

# The Lutheran AMBASSADOR

August 5, 1997



35th Annual Conference  
Seeing what God  
has done  
and is doing

# THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

August 5, 1997  
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The magazine of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, 3110 East Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441. (612) 545-5631

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### The Lutheran Ambassador

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## AN ENCOURAGING WORD

### For I am not ashamed of the gospel ...

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

**T**he greatest power we know is God. He has **all** power. The greatest thing He does is save sinners. It only makes sense for Him to put His power into saving souls. These words summarize that, "The gospel is the power of God unto salvation."

My Greek dictionary says that **power** means: "strength, miracle, ability, capacity." The **ability** to save souls rests in God and God alone. Remember two verses from Psalm 49:7-8: "No man can by any means redeem his brother, or give to God a ransom for him — for the redemption of his soul is costly, and he should cease trying forever."

The ability to save is not in us. The psalmist pointedly urges us to stop trying to redeem ourselves or anyone else. No one can pay the price. No one has the ability. God alone can do it.

God has, however, graciously made that power accessible to us in the gospel. In it the good news of God's wonderful love and infinite grace is clearly expressed for all to know and believe.

Parents sometimes have difficulty putting power into their word. Often little children seem unaffected by their word. It produces few visible results. We are all unable to put our power into words like God does. Our words do not cause things to happen. We have to use our hands and feet. I cannot, for example, walk into the kids' room and say to the floor full of toys, "get into the toy box." I can, but nothing happens.

We should not take lightly the fact that God has put the power of

salvation into the gospel — the written record of His loving acts of salvation. Even if people spurn God's Word as outdated and full of fables, we should have the deepest love and devotion for those very words and find in them the power of God.

The words that set us free and mend our hearts are there. The words that reach out and touch our souls are there. The words that can change the unbelief of our fellow men are there.

The wonderful words of the gospel are powerful to do everything they promise. In fact any good thing we might do or ever have happen in us is only the work of God's power in the gospel. The gospel is powerful to save from sin's condemnation and power in our lives.

Whenever you feel weak, powerless, or unable to perform the way God commands, flee to God's Word and drink deeply of the gospel's purest words. Let them remind you of all that Jesus has done for you on the cross and in your life since then. In doing this you unleash God's power to make you into the image of His only Son Jesus Christ.



— Pastor Steve Mundfrom  
Bethany Lutheran  
Sebeke, Minnesota

## sound bites

**1** "It can be said without fear of contradiction that the founders and early leaders of our church were men unusually gifted, highly trained and deeply pious. They were students of history but they were chiefly interested in the future. Fearlessly they blazed new trails through the wilderness of ecclesiastical traditionalism and formalism of their day. They had their face set toward the dawning day with confidence, courage and determination."

— T. O. Burntvedt

"When God's Spirit comes upon a congregation, the first and most pronounced effect will be a living zeal for the salvation of souls ... When those who

**4** have themselves been set free from the bonds of death, arise in the power through which Christ arose from the dead, and begin to labor for the awakening of others, then freedom has dawned in truth."

— Georg Sverdrup

**6**

**"The day of the professional minister is over ... the day of the missionary leader has come."**

— Kennon Callahan

**2** "We need revival; not only that sinners are awakened from their spiritual sleep of death, but also a renewed vision of what the congregation is as well as its purpose."

— Gisle Johnson

**3** "It is for the sake of the right concept of the congregation that the Association was formed. ... The larger church body is to be the servant of the congregation, not its master. The pastor is to be the servant of the congregation, not its overlord."

— John Strand

*"A simple layman armed with Scripture is to be believed above a pope or a cardinal without it."*

— Martin Luther

**5**



# Looking Back Looking Ahead

## Report on the 1997 AFLC Annual Conference

**T**he Association of Free Lutheran Congregations (AFLC) returned to the site of its first conference in 1962, Thief River Falls, Minnesota, for its 35th Annual Conference, June 11 to 15, 1997. Voting delegates totaling 529 gathered from across the United States under the theme, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," taken from II Corinthians 3:17.



## ➡ Beginning with Worship

Preparation for the conference included a concert of prayer led by the AFLC Home Missions Department on Tuesday evening, June 10. Another concert of prayer was held Wednesday evening, June 11 and was led by Pastor James Fugleberg of Fargo, North Dakota. The opening service occurred that same evening. This time of worship was led by Pastor Raynard Huglen of Newfolden, Minnesota, the first editor of *The Lutheran Ambassador*. The message on the conference's theme verse was brought by Pastor Bruce Dalager of Grand Forks, North Dakota, the secretary of the AFLC.

During the day various committees had met and prepared resolutions to be brought up on the conference floor. Other necessary committees were appointed at the conclusion of the opening service by Pastor Robert Lee, AFLC President, who officially opened the conference.

The opening service also included the presentation of checks for over \$18,000 each to the AFLC congregations in Grand Forks, North Dakota and East Grand Forks, Minnesota. This money had been sent to the AFLC to assist the congregations in the recovery efforts from the recent flood in their area. Testimony was shared about the devastation that has occurred because of the flood, but also about lessons that have been learned, growth that has happened and goals that have been set. A team of Association Free Lutheran Bible School (AFLBS) students has been put together to spend the summer in the area, providing assistance in a variety of ways.

## ➡ Moving Forward

The conference business sessions began with the sharing of reports. In his report to the conference President Robert Lee noted that June was the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Lutheran Free Church (LFC). He quoted from Georg Sverdrup's sermon at the first conference of the LFC when he stated, "We have gathered today with the purpose and prayer that we ourselves might be free and be ready to help others to freedom. ... The free congregation bears the mark of the cross, but through Christ's suffering it shall press onto His glory."

In discussing the state of the church President Lee spoke of looking "back over-the past year with humble praise to God for all of His goodness to us" and of "many reports of souls reached for Christ as well as believers strengthened in their faith."

In his report as chairman of the coordinating committee, Pastor Terry Olson of Thief River Falls, Minnesota told of five new congregations that were placed on the congregational roster of the AFLC during the previous year. They are: Faith Lutheran Church, Metropolis, Illinois; Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Ponca City, Oklahoma; Minnewaska Lutheran Church, Starbuck, Minnesota; Newark Lutheran Church, Newark, Illinois; and Our Savior's Free Lutheran Church, Manhattan Beach, Minnesota.

The director of the Association Retreat Center (ARC), Eric Westlake, reported on various renovation and remodeling projects that have been completed or are in process at the center. More importantly he told of lives that have been reached for Christ during the ARC's many events.

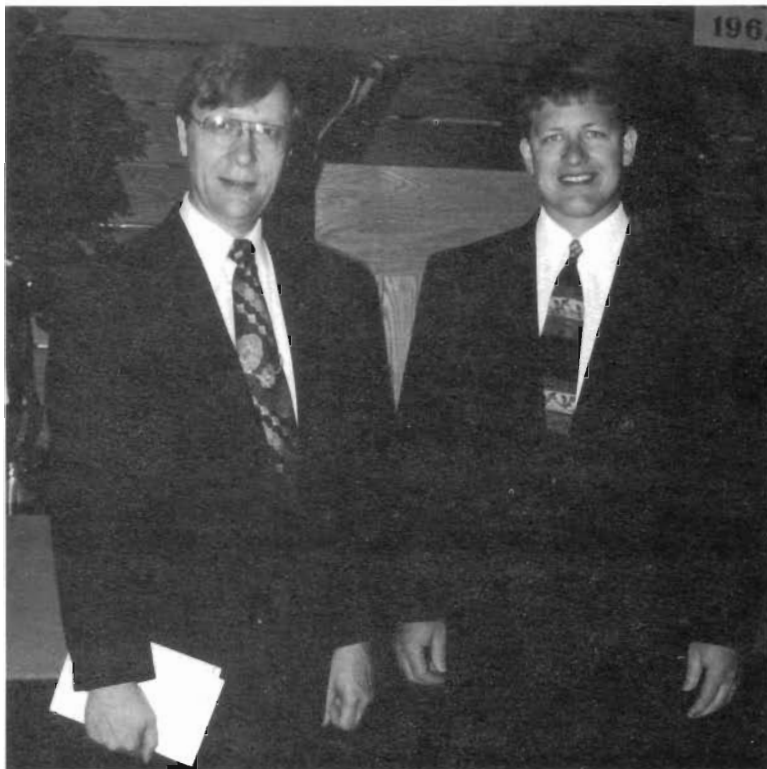
Each day a break was taken from the business sessions of the conference for a prayer hour led by Dr. Francis Monseth, Dean of the Free Lutheran Seminary.

Prayer was requested specifically for the congregations that are presently seeking pastors. Significant growth in the numbers of AFLC congregations has occurred and this has resulted in a shortage of pastors to fill all the available parishes. The conference resolved to "encourage our congregations to prayerfully hold forth the call of God to ministry."

In the election of officers for the church body, Pastor Elden Nelson of Kandiyohi, Minnesota and Pastor Bruce Dalagar of Grand Forks, North Dakota were reelected vice president and secretary on the first ballot with over 75% of the vote.

Pastor Phil Haugen, chairman of the Board of Parish Education, reported on Marian Christoperson's acceptance during the past year of the call to serve as director of parish education. He also reported on the progress in the ongoing work of revising The Ambassador Sunday School Series. Grades two and four are completed and currently in use. The expectation is that kindergarten quarter

(continued on next page)



Pastor Robert Lee and Pastor Tom Schierkolk at the Ordination Service held Sunday morning. Pastor Schierkolk and his family are serving the Northome and Mizpah parish in northern Minnesota. He was the only AFLC seminarian ordained this year.



Judith Wold, Thief River Falls, Minnesota, former AFLC Parish Education Executive Secretary, 1969-81, and Edith Gudim, Mayville, North Dakota, former LFC missionary to Madagascar.

## CONFERENCE REPORT

one will be ready for use in early fall 1997 and quarter two the later part of the same season.

In her first annual conference report as director of parish education, Marian Christoperson spoke of the publications of the department holding "firmly to the divine authority and complete infallibility of God's Word. We believe there is a great need for this type of literature in a modern world of spiritual compromise with no absolutes. It is for this reason that we desire Ambassador Publications to become more accessible to other individuals and churches." She also told of several resources and teaching aids that have been added to the department's inventory.

The chairman of the AFLC Youth Board, Pastor Lloyd Quanbeck, reported on the privilege the board had to work on the planning and carrying out of the 1996 Free Lutheran Youth Leadership Conference. He stated, "It was clear from this event that many youth are eager and able to serve the Lord and His church if someone will work with them and give them the opportunity. I believe that youth who catch a vision for ministry while young will likely be the leaders of our congregations and denomination in the years to come."

Pastor James L. Johnson, the president of the Free Lutheran Youth (FLY), spoke of the group's upcoming event: the FLY National Convention in Estes Park,

Colorado, August 4 to 9, 1997. Approximately 1400 to 1500 are expected to attend. In response to this the conference moved that "whereas, the largest gatherings in the AFLC are its youth gatherings, be it resolved, that we praise God for His blessing and the moving of His Spirit at these gatherings. Be it further resolved, that we pray specifically for the FLY convention, August 4-9, 1997, for its emphasis on evangelism and discipleship of youth."

In his report, the director of AFLC Youth Ministries, Pastor Kevin Olson told of various individuals who illustrate the effect support of AFLC Youth Ministries has had. He also spoke of ways he has been encouraged and of the department's mission, vision and goals. He described youth ministry as "a race against time. Seventy to eighty-five percent of those who come to know Christ do so before they graduate from high school. We do not have time to make random attempts at reaching our youth. We must be intentional if we are to be effective."

"The Stewardship Board has been looking at one critical job in each church, the treasurer," reported board chairman, Pastor Mark Antal. He told of a set of guidelines for accounting procedures the board has developed. They encourage congregations to examine and implement them.



Dale Hertel, New Hope, Minnesota, who services the AFLC's pension and insurance plans and Pastor Victor Young of Green Lake Lutheran in Spicer, Minnesota.



Herbert and Dorothy Presteng, Grafton, North Dakota, celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary during the conference.



Pastor Ted and Dee Berkas, Fosston, Minnesota. Ted completed two terms as a member of the World Missions Committee and Dee ended her two terms as the national WMF president.

The Board of Trustees of the AFLC Schools reported on blessings of the past year and vision for future years. They have developed goals called Vision 2004. The first step in this is groundbreaking in the Spring of 1998 for a new gymnasium-classroom-student center on the campus. The conference encouraged the board to move forward toward the accomplishment of this vision.

In his report the dean of the Free Lutheran Seminary, Dr. Francis Monseth stated that the seminary's vision and purpose is the same as the goals described by Georg Sverdrup in his annual report to the last meeting of the Norwegian-Danish Lutheran Conference in 1890: "A deep insight in the Word of God and His counsel of salvation, a heartfelt sympathy with the need of the human heart, and a self-sacrificing zeal for the salvation of souls and the upbuilding of the body of Christ, this is what our seminary has endeavored to awaken and foster in the students."

Pastor James L. Johnson spoke of thankfulness for what God has done during his first year as dean of AFLBS. He told of the various ways God had worked in the lives of the 112 students who attended the Bible school the past school year.

Along with the implementation of Vision 2004 and pursuing the construction of a new building on campus, other decisions that have been reached regarding the schools include the switch, beginning in the fall of 1997, from quarters to



Pastor Joe Schultz and Willis and Marilyn Kettlehut of Abiding Word Lutheran in Deshler, Nebraska.



Pastor Brian Pearson, Montgomery, Illinois, looked at the new Free Lutheran Youth Music Book with Youth Director Kevin Olson and Pastor Tim Carlson. The music edition is now available. Both the word and music editions will be available at the FLY Convention in Estes Park, Colorado, or may be ordered through Pastor Tim Carlson at P. O. Box 339, Wheatland, IA 52777; or AFLC Youth Office at 3110 East Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55441. The cost is \$3 for the words only edition and \$25 for the music and words edition.

semesters in the school calendar of AFLBS. The board is also continuing to wait for the man of God's choosing for an additional faculty position.

In looking forward Dean Johnson said, "We believe the Lord has plans for AFLBS to move ahead, win new souls for Christ and equip many more saints so we can refresh our Free Lutheran fellowship with a fresh wave of "Kingdom workers."



Missionaries Dan and Debbie Giles, Aguascalientes, Mexico.



Missionaries Connely and Carolyn Dyrud.

## CONFERENCE REPORT

As the discussion turned to the area of world missions, the chairman of the World Missions Committee, Ken Williams told of the committee's privilege of commissioning Sonja Dahl last November and seeing her off to Brazil to begin serving in several capacities. He also told of the remodeling of the missionary home at the ARC and expressed thankfulness for a wonderful group of volunteers.

In his report, Pastor Eugene Enderlein, AFLC World Missions Director, gave information regarding the work taking place on the mission fields of Brazil, Mexico and India. He also expressed much thankfulness for the Lord's outpouring of financial blessing and gifts on the Department of World Missions during the previous year.

Missionaries from Brazil, Connely and Carolyn Dyrud and from Mexico, Dan and Debbie Giles, were present at the conference and had various opportunities to share about the work God is doing.

The AFLC World Missions Department has received contact from individuals in the African nations of Mozambique, Angola and Zaire, requesting assistance in sharing the gospel with their people. Consideration is being given to Pastors Enderlein and Dyrud traveling to Africa in the fall to meet with the people there and observe the work. The conference resolved to pray for God's clear direction regarding these opportunities.

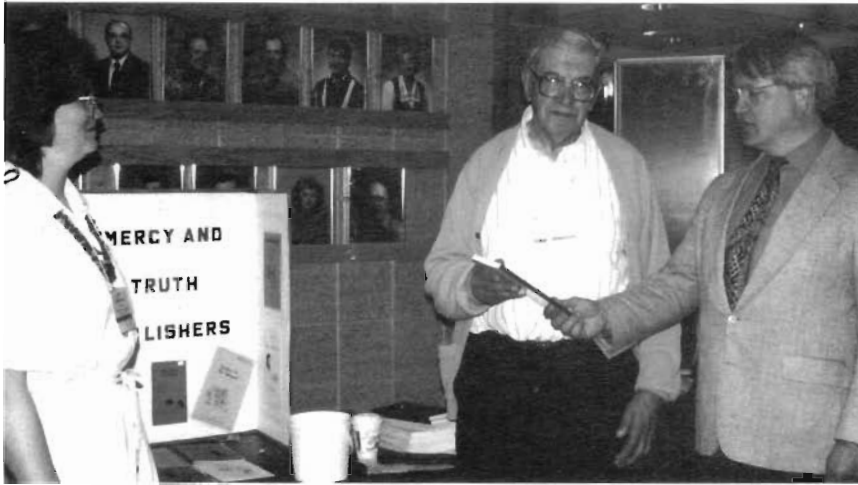
In their report regarding the work of home missions, the chairman of the committee, Pastor Allen Monson, and the

director of the department, Pastor Paul Nash, spoke of the work of establishing a clear vision and strategy for establishing free and living congregations throughout the United States. They reflected on the challenges that face home mission congregations and pastors and their thankfulness for those who take on those challenges. They encouraged much prayer and the consideration of personal involvement in the work of home missions.

Pastor James Rasmussen reported as chairman of the Commission of Evangelism on the commission's work during the past year in putting together a mission statement, a job description for the commission and a job description for the evangelist/director of evangelism. The mission statement reads, "To develop and sustain an excitement for evangelism throughout the AFLC from the congregation to the headquarters."

The commission has put together a prayer team. They are also seeking direction as to the best means of furthering the work of evangelism in the AFLC: calling a full-time evangelist or a director of evangelism who can preach and teach?

In regards to current issues facing society the conference passed a resolution stating that: "Whereas Disney Corporation, a once family-centered company, has begun to promote the homosexual agenda; and whereas the homosexual agenda seeks to make homosexuality an acceptable lifestyle; and whereas the Southern Baptists and Assemblies of God among other Christian denominations and



Displays were set up near the conference floor. The new parish education display did a brisk business as well as other ministries who filled the hallways. Pictured is Pastor Gerald Mundfrom (center) of Mercy and Truth Publishers of Osceola, Wisconsin, visiting with Pastor Jon and Lynn Wellumson, Williston, North Dakota.

organizations have voiced their concern to Disney over the direction they are taking and have begun to boycott Disney products. Be it resolved that the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations joins in expressing concern to Disney and in the boycott of Disney products."

### ➡ Looking Ahead

The conference came to a close on Sunday morning, June 15 with a communion service led by Pastor Randy Moe of Thief River Falls, Minnesota with the sermon shared by Pastor Gene Sundby of Outlook, Saskatchewan. This was followed by an ordination service led by Pastor James Rasmussen of Park River, North Dakota. Pastor Terry Olson of Thief River Falls, Minnesota gave the sermon which preceded the ordination into the ministry of 1997 Free Lutheran Seminary graduate, Thomas Schierkolk.

President Robert Lee, commenting on the conference, described it as "an unusually quiet conference, harmonious and unified." He was impressed by the nationwide participation with delegates attending from states across America such as Alabama, Pennsylvania, California and the Pacific Northwest as well as the Upper Midwest. While it was an anniversary conference — the AFLC's 35th and the 100th for the former Lutheran Free Church — he saw the focus of the conference being more toward the future than the past.

The 1998 conference of the AFLC is planned for Northfield, Minnesota.



— Pastor Craig Johnson



Elika Korhonen, Monroe, Washington, watches over a sleeping Erik Nelson, El Campo, Texas. In the background: Dawn Olson and baby Emily, Arlington, South Dakota, and Brenda Nelson of El Campo.

## Albin and Carol Haugen Fargo, North Dakota

We were starting to raise our four children in 1962 when our congregation, New Luther Valley in McVile, North Dakota, became one of the charter members of the newly formed AFLC. We were fortunate that our congregation was not divided. After the fall of 1962, we were filled with hope. At that October meeting, we found many with a like mind and a nucleus of pastors who shared our convictions.

One song that the McVile men's quartet sang at that October meeting was "At the Foot of the Cross." That is where we needed to be then and where we still need to be.

For the past thirty-five years, we've been able to attend most annual conferences, and there has always been some constants through the changes. There's the preaching of the basic gospel truths, the times of prayer, even stopping a business session to get on our knees, and there has always been a high percentage of lay participation. Many of us who were there in 1962 are still involved and there's a nice blending with the new people.

God has blessed us. At the beginning God gave us a leader. Shortly after, we had the opportunity to buy the Medicine Lake property in Minneapolis, then the church paper, the schools and a small mission that is now international. We see the AFLC expanding: no longer are we a fellowship from just a few states, mainly in the Midwest. But it's been a gradual growth and we've seen stableness and strength come from that. It seems that the congregations who join with us are serious and have carefully sought God's leading.

The highlights of the past 35 conferences are always found in the uplifting evening services and the ordination service on Sunday morning. That final service of the

# Filled with hope



conference is the opportunity to see the fruit, the results of prayer and the culmination of all we do as a fellowship of congregations. There's such a great need for young men to answer God's call to the ministry.

We still need to exist. Our nation needs the Lutheran church to adhere to the Word and Lutheran doctrine. The need in our local communities is for greater outreach. We can't afford to be dead.

## Pressing on

### Report on the Pioneer's Breakfast

**"P**ress on toward the goal" was the theme of the first organizational conference of the AFLC, held in October 1962 in Thief River Falls, Minnesota. During the 35th Annual Conference of the AFLC, 38 people who had attended the first conference and were now present 35 years later gathered for breakfast to remember and to discuss how the church body had done, "pressing on toward the goal."

They remembered coming together in 1962 without much prior knowledge or expertise. Many were "simply minding their own business but having convictions." Concern about what was

going on as the Lutheran Free Church was preparing to enter into a merger with other church bodies was prevalent. Dreams and hopes about what could happen were held. They remembered "starting with nothing, other than faith." Soon a church paper and seminary was begun and property for a headquarters and schools was acquired. God was good.

It is "good to forget some things." The times were not all pleasant in 1962. The first conference had "observers" who were not supportive of the efforts at forming a new group. Those at the breakfast remembered, however, that the prevailing view of

## testimonies of AFLC people then and now



### Loretta Reynolds Bethel Park, Pennsylvania

I'm a newcomer. In these past two years, I've been glad I'm in the AFLC and can see the Holy Spirit working in everyone involved. It's clear to me that the Association is strong on the



Jan Nyflot of Our Saviour's Lutheran in Thief River Falls and Sheldon Mortrud, Detroit Lakes, Minnesota, and a former AFLC Coordinating Committee member.

inerrant Word of God and on teaching. As a young family we need to be a part of that kind of church. My 16 and 13-year-old can see that strong foundation and they are watching to see Christ's light shine through us so they too will hold firm to Christ

and His Word.

We are grateful for the encouragement and support of the AFLC. It's good to belong to a larger fellowship like this and come together and realize we are part of a larger church family.



the day was that they wanted to be a group that was not always criticizing other church bodies. They were "by and large pro-AFLC." They were not out to cut down other groups, but to build up their own.

From the beginning the group

included people who were not part of the Lutheran Free Church. It became a home for people from different backgrounds.

"What do you think people of 35 years ago would think of the AFLC today?" was a question asked at the breakfast. The gen-

eral feeling was that they would be pleased, and also amazed at some of the growth and changes.

It was mentioned at the breakfast that the president of the Lutheran Free Church from 1958 to 1963, John Stensvaag, had commented in looking at the AFLC, "It has gone better for you than I thought it would." He was most pleased with the development and work of the Bible School.

While many changes had taken place in 35 years it was believed by those at the breakfast that the attendees at the first conference would be pleased with the lack of change in the area that matters the most. The preaching and teaching is still the same, centered on the Word of God.



— Pastor Craig Johnson



Those who were at the organizational meeting of the AFLC in October 1962, gathered for a Pioneers' Breakfast during this year's conference.

# 1997 election results

**Vice President** — Rev. Elden Nelson, Kandiyohi, Minnesota

**Secretary** — Rev. Bruce Dalager, Grand Forks, North Dakota

**Coordinating Committee** — Jim Boe, Ottawa, Illinois, and Ralph Peterson, Portland, North Dakota, were both re-nominated for five-year terms.

**Schools Board of Trustees** — Larry Behne, Wheatland, Iowa, was elected for a five-year term.

**World Missions Committee** — Rev. Steve Odegaard, Tioga, North Dakota, was elected to a five-year term. Rev. Tom Tuura, St. James, Minnesota, was appointed by the committee to serve until the next conference in place of Rev. Ted Kennedy, who resigned.

**Home Missions Committee** — Robert Christian, Newark, Illinois, was re-elected for a five-year term.

**Board of Publications and Parish Education** — Avis Dyrud, Middle River, Minnesota, was elected to a five-year term and Jan Strand, Kenyon, Minnesota, was elected to complete a two-year term.

**Stewardship Board** — Wallace Klein, McMurray, Pennsylvania, was elected to a five-year term.

**Youth Board** — Rev. Lloyd Quanbeck, Minot, North Dakota, was re-elected for a five-year term.

**Commission on Evangelism** — Pastor Irvin Schmitke, Thief River Falls, Minnesota, was re-elected to a second five-year term and Gene Quist, Bloomington, Minnesota, was elected to a two-year term.

**Board of Pensions** — Rodney Kjersten, Roseau, Minnesota, was re-elected to a five-year term.

**Christian Academic Education Board** — Rev. Brian Davidson, Ponca City, Oklahoma, was re-elected to a five-year term; Cherly Aakre, Argyle, Minnesota, was elected to a five-year term and Rev. Michael Peterson, Whites-town, Indiana, was elected to complete a one-year term.

**Association Retreat Center Board** — Rev. Tonnes Pollestad, Andover, Minnesota, was re-elected to a five-year term.

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## 1998 Conference committees

### Nominating Committee

#### Eastern North Dakota

— Kermit Berge, Larimore

#### Western ND/Eastern MT

— Rev. Jon Wellumson, Williston, ND

#### South Dakota

— Mike McCarlson, Webster

#### Lake Superior

— Tim Korhonen, Esko, Minnesota

#### Northwestern Minnesota

— Bob Wold, Thief River Falls

#### North Central Minnesota

— Rev. Dale Mellgren, McIntosh

#### Southwest Central Minnesota

— LaVern Thompson, Fergus Falls

#### Nebraska/Colorado

— Dan Mundfrom, Greeley, Colorado

#### Minneapolis

— Arden Jacobson, Champlin, Minnesota

#### Central Tri-State

— Rev. Lyle Aadahl, Byron, Minnesota

#### Northern Michigan

— Walter Peterson, Ishpeming

#### South Central

— Rev. Jerry Peterson, Oklahoma City

#### Southwestern

— Rev. Frank Cherney, Tucson, Arizona

#### Pacific Northwest

— Paul Kneeland, Kalispell, Montana

#### Eastern

— Rev. James Molstre, Bethel Park, Pennsylvania

Illinois — Stan Dale, Ottawa

## Elected to corporations

### Schools

#### 5-year term

Anne Erickson, Badger, MN  
Rev. Dennis Gray, Greenbush, MN  
Rev. Martin Horn, Astoria, OR  
Dr. Dan Mundfrom, Greeley, CO  
Rev. Mark Olson, Arlington, SD  
John Presteng, Grafton, ND  
Kent Quanbeck, McVile, ND  
Mark Quanbeck, McVile, ND  
James Rolf, Brandon, MN  
Gerald Twedt, McHenry, ND

#### 3-year term

Rev. Lyle Aadahl, Bryon, MN

#### 1-year term

Scott Johnson, Coon Rapids, MN  
Rev. John Mundfrom, Beulah, ND

### Missions

#### 5-year term

Rev. Ray Klug, Blackduck, MN  
Pastor Henry Mohagen, Towner, ND  
Kenneth Nash, Colfax, ND  
Timothy Rolf, McIntosh, MN  
Vernon Russum, Grafton, ND  
Rev. Tony Stockman, Brandon, MN  
Rev. Mike Crowell, Lake Stevens, WA  
Lee Quanbeck, McVile, ND  
Jim Keller, Wallace, SD  
Dr. Robert Kohl, Brookings, SD

#### 1-year term

Rev. Raynard Huglen, Newfolden, MN  
Rev. Mike Klenner, Freeman, SD

## Association Retreat Center

### 5-year term

Rev. Brian Davidson, Ponca City, OK  
Clifford Holm, Menahga, MN  
Dennis Jacobsen, Burlington, ND  
Arden Jacobson, Champlin, MN  
Larry Johnson, Amery, WI  
Rev. Todd Klemme, Metropolis, IL  
Rev. Philip Featherstone, Osceola, WI  
Erling Langness, Ishpeming, MI  
Bob Rudebusch, Lakeville, MN  
Reuben Emberson, Valley City, ND

### 2-year term

Laverne Storley, Roslyn, SD



Kermit Nash, Golden Valley, Minnesota, AFLBS Alumni Director and Jeremy Larson, Fargo, North Dakota, member of the AFLC Youth Board.

### Committee #1

Rev. Walter Johnson, Shakopee, MN  
Art Wilson, Pittsburgh, PA  
Kurt Bjorgaard, Argyle, MN  
Rev. Del Palmer, Shakopee, MN  
Wayne Deubner, Brockton, MT

### Committee #2

Wally Klein, McMurray, PA  
Paul Slaamot, Stanley, ND  
Jim Lehman, Kenyon, MN  
Rev. Alvin Magnuson, Reva, SD  
Rev. John Mundfrom, Beulah, ND

### Committee #3

Roland Deschene, Argyle, MN  
Rev. Norman Dornquast, Weslaco, TX  
Hjelmar Homme, Winger, MN  
Rev. David Skordahl, Dalton, MN  
Robert Bilden, Bagley, MN

### Committee #4

Brenda Stilley, Overbrook, PA  
Carmen Gustafson, Thief River Falls, MN  
Rev. Dan Klug, East Grand Forks, MN  
Marilyn Kettlehut, Deshler, NE

### Committee #5

Darrell Johnson, McIntosh, MN  
Rev. Raynard Huglen, Newfolden, MN  
Rev. Jon Wellumson, Williston, ND  
Robert Knutson, McVile, ND  
Willis Kettlehut, Deshler, NE

### Colloquy Committee

Rev. Todd Klemme, Metropolis, IL  
Rev. Dale Mellgren, McIntosh, MN  
Rev. John Allstaedt, Eben Junction, MI  
Rev. Tim Skramstad, Zumbrota, MN  
Rev. Lynn Kinneberg, McVile, ND

### Budget Analysis Committee

Richard Rasmussen, Monticello, MN  
Pastor Dale Finstrom, Glyndon, MN

# WMF Convention

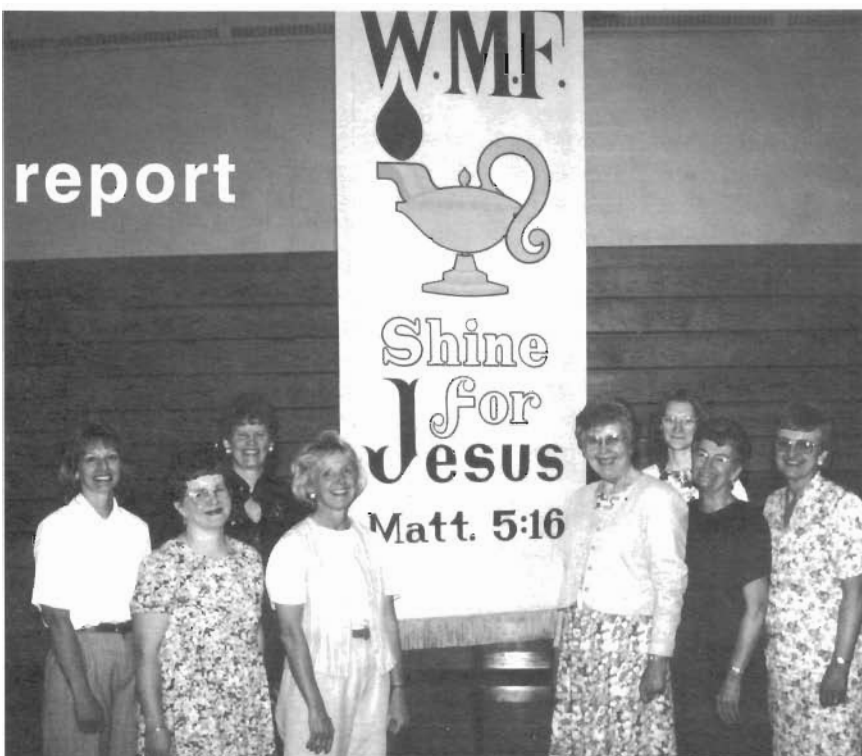
The 35th Annual Convention of the Women's Missionary Federation (WMF) met around the theme "Shine for Jesus" at the Northland Community College in Thief River Falls, Minnesota, on June 11 and 12, 1997.

The 330 attendees met Barb Hubner, the 1997 Bible Study author, through an informal interview by Dee Berkas, WMF president. The morning speaker was Missionary Connely Dyrud of Brazil. He spoke of the deception of false light for people in Brazil and in this country as well. Carolyn Dyrud sang, "The Name Above All Names" and shared Psalm 96:2, from the Living Bible, "each day tell someone that He saves."

During the business session, Faith Nelson of Kandiyohi, Minnesota, was elected to succeed Dee Berkas who completed two terms as president. Mary Pollestad, Andover, Minnesota, was elected as second vice president, succeeding Lori Molstre. Jeannette Benson, Upsala, Minnesota, was re-elected as treasurer. The 1996 budget of \$102,000 was surpassed by over \$14,000. At convention time, the WMF had received over \$18,500 toward furnishing the AFLC mission house near Osceola, Wisconsin. The "Eagle's Nest" taken from Isaiah 40:31, was chosen as the name for the missionary furlough home.

Missionary Debbie Giles of Mexico spoke in the afternoon on "Growing from Stress to Rest in the Lord." She encouraged us to face our trials with the knowledge that God's presence, power and purpose are at work and, as we understand that, we can transform from being the victim to

## report



The current national WMF officers are pictured along with the newly elected officers: Lori Molstre, Jeannette Benson, Mary Pollestad, Faith Nelson, Dee Berkas, Rosalie Paulson, Lola Lindell, and Karen Knudsvig.

becoming a visionary.

The Thursday breakfast fellowship featured Faith Nelson's devotional and Tara Nessa's testimony of their family's recent experience on internship in Brazil.

Missionary Dan Giles was the guest speaker at the Thursday evening Mission Festival Service. He stressed our foundation in

Christ and taking care how we build on it (I Corinthians 3:10,11). He emphasized the truths from Matthew 16:18: the Church belongs to the Lord Jesus — He is building it; the devil will try to prevail; and Jesus will not allow the devil to destroy His Church. Seminarian Raitis and Indra Eva-mois, Latvia, brought greetings as well as Rhoda Monseth and Melissa Nash who shared about their mission trip to India.

Offerings for home missions were over \$3,200; general fund — \$2,400; and world missions — \$4,000. Special thanks goes to Judith Wold and Our Saviour's Lutheran for their wonderful hospitality along with all the musicians, devotional leaders, coffee servers and the multitude of behind the scene workers. It was good to be together again at Thief River Falls.



— Rosalie Paulson  
WMF National Secretary



The Bethel Lutheran Bell Choir from Grafton, North Dakota.



Mabel Quanbeck, McVillie, North Dakota; Diane Grandstrand, Stephen, Minnesota; Mariys Swanson and Joshua, Ottawa, Illinois.



Pastor James and Linda Fugleberg and family of Fargo, North Dakota, sang at the convention.

# Come to Jesus for courage

**C**ourage takes on a new dimension when you are suddenly evacuated from your home and come back a week or more later to find your home and neighborhood in ruins. By the time this article is printed the flood in Grand Forks will be history. But now as I write, it is still very much with us, and will be for a long time.

We hear phrases such as "we will rebuild our city better than before ... I could have saved more 'stuff' if only ... ." The fact is that this experience as all of life is in God's hands.

We so easily slip into a religion of our own. We want to try our hardest and do our best to have courage in the face of tragedy. But do you know what? I have no courage at all without coming to Jesus. When I know Him and have learned to trust Him over the years in all the good and bad times, it is natural to turn to Him for help — then thank Him for walking with us through it all.

Is it hard for you to be personal when telling others what Jesus has done for you? Actually, it takes more courage to live as

God's children on the ordinary days. It seemed easy to talk to my neighbors recently about our faith when we were suffering together. But what about those days when our need is not so obvious? When I obey the nudges God gives to call, write, or visit someone He has appointed for me, I am amazed at how He works through me and the joy and peace He gives.

It takes the courage that Christ gives to live in prosperity, health and freedom. On the other hand we remember the thousands of Christians in Russia and China who persevered in their faith under oppression. Even today many living in hostile nations are facing persecution and martyr-

**"Actually, it takes more courage to live as God's children on the ordinary days."**

dom for their faith. We can't comprehend the required total dependence on God.

The comparison has been made

of life to a baseball game. There was a player who made a tremendous hit. It should have been a home run, but the umpire called him "out" at home plate because he had not touched first base. In baseball one cannot skip any bases. So too, in life. At first base we establish a personal relationship with Jesus. At second we are in the church finding nourishment for our souls and enjoying fellowship with other believers. Then we run to third where we live a life of service to God — intercessory prayer, sharing with others in need and witnessing for Him. Finally we reach home plate — heaven.

Now I am almost old. I wish I could say that I've always lived that way. But I do live in God's grace. He is the source of my life and the giver of the time and courage to love others. John 10:27,28 promises, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of My hand."

— Arona Skogerboe  
*Christ the King Free Lutheran*



Pastor Abel and his crew setting up the tent.

# Evangelism under the southern cross

When the apostle John related the incident of Jesus meeting the sinful woman at the well (John 4), He showed us how thrilled Jesus was to do one-on-one evangelism. Her conversion in turn led to open air evangelism with a crowd of people invited mainly by her. Jesus was so happy He lost His appetite and said to His returning disciples, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent me and to finish His work. Look ... the fields are white for harvest" (John 4:34).

Is there any greater joy than leading a soul to Christ? Can we ever "retire" from this effort? This was my burden last March when I traveled to Brazil and planned for tent evangelism to two cities with our two missionary sons and three Brazilian pastors.

Last year our Bible Camp organization had ordered a tent which would accommodate about 140 people. While I was there in 1996, we used it only once and that was in the city of Campo Grande. We held meetings there only one week after Jonathan Abel had arrived to begin planting a Free Lutheran Church. God was pouring His blessings out and we prayed with about 50 people for salvation.

Now this spring, we planned for another campaign in Campo Grande and one in Curitiba, working with Pastor Clovis Xavier and our Brazilian evangelist,

Agricio do Vale.

March and April are harvest months in Brazil and the weather is usually dry and temperate. As we met under the star-filled heavens and saw heaven-sent blessings in the form of decisions for Christ on most of the eight nights of the campaign, we could not keep from rejoicing. We looked up each night at the four stars of the Southern Cross, always laying on its side as if one arm of the cross was reaching down to help and encourage us. By the end of the week, twenty souls had made decisions for Christ and Pastor Jonathan's congregation of around 40, was strengthened. They had their work cut out for them — discipling these new converts. The congregation is now hoping to begin building their own church soon. A special joy was having

Seminarian Marshall Nessa working there during this time too.

From Campo Grande, we traveled the 800 mile trip down to Curitiba to set up the tent near Pastor Clovis' church. They had prepared well for the services, but some nights the temperature dropped to the 50s and attendance was hurt. Souls came to Christ and many Christians dealt with special needs in their own lives. Pastor Clovis said he felt a real unity and enthusiasm among his members. We visited a new housing area only two miles from his church where there are several hundred new homes and not one church. Pastor Clovis would like to buy a lot there (costs about \$4,000) and set the tent on it to get a new congregation started.

Time went too fast and my wife Ruby joined me for the last month until we returned to the States on May 10. We are rejoicing that God has given us many souls for our hire, as well as some good visits with our children and grandchildren. Lord willing, we will again by faith head for Brazil in January of 1998. If you would like to go with us to see missions first-hand or would in some way have a part in the needs mentioned, write to me or to the mission office in Minneapolis.



— Pastor John Abel  
PO Box 97  
Hitterdal, MN 56552



# A wide door in the midst of opposition

**A**t the same time as the Apostle Paul rejoiced in the "wide door for effective service" that God had opened for him, he acknowledged that "there are many adversaries" (I Corinthians 16:9). In our fifth mission trip to Eastern Europe earlier this year, this would be a description we would echo. The opportunities for the ministry of the gospel remain abundant and amazing. At the same time, opposition to such ministry is great and growing.

First, let me encourage you with some of the special opportunities Ellen and I had to minister in our time in Estonia and Latvia.

Christian radio is a growing phenomenon in the Baltic States. Altogether unprecedented, these stations are beaming gospel preaching and teaching as well as Christian music to most areas of Latvia and Estonia, and even into Russia. In the winter months, when the ability to get to church becomes difficult for many, worship services are available by tuning one's radio dial. When the public appears to be eager to hear, read or see anything, what exciting possibilities to reach the lost!

Both academies in these two countries with which we have worked the most, have seized the opportunity to conduct Christian radio ministries. On the stations in Riga and in Tartu, I was interviewed extensively regarding the nature of our ministry in Eastern Europe, and regarding the answers to the great spiritual, social, and economic needs in this region. What an opening for sharing Christ as the answer to everyone's most fundamental need!

Government-sponsored schools are still welcoming and encouraging the sharing of Christian teaching and values. Ellen and I were invited to speak at a school in Riga

where about 100 children (ages 6-16), mostly from broken homes, sat in rapt attention as we shared our personal testimonies and taught them several illustrated Bible stories as well as Christian songs. We believe there were many who trusted Jesus as their personal Savior that day through the blessed ministry of the Holy Spirit.

When we lived in Eastern Europe in 1993-94, we got acquainted with a young man who professed to be an agnostic. We shared the gospel with him repeatedly during that time, meeting polite but firm resistance. We have prayed for Ziegmund's salvation since that time. God has amazingly brought him across our path during each return trip to Latvia — March 1995, January 1996 and again on this trip. In a city of about one million people we can only attribute these meetings to "divine appointments." With each meeting, we can see the resistance deteriorating. As we met him now, he was hungry to talk. He admitted that his life was "garbage" (as he put it), which is a vital step in acknowledging the need of a Savior. We believe he is "not far from the Kingdom." Pray for this gifted young man that he would be truly saved and commit his talents in the service of the Lord.

It was a thrill to teach at the academy in Tartu once again. In a course I taught to the first-year students, "Fundamentals of the Christian Faith," there was a gracious work of the Holy Spirit in bringing several of them to a living faith in Christ as their Savior. It is exciting to think of God's plans for these future leaders in the church and society in Estonia.

We were amazed at many other opportunities which included the lay-evangelists' seminar at the Lutheran church headquar-

ters in Riga, attended by lay people from all over Latvia. They are prepared to serve as lay-assistants in their congregations in evangelistic outreach as well as ministry within their congregations. Ellen met with about 25 women eager to grow in their walk with the Lord and also to learn how to more effectively teach the Word of God in their homes and congregations.

While we rejoice to share these blessed opportunities, we would be remiss if we did not mention the growing opposition to the ministry by many from within and without the church. Sadly, there are inroads of liberal theology in schools that are preparing pastors and teachers. The higher-critical method, with its unbelieving presupposition that the Bible is not the inerrant Word of God, is making an impact on the thinking of both future and present pastors. Some are asking for conservative and evangelical theological books that will help to counteract the theological material that is currently most available. Leaders of evangelical schools are requesting conservative teachers to come and help them present the historic Bible-believing position on the fundamentals of "the faith once delivered." Pray for the exposure and the salvation of unbelieving teachers and increased awareness and discernment of tendencies that would detract from Christ and His Word. Pray for the provision of solid evangelical teachers.

Secular society certainly militates against the gospel in Eastern Europe as everywhere else in the world. With the recent independence has come for many people an all-consuming drive for material affluence and comfort. Blinded by such short-term goals, they have no time for the Church or its message.

With the independence and the resultant lessening of government control has come a flood of

# It's worth it

Their ages vary from sixteen into their forties. Some were temporarily unemployed, others are still working. Some are single, others are married with grown children. Most are members of a Free Lutheran congregation, some are from other evangelical congregations. What do these people all have in common? They have all set aside this year to study more deeply the riches of the Bible, the Word of God, at the Free Lutheran Bible School in Campo Mourão, Brazil.

Jose (19) is from the city of Londrina, about three hours from the Bible school campus. He comes from a non-Christian family and he himself has been a Christian for about one year. Why did he come to Bible school? "I want to be able to help my church ... I want to grow more in God's Word and discover my spiritual gifts." No, it is not easy to complete all the homework and work assignments. Is it worth being here? "It is worth it!" Would Jose

recommend the Bible school to others? "CERTAINLY!!!- especially for young people."

Being a relatively new Christian, "everything is new." Pray for Jose's family members, who are not yet converted.

Delfina (27) is also from Londrina. She never completed the fourth grade. She, too, wants to be able to help out at her church and to overcome her fear of public reading and singing. What has she been learning in the first several months of school? "So many things that I cannot begin to explain them all!" Was it worth it to come to Bible school? "It is worth it!"

Please pray for Jose, Delfina and the others who are studying at the Bible school in Brazil. They want this to be a useful year of equipping for service in their local congregations and, possibly, in other parts of the world to count for Jesus.

— Missionary David Nelson  
Campo Mourao, Brazil

## Mission opportunity

**The Partners In Mission Outreach** annual meeting was held on Tuesday, June 10, 1997 in Thief River Falls, Minnesota. The meeting was led by the chairman, Pastor Alvin Sather.

Director Al Brazier spoke about the next trip into Central Mexico. This will be in 1998 when Missionary Dan Giles is once again in Mexico after his time of furlough.

Two trips will be made to Obergon. The first trip will be January 10 - 24, 1998 and the second will be on March 14 -24, 1998.

Last August a group went to Aguascalientes. The group worked on the Springs of Living Water Church served by Missionary Dan Giles and Missionary Todd Schierkolk. They visited the city of Leon as well and the church there served by Pastor Samuel Flores.

People who wish to go to

**Rick Rasmussen**, Monticello, Minnesota, received the 1997 Community Service Award from Honeywell Solid State Electronic Center. There have only been 300 employees that received this award in the history of Honeywell. Rick is a member of Solid Rock Lutheran in Osseo and designated the \$500 gift for a special project at the Miriam Infant Home in Brazil.

**Cumberland, Wisconsin** — Pictured are the Sunday School children at Hosanna Free Lutheran Church packing a box for the Miriam Infant Home in Brazil.



## OPEN DOOR

immoral and perverse material in the print and visual media. Warped and jaded minds and emotions appear unable to even consider the claims of the gospel in their mad thirst to satisfy their physical lusts.

There is also a resurgence of interest in discovering and restoring

ing their national identity. This worthy and natural desire, however, has led some to accept uncritically ancient pagan folk-religion as it has related to their past.

We thank God for this exciting "wide door for effective service." Even as we continue to do all we can in prayerful support of our

beloved sisters and brothers in Christ in these former communist lands, we must keep our eyes open to the inroads of the enemy of the Church and claim and reclaim the victory in Christ. Continue to pray!

— Dr. Francis Monseth  
FLTS Dean  
Rogers, Minnesota

for you!

Mexico can contact the director, Al Braizer by writing him at RR 2 Box 338, Greenbush, Minnesota 56726 or calling at 218-782-2456.

Thankfulness was expressed regarding the bus now being paid for in full. The decision was made to spend \$2000 on a video projector and sound system. In the area of finances a continuous need exists for dollars for Pastor Gabriel Mercado's salary and car. Those wishing to contribute can send donations to Dean Crouthers, 40 E. Hudgins Street, Nogales, AZ 85621

**Aguascalientes, Mexico** — Springs of Living Water held their monthly prayer vigil at the end of June. They gather on the last Friday of every month and pray for three to four hours together. On May 24, the new baby of Ricardo and Adriana was baptized. Ricardo will be graduating from seminary in August.

**Campo Grande, Brazil** — The young congregation started last year by Missionary Jonathan Abel has outgrown their rented chapel. They have purchased a corner lot on a busy avenue and bus route. A new housing development is nearby with many souls to be reached. They hope to start building soon. Perhaps it would be an opportunity for an American short-term building crew to join with them. Pray for church growth, that God would use that congregation to bring living hope to the lost.

**Curitiba, Brazil** — Missionaries Paul and Becky Abel are busy at the ARCA with improvements in the dormitories, finishing a fireplace and making two new soccer fields.

They held a Children's Camp in July. In June their church in São Braz began a 12-week profes-

## New books introduced at conference available through the Parish Ed office

**Georg Sverdrup: Champion of the Free Congregation** (\$3) by Dr. Francis W. Monseth. "No name is more prominent or significant in the history of the Lutheran Free Church or its successor, the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, than that of Georg Sverdrup." Sverdrup stated that, "The important thing is to bring as many as possible to salvation in Christ through sincere repentance and living faith. It is not a question of getting the congregation to grow through a compromise with the world, but of insuring its growth through the drawing and convicting power of the Holy Spirit."

**A New Springtime** (\$9.95, paperback; \$14.95, hardcover) by Rev. Robert Lloyd Lee. Centennial reflections on the revival in the 1890s among Norwegian-Americans. "The Revival in the Nineties was not a structured movement of evangelistic outreach, but a spontaneous movement of the Holy Spirit among an immigrant people."

**Christian Liberty** (\$3.50) by Martin Luther. "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is

a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all." One of Luther's most famous treatises that makes clear that a believing Christian is free from sin through faith in God, yet bound by love to serve his neighbor. (Many asked for this booklet — only 40 pages — at conference, which was recommended by pastor Bruce Dalager along with *The Believer Free from the Law* by C.O. Rosenius in his sermon at the opening service. Both are now available through AFLC Parish Education.)

**Hallesby and other classics** — Interest has been expressed in reprinting several out-of-date books including: *The Law Perfect*; *Mirror of the Heart*; *March of Faith*; and O. Hallesby's *Infant Baptism and Adult Conversion* and *Conscience*. However, these cannot be reprinted without widespread interest and financial support. If you heartily desire the reprinting of one of these books and/or are able to give towards that end, please contact Marian Christopherson, Parish Education Director at: phone — (612) 545-5631; fax — (612) 545-0079; e-mail — hqmail@afcl.org

sion of faith class and have many new Christians participating. Two girls are currently living with the Abel family, Luciano and Silvana. They recently wrote, "Silvana was raised in a Christian family but left home several years ago and became deeply involved in spiritism. After having a demon cast out of her, she wanted to start life over again in a Christian family — so we have taken her in for awhile."

**Campo Mourao, Brazil** — During the last week of June, Missionary Sonja Dahl traveled with a Baptist Medical Missionary Team translating while working in an area with people who don't have easy access to medical service. Sonja wrote, "I learned so much and I hope to use what I learn at the orphanage." In July she traveled into the Amazon region on a similar mission.

## PEOPLE AND PLACES

### Lake Stevens, Washington

— Elim Lutheran members, Darwin and Mary Ann Jackson and their daughter Jeannette, will soon begin their new ministry in Mexico City to do evangelism with the World Mission Prayer League. The Jacksons left Minneapolis in May, after completing some classes at the AFLC

### Morris, Illinois — Area

churches sponsored "Heaven's Gates and Hell's Flames," a powerful drama depicting the reality of heaven and hell at the Morris High School Auditorium during May 11-13. Area congregations provided the actors, counselors and other support personnel for this outreach event.

**Pastor Brian Davidson**, has a new address: 2505 Turner Rd., Ponca City, OK 74604. Office (404) 762-4775. Home 765-2538.

**Dalton, Minnesota** — The Zion-Sarpsborg, Kvam and Tordenskjold Parish hosted a farewell party on June 7, for their youth pastor, David Foss. He accepted a call to serve a congregation in California and began his new ministry in June.



Pictured is Arvid and Gloria Boyum, Kenyon, Minnesota, with the RV being loaned to the AFLC Home Missions by the Emmanuel and Hauge Parish of Kenyon, to be used to help house the Flood Relief Team.



The Mission Aid of Bethlehem Lutheran in Morris, Illinois, helped a local merchant celebrate the Syttende Mai. The store windows were decorated with Norwegian artifacts supplied by one of the Mission Aid members. The ladies also prepared and sold Kringla for a fund raiser with proceeds going to flood relief in North Dakota and Minnesota. AAL matched the proceeds to make a total of \$1,400.



Pastor Bruce and Karen Dalager and Pastor Dan and Marna Klug were presented checks of over \$18,000 each for Trinity and Christ the King Lutheran congregations to use as a part of the AFLC Flood Relief assistance. Each congregation has received funds directly as well. That was not included in the total.

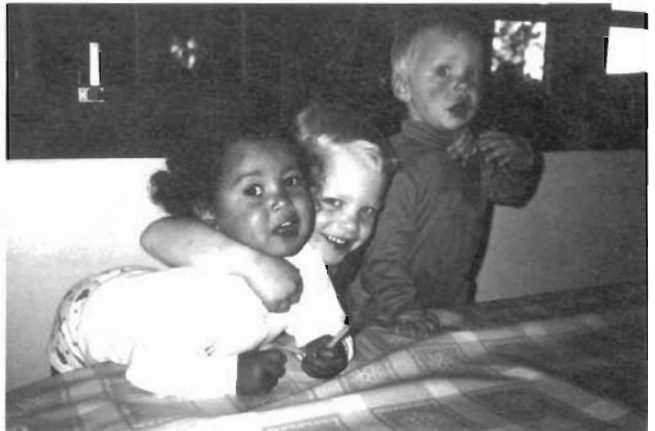


Pictured are the members of the Flood Relief Team (Nehemiah): L. to R. Melanie Blawat, Trevor Tungseth, Heather Thorson, Arte Cesle, Jessica Benson and Ben Dahl. They are working in the community to assist in clean-up, VBS, etc. Support is still needed for their ministry.

## PEOPLE AND PLACES



**Lisbon, North Dakota** — Vacation Bible School was held during the last of week of May at the Lisbon Elementary School gym. Eighty children participated through the week and the closing program was held at the North Dakota Veterans' Home. The outreach ministry was led by individuals who are praying that someday there will be an AFLC congregation in that community.



Rachel, Josiah and Samuel, children of Missionaries David and Sarah Nelson, Campo Mourao, Brazil.



**Detroit Lakes, Minnesota** — Faith Free Lutheran celebrated the burning of their mortgage last April 9. The congregation was organized in 1990 with 23 members. They met in a rented facility until moving into their own building in July of 1993. Pastor Paul Larson has served the congregation since 1990. With over 150 baptized members, the congregation is looking ahead to beginning a Christian school and adding on a sanctuary as God provides and leads.

**Valley City, North Dakota** — The Eastern North Dakota District WMF held their Spring Rally at Grace Free Lutheran on April 26. Missionaries Connely and Carolyn Dyrud were the special guests. The theme was "Victory Through Jesus" from I Corinthians 15:57-58.



**Spokane, Washington** — New Vision Free Lutheran put on a children's play called "God is in Control," written by two members of the church. Attendance at the two performances was 170, not including the 29 children who participated.

### Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

#### AFLC Benevolences — January 1 - June 30, 1997

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN JUNE	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund . . . . .	\$279,330.00	\$13,101.27	99,391.96	36
Seminary . . . . .	113,300.00	5,152.92	41,189.95	36
Bible School . . . . .	142,509.00	4,932.30	51,335.57	36
Home Missions . . . . .	257,432.00	8,495.64	94,067.95	37
World Missions . . . . .	341,000.00	22,208.36	166,551.90	49
Capital Investment . . . . .	19,000.00	710.45	4,276.41	23
Parish Education . . . . .	56,517.00	2,35.68	28,881.15	51
Church Extension . . . . .	14,813.00	308.62	9,499.57	64
<b>TOTALS . . . . .</b>	<b>\$1,223,901.00</b>	<b>57,245.24</b>	<b>495,213.46</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>TOTALS 1996 . . . . .</b>	<b>1,232,267.00</b>	<b>70,569.64</b>	<b>508,710.68</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Goal 50%</b>				

## PEOPLE AND PLACES

**Pastor Harris and Sylvia Van Someren**, formerly of Winger, Minnesota, are now retired and living at RR 3, Box 216-A, Mason, WI 54856. Their phone number is (715) 765-4618 and e-mail is:

<hvsomern@win.bright.net>

**Pastor Craig Johnson** has resigned as pastor of Spencer Creek Lutheran Church, Eugene, Oregon to work in the planting of a new AFLC congregation in the Portland, Oregon area. He will move to the Portland area in early October. He will continue to serve as editor of *The Lutheran Ambassador*.

**Pastor James Johnson**, Brooklyn Park, Minnesota, has a new office phone number: (612) 315-3579. The change reflects the recent move of the church office to a location closer to members of Solid Rock Lutheran. The young congregation continues to worship in a school while seeking a permanent church home.

**Pastor Ralph Rokke** has been removed from the AFLC clergy roster at his own request in order to serve in another denomination.

**Pastor Rodney Stueland**, Roseau, Minnesota, is recovering from heart surgery. He is the pastor of Norland and Roseau Lutheran churches.

### Seminary receives matching funds

FLTS recently received \$2,175 from Lutheran Brotherhood through the Member Matching Gift program. The latest payment matches 23 gifts from Lutheran Brotherhood members made during the first quarter of 1997. Lutheran Brotherhood's IMPACT Plus program matches members' gifts of \$25 to \$100 per year to Lutheran seminaries nationwide.

**Kalispell, Montana** — Stillwater Lutheran member, Allen Herset, was recently honored as the first runner-up for the state's "Outstanding Male Nursing Home Resident" award. Allen, 42, is disabled with MS and has been

a resident at Immanuel Lutheran Home since 1996. Allen was an Ambassador Gospel Team member and a 1976 AFLBS graduate. Allen and his wife, Joanne, have three sons.

## DELEGATE SYSTEM

Lutheran Free Church — not merged. But the ALC sought a court injunction to block the continued use of this name which resulted in a trial in International Falls, Minnesota.

The non-merging group argued that the LFC was not a synod — had never incorporated — and, therefore, did not exist in legal terms. What did exist was merely a fellowship of congregations and loosely connected corporations just as Rev. Gjerde had implied. Thus the not-merged group should be the legitimate holder of the name, the heritage and, perhaps, some property.

District Judge Gordon L. McRae thought otherwise. He ruled that the two bodies (ALC and LFC) were "substantially the same" in polity, and thus the ALC was the legitimate heir to the LFC name as well as the congregations. One of the points on which Judge McRae obviously based his decision was the recently implemented delegate system. In other words, **if you operate like a synod, you are a synod**. Thus, one of the great fears of the founding fathers was substantiated: the LFC, according to the judge's ruling, had become a synod.

Therefore, when the not-merged group reorganized under the name of the AFLC, they went back to the original "rule six" of *The Rules for Work* where anyone could vote.

There is yet another reason why a delegate system would not be consistent with our free church heritage. I recently spoke with a friend who had just returned from an annual conference of a Lutheran church with a synodical structure. His wife had been a delegate. When I asked him where he sat during the conference, he admitted he sat in the back in the visitors' section. In other words, he couldn't sit on the main floor with the delegates. He was a "visitor," someone of lesser status, and not truly a part of the activities. Delegates, you, see, become somehow "elevated" at conference time. An air of importance and exclusivity surrounds them that runs counter to the equality, unity, and spiritual fellowship that historically has pervaded our annual conferences.

So today when someone brings up the idea that a delegate system would make the Association more responsive to congregations and bring better representation to the conferences, old timers shudder. They know you can't be a free church and a synod at the same time!



— Lozell Dyrud  
Our Saviour's  
Thief River  
Falls, Minnesota

## A heritage of dreamers

It started with a dream, a vision that things could be better than they were. Georg Sverdrup had a vision of free and living congregations being planted throughout America. He dreamed of congregations directing their "own affairs, subject to the authority of the Word and the Spirit of God" but gladly accepting "the mutual assistance which the congregations can give one another in the work for the advancement of the Kingdom of God" (Fundamental Principles 5 and 7).

A Sverdrup biographer, James S. Hamre, describes Sverdrup's dream as "a breathtaking, even staggering concept. It involves nothing less than the idea that America offers Christians a chance to make a 'new beginning,' to return to the New Testament pattern of Christianity. From Sverdrup's point of view, this was a unique period in the history of God's people. But it was a moment that must be grasped."

That dream and the "grasping of the moment" led to the beginning of the forerunner of the AFLC, the Lutheran Free Church, in 1897.

Some people dared to dream in 1962. The Lutheran Free Church was merging with other Lutheran church bodies. Many were concerned, but few were willing to take a stand. It seemed it would accomplish little. The wheels of merger were in motion. Going along appeared to be the only option.

Some dreamed of another option. They dreamed of a new church body continuing along under the Fundamental Principles that had been developed in accord with Sverdrup's vision in 1897. They dreamed of a church body that respected the autonomy of the local congregation, that viewed the Bible as the authority without error, that longed to see lost souls saved and brought into the Kingdom of God. They soon began dreaming of a seminary and a Bible school, of mission work at home and abroad, of Sunday school material and youth work.

To many the dream seemed foolish, something that would only float in the sky but never get planted on the ground. By the grace of God, however, the dream did get planted and the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations began.

Our heritage is one of dreamers and risk-takers. It is one of people who believed they "can do everything through him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:13, NIV). It is one of people who

believed mountains can be moved and that Jesus meant it when He said, "whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours" (Mark 11:24, NIV). It is one of people who had confidence in God with whom "all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26, NIV).

Are we being faithful to our heritage? Are we walking in the footsteps of those who have gone before us and taking steps of faith? Or are we looking to go where the path is easy and the way is clear? Which are we doing the most: cautiously stepping only where we think we can see where we are going, or marching forward, knowing our Lord who can see is leading?

A blind beggar called out for Jesus as He was passing by. The Lord stopped and asked him the surprising question, "What do you want me to do for you?" It would have been reasonable to expect the beggar to simply ask for a coin or some food. Instead he asked big. He said, "Lord, I want to see" (Luke 18:41, NIV). The request was granted.

Often our requests are far too small, because our confidence in God is far too small. Jesus told the woman at the well, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water" (John 4:10, NIV). Essentially He is saying, "If you really knew the nature of the One you are talking to, you wouldn't just be interested in water you can see. You would ask for living water." If we really knew what God can and wants to do, we would ask big things and receive even more. The Bible says, "You do not have, because you do not ask God" (James 4:2, NIV).

The ones who went before us 35 and 100 years ago asked for new church bodies. They had confidence in God that motivated them to dream and take courageous steps of faith. Our God has not gotten any weaker or smaller over the years. He is still "able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine" (Ephesians 3:20, NIV). Therefore, let us make big requests of God also and dream wild dreams of how we might be used of Him in His service. They did not know for sure what God would do in 1897 and 1962, but they knew what He could do, so they boldly went forward. Let us follow their example and, like them, be ready to be amazed at the great work God will do.

— Pastor Craig Johnson

**"a breath-taking, even staggering concept. ..."**

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## BUILDING THE BASE

### The annual conference: *Why not a delegate system?*

From the beginning, annual conferences of the Lutheran Free Church (LFC) were as much “a religious rally as a working convention,” according to Eugene Fevold in *The History of the Lutheran Free Church*. But that did not mean they were without controversy. One source of controversy was whether or not to have a delegate system. This issue arose several times, most notably during the 1920s when it was brought before the conference floor on three different occasions. Each time the issue was soundly defeated.

The usual arguments for delegates included the notion that the congregations would be better represented, the conference better attended, and the business of the conference taken more seriously. Leading the opposition during this decade was George Sverdrup, president of Augsburg College, and son of founder Georg Sverdrup. He believed a delegate system would betray the free church principles his father had fought so hard to establish. Another opponent was Rev. E. E. Gynild, president of the LFC in the latter part of the 1920s. He felt a delegate system would transform the LFC into a synod. In spite of over-

whelming early opposition to a delegate system, there was always a group unhappy with the looseness of the church body generally and the conference specifically.

Finally, after the resolution to merge with the American Lutheran Church (ALC) had been defeated in 1955 and again in 1957, the delegate issue again arose. In 1958, Rev. Luthard Gjerde, who would be elected vice president of the LFC that summer, spoke on “the contemporary dilemma” of the LFC. In order for the LFC to meet its responsibilities, he advocated a more structured body including a delegate convention and a more authoritative administration. This would do away with the weakness of the LFC which he described as an “aggregate of corporations held together in one fellowship through the sheer force of its president’s personality.”

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#### **“The LFC’s adoption of the delegate system had significant consequences for the AFLC.”**

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The next year a resolution to change the “Rules for Work” was passed following this schedule:

congregations up to 100 baptized members — one delegate; up to 250 — two delegates; up to 500 — three delegate; and any congregation over 501 — four delegates. The intent was to tie the congregations closer to the conference. The new LFC President John Stensvaag proclaimed that the system would “bring about a more responsible relationship between the congregations and the annual conference.”

The delegate system went into effect in 1960, and in 1961 the conference voted to conduct another merger referendum. This time it passed — effectively dissolving the LFC after 1962.

It is unfair to say the merger came about as a result of the delegate system. The merger vote would undoubtedly have passed sooner or later regardless of the system. Nevertheless, the LFC’s adoption of the delegate system had significant consequences for the AFLC.

After the LFC officially merged with the ALC in February of 1963, the group that met in Thief River Falls, Minnesota in October of 1962, sought to retain the polity, heritage, and name and call themselves the

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