same, I would believe, to the ones writing and speaking.

We need to be warned, certainly, but we also need encouragement. The light needs to be shined on the darkness, but the beauty of the light needs to also be proclaimed. We need to fix our minds on the One who is greater than all evil and who gave His life for us so that we could "have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10, NIV).

Let's focus on the gospel and celebrate because of the foundation and the more to this life that we can enjoy because of the gospel.

— *Pastor Craig Johnson*

"We ought to spend more time thinking and talking about the goodness of God than we do about the evil in the world."

BUILDING THE BASE

Freedom: From generation to generation

The two events in this issue of the Ambassador are clearly different. I can't see the pictures that will accompany the articles, but I'm sure it is fairly obvious that the annual conference and the Free Lutheran Youth convention are not the same event. For those who weren't at the conference, the word I would use to describe it is "quiet." I have been to a few annual conferences, and this one was by far the quietest conference I have ever attended. I wasn't able to attend the convention in Colorado, but I know that 1500 young people together in one place are usually not described by the same word.

As we approach the year 2000, we hear many things about the differences between today's young people and generations that have gone before. As we look at the word "freedom" this year, we would be amiss if we did not at least once consider whether or not the freedom we cherish will be passed on to the generation that is now attending the youth convention. In order to do this, let us consider the similarities between our spiritual condition and theirs.

First, our young people have the same sinful nature that you and I have. They sin, they fall short of God's glory, and they are in need of a Savior. Yes, they maybe use different words to tell us about the empti-

ness they have inside, they maybe deal with frustration differently, but the need is the same. God knows that the needs are the same from generation to generation, that is why Deuteronomy 6:7 tells us how to teach our children the commands of God. It says, "and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up." As our young people are made aware of their sinfulness, they will see their need.

Second, after they have seen their need, that need is only fulfilled in the gospel of Christ. It is only Jesus Christ that can free them from their sin, and the wrath of God toward sin. God knows that young people need a Savior, that is why it says in II Timothy 3:15, "and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." If we give them something else, other than the gospel, they will again experience a defeated life, until eventually they stop seeking the Lord, and decide that it just didn't work for them. In I Corinthians 2:2 Paul says, "For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."

Finally, we who are no longer

teenagers, should realize that it is the same Spirit that set us free. Our freedom as a church body does not come about by our cohesiveness, cooperation, or congeniality. Our freedom as an association is enjoyed only because the Holy Spirit is working in our individual lives. If we begin to think that we will lose our freedom when these young people start joining us, then we really don't understand where our freedom comes from. If they have been set free from sin and death, as we have, then it is by the same Spirit. That is why I Corinthians 12:13 says, "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit." If our young people are set free by the Spirit of God, then they will cherish the freedom that you and I hold dear.



— Jon Dryburgh
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