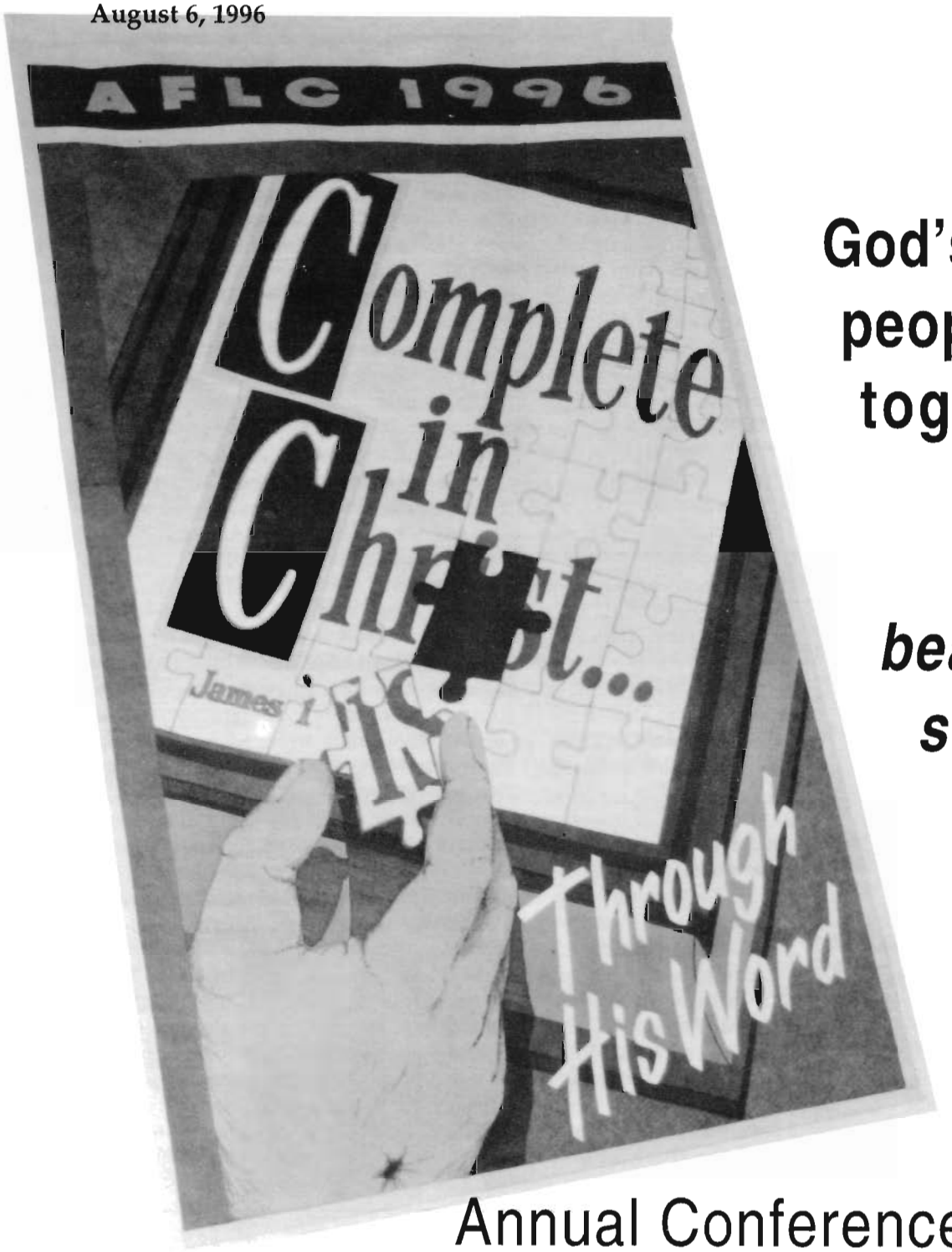
The Lutheran
AMBASSADOR
August 6, 1996



God's people together

A beautiful sight

Annual Conference review

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

August 6, 1996
Volume 34, Number 10

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

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Conference photos by Solveig Hjermstad

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AN ENCOURAGING WORD

Peace in a turbulent world

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. — John 14:27

One man put it well when he said, "We live in a turbulent world, but we have a tranquil God." Violence, warfare, unrest and strife touch our lives. Like a turbulent, sin-tossed sea, we at times feel tossed to and fro. Perhaps we are tempted to feel like orphans as inner tranquillity escapes us.

Even as Christians, it is easy for us to feel agitated, upset and disturbed. Satan loves this. It is contrary to God's desire and will for His children. Peace, for some, seems so illusive that it is like a desert mirage — never attainable.

But there is the encouraging word. God desires each of us to rest with peace in our soul, heart and mind. It is attainable, no matter what troubles are around us.

The world offers no true peace. Jeremiah 6:14 reminds us, "'Peace, peace,' they say, when there is no peace." Apart from Christ, there is not genuine peace. Paul calls God, "the God of peace" in Romans 15:33. Isaiah called Jesus the "Prince of Peace." The gospel of Christ is "the gospel of peace" and "beautiful are the feet of them that preach it" (Romans 10:15).

How can we have this true peace? It is by one way and one way alone: that is in having an intimate, saving relationship with the Prince of Peace — the Lord Jesus Christ. We must first have peace with God before we can have the peace of God. He gives freely through Christ who reconciled us to God by His redemptive work at Calvary. Therefore Christ is our peace (Ephesians 2:14-16). We can claim along with Paul in Philippians 4:7, "The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Listen closely friends: if Christ secured our peace, our favor with God the Father and, if He is our peace, let us take to heart what He promises His children! Why should our inner tranquillity of soul not be constant when He is our peace and has promised us peace?

In a painting contest one artist portrayed peace by painting a very serene scene with a placid, calm lake. Everything was pleasant and bright. Another contestant painted a scene of a raging storm with winds and waves of the sea lashing at the rocky cliffs on the shore. Up in a cleft, high in the rocks, nestled a little bird, safe and secure. This painting won the prize.

Trust Jesus, friends. Trust His Word. Isaiah said, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusts in Thee" (Isaiah 26:3). What assurance and confidence He gives!

Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with you all. II Thessalonians 3:16

– Pastor Alvin Grothe
Asotria, Oregon

Sound Bites

"Since the church is a living organism, it is natural for it to grow if it is healthy. The church is a body, not a business. It is an organism, not an organization. It is alive."
— Rick Warren

"I didn't go to religion to make me happy. I always knew a bottle of Port would do that. If you want a religion to make you feel really comfortable, I certainly don't recommend Christianity."
—C. S. Lewis

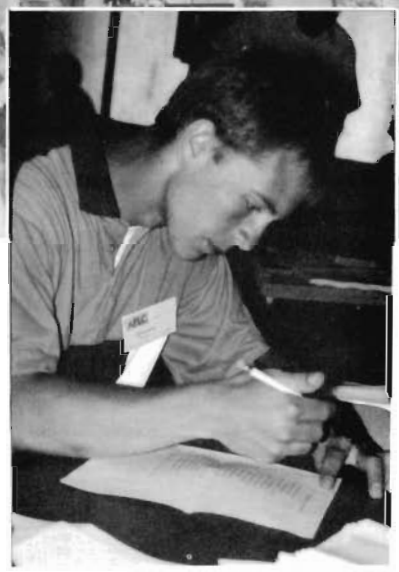
"Vital religion is like good music. It needs no defense, only rendition. A wrangling controversy in support of religion is as if the members of the orchestra should beat the folks over the head with their violins to prove that the music was beautiful."
— Harry Emerson Fosdick

"The hard truth is that we have substituted an institutionalized religion for the life-changing dynamic of a living faith. For most of us the church is the building where we assemble to worship; its ministries are the programs that we get involved in; its mission is to meet the needs of its parishioners; and its servants are the professional clergy we hire to shepherd us. Church growth has come to refer more to such things as location, marketing, architecture, programs, and head counts than to the maturity of the body of Christ."
— Charles Colson

"Everything about Jesus' life shouts service! And the ultimate expression of his servanthood was the cross. There, hanging on the cross, was the Servant *par excellence*, performing the ultimate service. Wherever we may be on the path of servanthood, there is one thing we all must do if we are to be servants, and that is look to the cross."
— Kent Hughes

"Church is the one place I visit that brings together generations: infants still held at their mothers' breasts, children who squirm and giggle at all the wrong times, responsible adults who know how to act appropriately at all times, and senior citizens who drift asleep if the preacher drones on too long."
— Philip Yancey

Pastor Ken Moland, Kirkland, WA, led the Sunday morning worship service.



David Olson, Fargo, ND, was one of the tellers.

AFLC officers and their wives (L. to R.) Vice president Elden and Faith Nelson; President Robert and Gloria Lee; and Secretary Bruce and Karen Dalager.

A beautiful

Report on the 1996 AFLC Annual Conference

The beauty of what God can do was on display at the 34th Annual Conference of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations (AFLC), held June 19-23 at the Warm Beach Conference Center in Stanwood, Washington. The site on the Puget Sound, north of Seattle, offered picturesque views of God's creation. The spirit of the conference offered the beautiful sight of God bringing people together around Christ and His Word. "How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1, NIV)

Before the official beginning of the conference, the AFLC Home Missions Committee invited the early arrivers at Warm Beach to join in a concert of prayer on Tuesday evening, June 18.

Wednesday's schedule was filled with the meetings of the Women's Missionary Federation (WMF) and a number of committees. Some of these committees were ones that were given the responsibility of preparing resolutions for the conference's business sessions.

Pastor Martin Horn of Bethany Lutheran in Astoria, Oregon, led a concert of prayer before the Wednesday evening opening service of the conference. That service was led by Pastor Richard Long of Atonement Free Lutheran in Arlington, Washington, who was also the chairman of the organizing committee for the conference. Pastor Elden Nelson, who serves

Maranatha Free Lutheran in Willmar Minnesota, and is vice president of the AFLC, preached the opening service message on the conference theme: "Complete in Christ — Through His Word" taken from James 1.

Pastor Nelson noted that James is addressing people who were in the midst of battle, speaking to them and to us of the need of having a faith that is tested and tried in order for completeness to come. "You are complete in Christ if you have a faith in Jesus that is current." Pastor Nelson asked his listeners, "Will we be doers of the Word and not debaters only?"

The president of the AFLC, Pastor Robert Lee, officially opened the conference by reading from II Timothy 3:14-4:5. He desired for those attending the conference to remember the inspiration and adequacy of the Scripture and the call that is given to preach that Word and do the work of an evangelist.

Discussing the Work

In his report to the conference, Pastor Lee spoke of his "conviction that God has raised up the AFLC to be evangelical in profession and evangelistic in practice. The recycling of saints from one church to another is not an adequate vision for a world where countless lost souls are passing day by day into an eternity without Jesus Christ. God has called us together, not to merely survive in the midst of secular hostility, but to thrive in the midst of spectacular opportunity!" He stated that "The AFLC exists for the sole purpose of serving local congregations, assisting them as they work together in love and unity to accomplish what they cannot do alone. ... Our common endeavors ... continue to serve as genuine faith ministries, supported not by synodical compulsion but by free-will gifts from congregations and interested friends. ... May the Spirit of God renew within the AFLC His vision for building free and living Lutheran congregations!"

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Daily prayer time was led by Pastor Jerry Moan, AFLC Schools faculty member.

Bud Haugen, Snohomish, WA

Cedar Lodge, site of conference registration and meals.

Pastor Les Galland of Calvary Lutheran in Everett, Washington, reported to the conference as chairman of the Coordinating Committee. He told of ten pastors who were added to the clergy roster during the past year and six new congregations.

Ernest Miedema gave his last annual conference report as AFLC Director of Development. After 17 years in the position he is retiring effective January 1997. The conference rose in appreciation for his years of service.

Continued growth and rejoicing in what God has done highlighted the report of the Association Retreat Center (ARC) director, Eric Westlake. Work on the facility in Osceola, Wisconsin, continues as does God's work in many lives through the camps, retreats and other events the ARC hosts. The report stated, "The ARC continues to enjoy growth with bookings up over thirty percent from last year. God has been good to us and deserves all the praise."

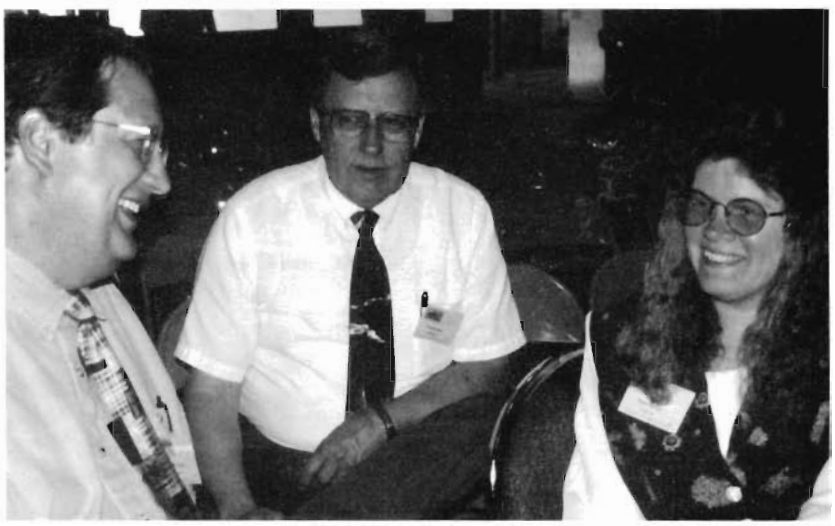
During the discussion of resolutions in the area of administration, the conference reaffirmed its "biblical convictions that unborn children are persons in the sight of God from the time of conception and stand under the protection of God's command against murder, and ... the employment of every peaceful and legal avenue to enact laws restoring protection to unborn children be encouraged, while relying on the spiritual resources available to God's people for fighting the spiritual battle for the sanctity of human life." In the same resolution the conference expressed its "opposition to the violent actions of some abortion opponents, convinced that the violence of abortion will not be overcome by further violence, and that Christians must not take the law into their own hands in opposing evil."

The conference also resolved that it was "deeply grieved over the acceptance by elements of our government of the homosexual lifestyle which is contradictory to the Scriptures" and reaffirmed its "previous position of rejecting same sex marriages and relationships. ... The only norm for marriage and human sexuality found in the Scripture is heterosexual, monogamous marriage."

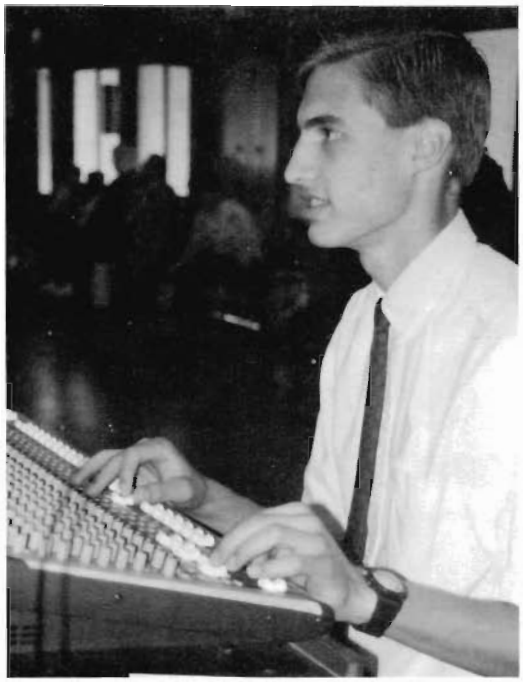
The conference moved next into a discussion of the areas of stewardship and pensions. The chairman of the Stewardship Board, Pastor Mark Antal of Leeds, North Dakota, reported that "On our board we have seen Christian discipleship as the key to effective stewardship."

Pastor Frank Cherney of Tucson, Arizona, chairman of the AFLC Pension Board announced that an annual physical benefit and a cancer screening benefit has been added to the AFLC health plan. The Pension Board is also providing on request information and guidelines for clergy compensation packages that meet IRS rules and make the most of the resources available.

Pastor Richard Anderson, Lakeville, MN, spoke to the Home Missions' Builders Fellowship luncheon.



Pastor Everett Hind, Pipestone, MN, (center) and Pastor Frank and Pam Cherney, Tucson, AZ. Pastor Hind was placed on the AFLC clergy roster in June by the Coordinating Committee.



Lucas Long, Arlington, WA, worked with the sound board during the conference. The Arlington congregation and Pastor Rick Long led the West Coast District in hosting the conference.

Downtown Seattle was just an hour away from the conference grounds. Matt Greven, youth worker at Lake Stevens, WA, arranged the conference youth activities which included a Mariners baseball game.

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.

An election was a major news item when the emphasis of the conference turned toward the AFLC's Bible school and seminary. Pastor James L. Johnson of Fosston, Minnesota, was nominated by the schools' Board of Trustees and elected by the conference as the new dean of the Association Free Lutheran Bible School (AFLBS) located in the Minneapolis, Minnesota, suburb of Plymouth. The dean of AFLBS for the past 12 years, Pastor Don Greven, left the position this spring to serve West Lisbon Lutheran in Newark, Illinois.

In their reports Pastor Lyndon Korhonen, chairman of the Board of Trustees, and Dr. Francis Monseth, dean of the Free Lutheran Seminary, both spoke of the financial needs of the schools. "We remain concerned that the financial needs of the seminary be met," said Dr. Monseth. "There is a great need for all of our congregations to share in the support of the seminary. The seminary is an arm of

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Loiell Dyrud, Thief River Falls, MN; and Pastors Craig Johnson, Eugene, OR and Raynard Huglen, Newfolden, MN. Mr. Dyrud spoke at the Friday evening Pastor's Banquet on the history and principles of the Free Lutheran movement in America.

Pastor Gene Sundby, Outlook, Saskatchewan, the president of AFLC-Canada.

The Elim Choir from Lake Stevens, WA, conducted by Lyle Forde, sang at the opening service on Wednesday night.

the local congregation. ... It is an investment in the future spiritual leadership of one's own congregation (as well as of others) when a congregation keeps the seminary on its 'prayer list' and on its 'benevolence list.' Praise the Lord for each congregation that does."

During the Thursday evening service Pastor Paul Abel, missionary in Brazil home on furlough, brought the message. Also sharing in the service was missionary candidate Sonja Dahl, who is in the process of applying for a visa and raising support for going to Brazil.

During the business sessions AFLC World Missions Director Eugene Enderlein shared about the various areas of mission work the church body is involved in. Types of support that people can provide were mentioned. These include prayer, financial gifts, commitments to designated giving, and going to the field to provide short-term help or taking part in one of the "Partners in Mission" bus trips to Mexico. Discussion also took place regarding the need to secure housing for missionary families who are home on furlough.

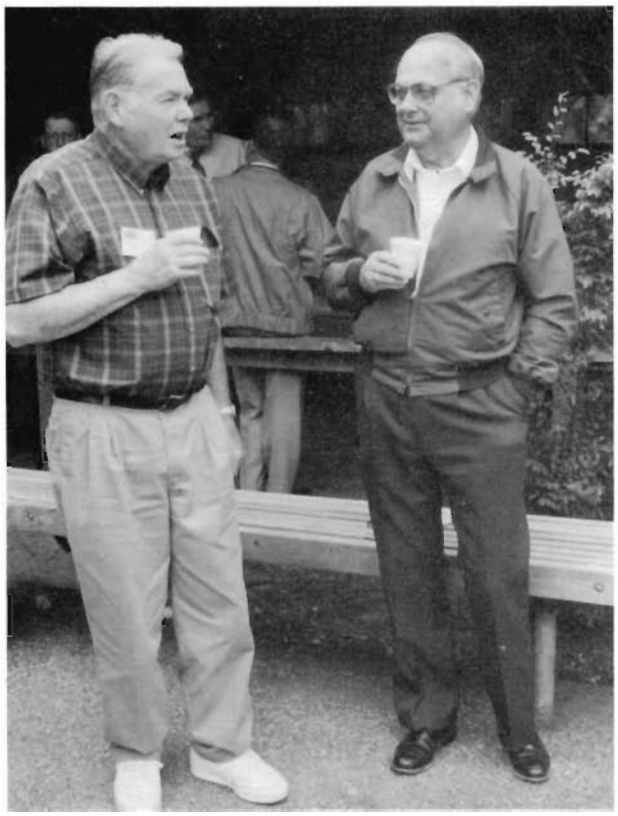
Home Missions Committee Chairman, Pastor Allen Monson, and Director, Pastor Paul Nash shared about a new direction in which God has been leading them called "Vision 2100." This is a church ministry management plan for the purpose of helping a congregation discover

Sonja Dahl, missionary candidate.

and identify its vision, calling and mission. Pastor Richard Anderson will be serving as a resource person to help in this area.

Discussion was held regarding a ministry description for and the calling of a full-time evangelist. Consideration was also given to possible means of funding such a position. A resolution was passed encouraging a unit support method similar to that used for supporting missionaries. Conference business was then stopped and people were asked to write down on a slip of paper the amount they would give toward the support of an

World Missions Director Eugene and Beverly Enderlein with Pastor D. Luther Sastry. Pastor Sastry returned to India after the conference. He spent the last months studying at AFLTS.



Mr. Harold Carter, Ferndale, WA, and Pastor Dennis Gray, Greenbush, MN.

John and Ruth Horn, Whitefish, MT.

evangelist. The total pledged was $24,000.

Thanks was given for the ten years of service Katha Tjelta has provided as the Director of Parish Education for the AFLC. The need for prayer in the calling of a new director was expressed.

The Christian Academic Education Board was commended for the completion of their informational display as they strive to serve through the evaluation of educational resources.

In the area of youth work, praise to God was given for the realization during the past year of the goal of a full-time youth director in the AFLC with the calling of Pastor Kevin Olson. He and the Youth Board see their mission as encouraging and challenging the local congregation to win, build and equip youth in Jesus Christ.

During the Saturday evening youth night service thanks was expressed to Pastor Dennis Gray for his years of service as part-time youth director of the AFLC. A reception in his honor was held following the service.

Sent to do the Work

Many of the 309 who registered for the conference worshipped together on Sunday morning at a communion service led by Pastor Joel Lohafer of Ferndale, Washington, with the message brought by Pastor Stephen Mundfrom of Sebeka, Minnesota. Another worship service was also held that morning with Pastor Ken Moland of Kirkland, Washington, leading and Pastor John Dennis of Bethel Park, Pennsylvania, preaching.

Reflecting on the conference President Lee commented on a "new sense of direction" and a thankfulness for the presence of the Lord. "Surely we have been blessed by God."

— by Pastor Craig Johnson

1996 Annual Conference elections

Officers
Vice President
Pastor Elden Nelson, Kandiyohi, MN
Secretary
Pastor Bruce Dalager, Grand Forks, ND

Schools' Board of Trustees
Mr. Wayne Floan, Fertile, MN
Pastor Rodger Olson, Fergus Falls, MN

Youth Board
Alan Arneson, Badger, MN
Jeremy Larson, Fargo, ND

Board of Pensions
Pastor Lynn Wilson, Roslyn, SD

Stewardship
Joel Hanson, Webster, SD
Pastor Jim Fugleberg, Fargo, ND

Parish Education and Publications
Pastor Martin Horn, Astoria, OR

Commission on Evangelism
Pastor Tom Olson, Barronett, WI
Pastor Jim Rasmussen, Park River, ND
Mr. Mike McCarlson, Webster, SD

Christian Academic Education Board
Mrs. Rosemary Carlson, Wheatland, IA
Pastor Gerald Peterson, Oklahoma City, OK
Pastor James Johnson, Brooklyn Park, MN

Colloquy Committee
Pastor Tim Skramstad, Zumbrota, MN
Pastor Jim Fugleberg, Fargo, ND
Pastor Del Palmer, Thief River Falls, MN
Pastor John Dennis, Bethel Park, PA
Pastor Mark Olson, Arlington, SD

Budget Analysis Committee
Mr. Eldwyn VanBruggen, Valley City, ND

Elected to the AFLC Coordinating Committee at the conference were: (L. to R.) Mr. Marlin Benrud, Goodhue, MN; Pastor Terry Olson, Dickinson, ND; Mr. Vince Larson, Buffalo, ND; and Pastor Ken Moland, Kirkland, WA.

Youth Ministries Director Kevin Olson gave his report to the conference.

1997 Nominating Committee

EASTERN NORTH DAKOTA —
Arne Berge, Binford, ND
WESTERN ND/EASTERN MT —
Dennis Jacobson, Minot, ND
SOUTH DAKOTA —
Mike McCarlson, Webster, SD
LAKE SUPERIOR —
Peter Hill, Cloquet, MN
NORTHWESTERN MN —
Wayne Peterson, Thief River Falls, MN
NORTH CENTRAL MN —
Kenneth Rolf, McIntosh, MN
SOUTHWEST CENTRAL MN —
Ralph Johnson, Upsala, MN
NEBRASKA/KANSAS/COLORADO —
Dan Mundfrom, Greeley, CO
MINNEAPOLIS —
James Galland, Lakeville, MN
CENTRAL TRI-STATE —
Pastor Tim Skramstad, Zumbrota, MN
NORTHERN MICHIGAN —
Pastor Merle Knutson, Ishpeming, MI
SOUTH CENTRAL —
Pastor Vince Will, Springfield, MO
SOUTHWESTERN —
Dean Crouthers, Nogales, AZ
WEST COAST —
Pastor Alvin Grothe, Astoria, OR
EASTERN —
Pastor James Molstre, Bethel Park, PA
ILLINOIS —
Stan Dale, Ottawa, IL

Missions Corporation
Robert Dietsche, Osceola, WI
Pastor Amos Dyrud, Crystal, MN
Halvor Knapp, Kandiyohi, MN
Pastor Dale Mellgren, McIntosh, MN
Pastor Steven Mundfrom, Sebeka, MN
Pastor Allen Monson, Lakeville, MN
Mrs. Aini Myking, New Hope, MN
Pastor Tom Tuura, St. James, MN
Eldwyn VanBruggen, Valley City, ND
Mrs. Marilyn Gray, Greenbush, MN

Schools Corporation
Philip Dyrud, Middle River, MN
Pastor Harvey Jackson, Hatton, ND
Tim Jones, Wyndmere, ND
Pastor Terry Olson, Dickinson, ND
Roger Peterson, Thief River Falls, MN
Pastor James Ritter, Bloomington, MN
Pastor Steve Snipstead, Kalispell, MT
Pastor Lynn Kinneberg, McVille, ND
Larry Behne, Wheatland, IA
Tony Bundy, Marysville, WA

ARC Corporation
Ivar Berge, Fargo, ND
Ralph Johnson, Upsala, MN
Jim Ray, Cloquet, MN
Pastor Jonathan Unverzagt, DeKalb, IL
Kermit Nash, Osseo, MN
Pastor Mel Meyer, Amery, WI
Dennis Holmquist, Maple Grove, MN
Pastor James Johnson, Brooklyn Park, MN
Pastor Clyde Grier, Milford, IL
Ernest Miedema, Minneapolis, MN

1997 Annual Conference Committees
Committee #1
Albin Haugen, Fargo, ND
Pastor Wesley Langaas, Thief River Falls, MN
Anders Macy, Fertile, MN
Clifford Johnson, Esko, MN
Pastor Rick Long, Arlington, WA

Committee #2
Roger Peterson, Thief River Falls, MN
Pastor Tim Johnson, Beltrami, MN
Pastor Tim Skramstad, Zumbrota, MN
Todd Morey, Nogales, AZ
Rorie Iverson, Sisseton, SD

Committee #3
Steven Dahl, Plummer, MN
Jacob Schaffhauser, Strandquist, MN
Bud Haugen, Snohomish, WA
Pastor Brian Pearson, Montgomery, IL
Pastor Wayne Hjermstad, Faith, SD

Committee #4
Pastor James Rasmussen, Park River, ND
Pastor Tonnes Pollestad, Andover, MN
LaVern Thompson, Fergus Falls, MN
Robert Kohl, Brookings, SD
Blair Johnson, Badger, MN

Committee #5
Pastor Alvin Sather, Greenbush, MN
John Morris, Bothell, WA
George Hartman, Dalton, MN
Pastor Larry Haagenson, Loveland, CO
Mark Hiepler, Camarillo, CA

Our President Writes

Someone was missing

Someone was missing at the annual conference. Olve Willand from Ferndale, Washington, a lifelong member of the Lutheran Free Church first and then the AFLC, went home to heaven last year. I thought about how happy it made him to hear that the conference was scheduled for his home state in 1996, after so many trips to the Midwest — most recently to Valley City, North Dakota in 1994. But the Lord had other plans for him, and he joins his dear wife Frances who died a couple of years earlier.

The annual conference was more than an option for others to attend as far as Olve was concerned. His daughter Lola (Mrs. DeWayne Lindell) mentioned that it was always an important part of church life for her dad, in spite of the distance involved. He loved the Lord and his local congregation, but he also loved the AFLC and was personally committed to its common endeavors.

I missed him at conference this year. He was one of a declining number of pioneers who took a stand for free and living Lutheran congregations back in 1962, and who supported our fellowship with his prayers and gifts — and with his presence at the conferences as well, throughout the years.

Perhaps you were missing at the conference, too. The Lord blessed us with a wonderful season of refreshing together this year, and we are grateful to Him for everyone who attended. There are still some of our faithful pioneers who come year after year, as well as many new friends for whom the conferences have become almost a spiritual family reunion. Yet most AFLC members have never been to a conference, in spite of the fact that one of the most unique features of our fellowship is an annual conference that is open for all members to attend.

The Word of God encourages Christians not to forsake your own assembling together (Hebrews 10:25). This is fulfilled primarily through the local congregation, of course, but my prayer is that the Lord would raise up many within the AFLC like our friend from Ferndale for whom the annual conference has a high priority.

A couple for whom Warm Beach was their first annual conference asked, "How can we ever explain to others what this is like?" The answer is to invite them to come next year and experience it for themselves. Tell them that the 1997 Annual Conference, marking the 35th anniversary of the AFLC, will meet June 11-15 at Thief River Falls, Minnesota, where the organizational conference met in 1962.

Don't forget to mark these dates on your calendar, too, and make plans to attend. Unless the Lord calls you home first, don't be missing!

— Pastor Robert L. Lee

WMF Convention report

It was a time of refreshment and a time to deepen commitments to Christ as we met at Warm Beach Conference Center in Stanwood, Washington for the 1996 Annual WMF Convention. The theme was "Let Freedom Ring" from Galatians 5:1a, "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free."

Mrs. Mary Christenson, Fergus Falls, Minnesota, was the 1996 Bible study writer and the morning speaker. She compared the construction of the Statue of Liberty with how the Lord constructs each individual's life as we yield to the indwelling Holy Spirit. In the afternoon our missionary to Brazil, Becky Abel, spoke on how true freedom is experienced when we do what God wants us to do. This requires a giving up of personal rights to do God's will. She echoed the phrase, "It's so simple but it isn't easy" throughout her message while relating it to the proclamation of the gospel in word and deed.

At the Thursday's Women's Breakfast, 1st vice president Bonnie West, led the group in song and sharing. Many testified of how God was working in their lives.

Missionary Paul Abel was our guest speaker at the Missionary Festival Service on Thursday evening. He said our strength is measured in three ways: 1) our dependence on God; 2) our unity toward one another and 3) our obedience to the Word of God. We were privileged to hear greetings from former military Chaplain Tim Skramstad, Missionary Sonja Dahl and Rev. Luther Sastry from India.

The following offerings were received during the convention: $2,430 for Home Missions; $1,551 for General Fund; and $2,209 for World Missions. Mrs. Bonnie West and Mrs. Cheryl Skordahl have completed two terms as national officers. Mrs. Lola Lindell of Ferndale, Washington, and Rosalie Paulson of Fosston, Minnesota, were elected to the offices of 1st vice president and secretary respectively. The proposed changes to the WMF Constitution were passed by a vote of 118 to 8. It was decided to publish the 1997 Bible Study in booklet form, similar to the 1996 study.

Thank you to all who prepared for this convention — creators of the banner, musicians, devotional leaders and those tireless workers behind the scenes. We appreciate you and your work tremendously along with the warm hospitality of the West Coast District.

— Mrs. Cheryl Skordahl
WMF National Secretary

Order your 1997 WMF Bible Study

Come to Jesus — Share with Others

by Mrs. Barbara Hubner,
Pipestone, MN

$3 per book with group order.
$5 for individual order.
(Please include address of church)

Send your prepaid order by September 1, 1996 to:

Karen Knudsvig
RR 2 Box 11
Buxton, ND 58218

Pastor Mel Meyer, Amery, Wisconsin, and Missionaries Paul and Becky Abel.

National WMF president, Mrs. Dee Berkas, Wallace, SD, and newly elected 1st vice president, Mrs. Lola Lindell, Ferndale, WA.

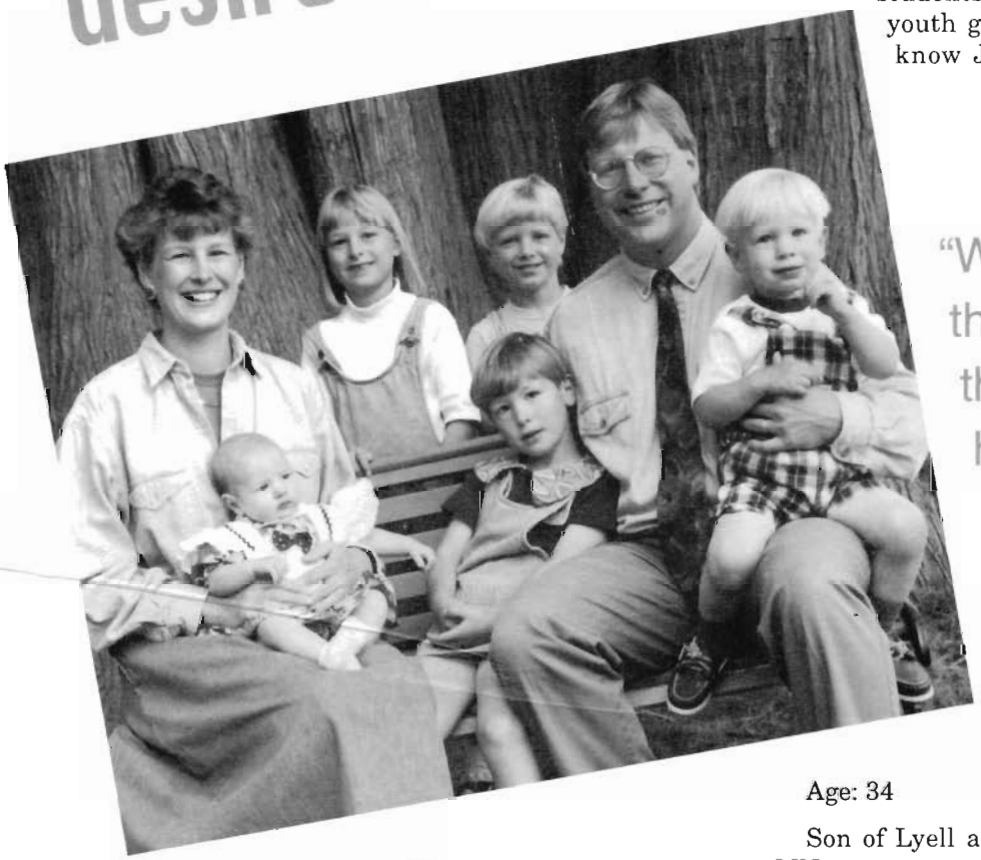
Mrs. Mary Christenson, Fergus Falls, MN, was the convention's morning speaker.

Mrs. Karen Knudsvig, Buxton, ND, the WMF Executive Secretary.

National WMF officers and participants during the convention on June 19th.

Mrs. Clara Gunderson, Puebla, Mexico.

His prayer and desire for AFLBS



Notes and quotes

On his first connection with the Bible school:

I remember the first time I came to AFLBS. I laid in my bed the first night all alone, staring at the ceiling, wondering, "What am I doing here?" I knew exactly two other students, none of the teachers. I wasn't even from the AFLC at the time. But I knew God wanted me to go to Bible school. My brother and sister had gone to a Bible school in California. Ten other students had gone to AFLBS from our youth group. I really wanted to get to know Jesus as they had. Within the

"We want to keep the same emphasis that AFLBS has had for years."

Meet the new Bible School dean, Pastor James L. Johnson

Age: 34

Son of Lyell and Lois Johnson, Bloomington, MN

Home church: Emmaus Lutheran

Family: married to Linda (Jackson) Johnson

Elizabeth, 8; Hannah, 6; Lydia, 4; Benjamin, 2; Grace, born in April

Education: John F. Kennedy Sr. High, Bloomington, MN; Association Free Lutheran Bible School, 1982; University of Minnesota (College of Liberal Arts; Journalism, B.A.) 1987; Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary (G.T.) 1992

Pastor: Calvary Free Lutheran Church, Fosston, MN, 1992- present

President, Free Lutheran Youth, 1993-present

first few months I fell in love with the place, the teachers, the students, the AFLC. I knew, before long, I would be a Free Lutheran myself.

On his agenda as dean:

No, I'm not coming in with any kind of agenda, except to help students have the same sweet experience with Jesus Christ that I had as a Bible school student here. My philosophy is: "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." I really feel that the best education I had was my two years at AFLBS. I had a great experience at seminary and at the University of Minnesota — which was the third largest university in America at the time. Seminary was great — so was high school, for that matter, in Bloomington. But none of those experiences could ever compare with the learning that took place at AFLBS. I learned how to pray, how to witness, get a grip on the Word. I matured as a person, as an individual. I changed. And my only real goal is to be faithful to Jesus and give students that same kind of experience. We want to keep the same emphasis that AFLBS has had for years.

On his call to the Bible school:

Linda and I are still in a state of shock. Yes, we worked at AFLBS as resident heads for three years during seminary. And after graduating from AFLBS, I worked there off and on for the better part of 10 years. But when the School Board called out of the blue and asked for an interview, my reaction was, "Don't you men think you need somebody older?" But going through the process of praying through the decisions, the nomination, the elections, the interview — it left Linda and I with an unmistakable call to obey.

We did not want to leave our church family in Fosston. I feel a pastor should stay at a church for at least 10 years. We're leaving a circle of support and friendship at Calvary that makes us just grieve. But when God calls, I need to listen.

I remember reading Psalm 32 in my devotions one day in May, and getting to verse 9, which said, "Do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, whose trappings include bit and bridle to hold them in check, otherwise they will not come near to you." I remember the Holy Spirit nudging me so powerfully, "Don't be stubborn — let Me lead." I said, "OK, God, you lead, I'll follow." To my surprise, after the interview, the School Board asked me to be their nominee. During the next two weeks, as we prayed, the Lord gave Linda and I an unexplainable peace: "you know you'll be all right." The election at the annual conference left us in an odd state of shock and peacefulness. But even that peace hasn't taken away the grief we're feeling about leaving Fosston. We will begin half time at AFLBS on August 1, and begin full time the day after Labor Day.

On his emphasis in ministry:

I've always felt, since I became a committed believer, a love to be involved in evangelism and discipleship. I love to see people become saved and to help them grow. Being around new believers has always been a love of mine. Their genuineness is contagious for me. I grow the most when I'm around them. So I look forward to Linda and I being around the new, young believers at AFLBS — and helping to disciple the long-time believers that come to Bible school.

"I love to see people become saved and to help them grow."

On previous deans:

Pastor Ken Moland was dean here when I was a student. His study in Romans was one of the best Bible classes I've ever taken. One of my best friends came to assurance of salvation while sitting in that class. And I worked under Pastor Don Greven for six years. I learned a lot from him. We shared so many concerns and interests. I thought he did a great job with outreach and gospel teams. He and Mary became super friends to Linda and me.

On his goal to get to know better the AFLC:

Linda and I hope to get out and visit congregations at least one Sunday a month. Bring a team, a student or two, and have them share a testimony. I'd love to preach a simple, salvation message and let them know a little more about our Bible school. Feel free to call and invite us. We'd love to mix with our AFLC family.

See what the Lord has done!

—Pastor Tim Skramstad
Zumbrota, Minnesota

Have you ever not planned something and the Lord shocks you into an awareness that He is in control and doing miracles without any help? For the past fifteen years, the Lord has led us from one fascinating experience after another. His mighty hand provided opportunities to serve Him in situations which could never be planned by men.

In January, 1981, I began active duty as an army chaplain. When I was commissioned as an officer in 1972, it seemed so obvious that after completing seminary in 1975, I would serve the Lord and the AFLC as an active duty chaplain.

Our omnipotent God, however, could foresee the end of the Vietnam War, a rapidly shrinking army, and His plan for me to serve the Minnewauken, North Dakota parish. When it was His timing, we could leave a loving parish and enter the military with confidence, prayer support, and at least a little more experience.

Our God provided the way of salvation in a way totally foreign to the logic of man. When His only begotten Son died on the cross for our sins, all of humanity said, "NO!" Yet, this is the message He has commanded us to proclaim. I would never have planned to preach at ten services in one day, standing in muddy, rain-drenched fields, but the ones Jesus died for were there. Because He cared enough to love them, I could love them as well.

The pouring rains in the training area of Fort A.P. Hill, Virginia; the mud and snow of Grafenwoehr, Germany; the 120 degree heat of the Mojave Desert in California were glimpses into heaven.

Only when Christ returns will we know the result of that word of testimony, sermon, or cup of cold water given in His Name. I often think of the soldier who gave his life to Christ and then returned to his home near Jonestown, Guyana; or the soldier who needed a friend and spent considerable time talking about family and life in his native Truk Island home.

Jesus spent time with the poor and outcast, but never neglected the rich and powerful. The message of the love of Jesus appealed to the poorest and lowest ranking soldier who was trying to raise a family in the midst of ever-mounting debts. High ranking officers facing difficult decisions also needed a pastor to listen and pray.

"... but the ones Jesus died for were there."

Young and old, powerful and lowly, all are invited to the chapel which is much like any AFLC congregation. Like people "back home" they look for something familiar, something to which they might belong, be accepted, and find the spiritual nourishment their empty lives are seeking. What a joy it was to preach the Word, lead in worship, teach Bible classes, encourage the youth and advise the parish councils. Denominational labels are absent in the chapels, but the essentials of a unity based upon a love for Jesus Christ and reliance on the Word of God held us together.

Ministry is often found in odd places. The couple whose marriage is dissolving, the man under investigation for abusing his child, or the teenager who needed her stomach pumped from a near fatal suicide attempt may not normally come to church. One way to reach into the lives of the suffering is with pastoral care and counseling.

Counseling apart from the life and witness of a congregation or which is based on values contradictory to Christianity can do great harm. As a Chaplain's Family Life Ministries director, it was thrilling to train and then observe God use other chaplains and lay people in building healthy marriages and restoring damaged souls.

All of the training and experiences of the past seemed to lead to a time in ministry which will hopefully never be repeated — the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City on April 19, 1995. Of the 168 people murdered, eight were from our recruiting battalion headquarters.

Last April 12, the new recruiting battalion office building was dedicated along with a memorial ceremony. Following the dedication ceremony, a TV news reporter from San Antonio interviewed me about my ministry to the families and friends of the victims. He began by asking which Bible verse helped the families the most. The Lord's promise in Hebrews 13:5, "I will never leave you, I will never forsake you" was given to every one of the victim's families and now to that reporter. That response was the only portion of my interview used for the evening news in San Antonio!

I can never thank Him enough for allowing me to be used these past fifteen years in places and to a people who needed a word of comfort and peace. Indeed, the Savior has led me and you all the way!

The author completed his tour of duty in June, 1996, and has begun serving as pastor of Our Saviour's Lutheran Church in Zumbrota.

Christian cyberspace

Cybershock was the cover story on the April 3, 1995 issue of *Christianity Today.* The summer edition of the *Christian Research Newsletter* carried an article entitled "Cyberspace Apologetics," which was written by the president of Christian Research Institute, the popular "Bible Answer Man," Hank Hanegraaff.

Cyberspace was a term coined by science fiction writer William Gibson. In Gibson's terms, cyberspace is an alternative computer universe in space where data exists like cities of light. Anyone with a computer can jump into this world and travel its superhighways. The computer gives you the experience of traveling anywhere in cyberspace — visit the White House or Smithsonian Institute — and interact with computers around the world.

Cyberspace is related to the Internet and is comprised of four basic technologies:

Bulletin boards (BBS) allow a computer user to call in and exchange messages, access files or play games. There are many Christian BBS in operation across the country where you can observe or get involved in discussions on various subjects.

Commercial on-line services such as CompuServe and America OnLine are only a couple of the serves available. Most of these companies have local access numbers or toll free numbers and they charge hourly or monthly fees.

The Internet is a world-spanning system of networks that allow individual computers to link up with computers worldwide for easy access of information. Today the Internet is thirty million computers all over the world connected together through these networks. If you have access to one of them, you have access to all of them. This presents an opportunity that must be exploited for the glory of God.

E-mail on-line services allow us to communicate with one another using electronic mail. E-mail provides a medium for church workers to communicate their needs, prayer requests, and to exchange views on various issues affecting their denomination. A church leader can compose a letter on his word processor, import it to his on-line software, and send it to one hundred people at once in about thirty seconds. Imagine the cost of 100 first-class stamps compared to the cost of a single, 30 second local telephone call.

When denominational headquarters, mission organizations, and local congregations are "connected — wired," then real savings can be made in the cost of communication. Some have formed e-mail directories. This allows members to circulate prayer requests, employment opportunities, etc. throughout the denomination on a scale that was not possible through conventional mail. Church members may now keep in touch with foreign missionaries serving in the remotest parts of the world.

The Internet is not just e-mail. Another important feature of the on-line world known as "cyberspace" is the variety of Christian chat (discussion) groups which provide an excellent way to keep sharp by engaging in discussions and debate of current theological issues. Unfortunately most interaction ends up as "godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge" (I Timothy 6:20).

A new tool

The Internet is a new vehicle of communication, a facilitating device like a typewriter, computer, etc. It represents a domain where Bible students, desiring to excel in communication need to have a strong presence. One may visit and research electronic archives, libraries, and databases world wide. Instant access to hundreds of periodicals — including *Christianity Today, Christian History,* and *Campus Life* — newspapers, and special interest forms is provided. Articles can be skimmed and downloaded for personal use.

The Lutheran Christian can download an overwhelming amount of material. Do you want to read Martin Luther's 95 Thesis in English or Latin? You can skim Luther's biography, his lectures on Galatians, and the Wartburg Bible. The Christian Classics Ethereal Library allows

➜

— Frank Mannion
Ruthfred Lutheran
Bethel Park, PA

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Pastor Orville Hiepler, Oceanside, California, traveled last March to Tomsk, Siberia, where he joined 35 other representatives of Campus Crusade for Christ's International School Project. They taught public schoolteachers and administrators morals and ethics from the Bible so they in turn could teach the students.

"Delinquency and crime have increased in Russia," Hiepler said. "Many parents now recognize that something has to be done, rather than build more jails. Something has to change inside youth to stop the slide into juvenile delinquency, gangs and bad morals."

Campus Crusade was asked by officials in the Russian department of education to teach the teachers because of the "Jesus Film." Robert Bradberry, Hiepler's son-in-law, distributes the film for Campus Crusade and began showing it in Russia in 1990, and hopes to get the film into all of Russia's 65,000 schools, along with curriculum on how to use it.

Pictured are Pastor Hiepler with his daughter, Ilene Bradberry, and with a group of Russian administrators who attended the week-long seminar.

Bloomington, Minnesota — Emmaus Lutheran has purchased a copy of the "Jesus Film" in the Telegu language along with a projector and a portable power supply to be used in ministry by the BFLC in India.

Campo Grande, Brazil — Missionaries Jonathan and Tamba Abel praise God for the 50 people who responded at the evangelistic services conducted by Pastor John Abel. Rented worship facilities have been painted for use by this new group. The Abels thank God for what He has done since beginning this new outreach last spring.

CYBERSPACE

you to browse some exciting Christian literature.

"Web pages" and "gopher sights" contain material for the serious Bible student. Examples include *Matthew Henry's Commentary* and Bible translations in Italian, French, Swedish, Danish, and Norwegian. Daily devotionals online include *Our Daily Bread* and R.C. Sproul's *Tabletalk.*

The dark side to the Internet is pornography referred to as cyberporn. It takes up less than 3% of the Internet sources. A great deal of national media attention is being given to it as Congress and the courts attempt to protect children from this type of pornography.

Surfing the net can also be addictive, and if you have an addictive personality — beware! Hours can pass doing Christian research and we must be good stewards of our time. I bridle my time on the net with a loud kitchen timer. After thirty minutes, I stop surfing.

The Internet is a new and exciting tool that can make the world more accessible for the preaching of the gospel. It can have a beneficial effect on the spreading of the gospel. Since this article was written by a layman, not a cybernetician, I would appreciate comments from laymen and pastors. (Send to Frank at: mannionа@genesis.duq.edu or at mannionа@nb.net)

Aguascalientes, Mexico — Missionaries Todd and Barb Schierkolk thank God for the improvements their daughter Rachel has made in adjusting to Mexico, and for the relatively good health for their family during these first months on the mission field. Pray for the Schierkolks and Giles families as they host the Partners in Mission Outreach team in August. They ask for prayer for fruit from the evangelistic survey they are conducting in Jerez and from the Bible study in Palomino. Pray also for the salvation of Ernesto's family and wisdom to deal with overwhelming problems they are facing.

Curitiba, Brazil — A Mighty Fortress is the new name for one of the Curitiba area AFLC congregations. The Sao Braz congregation recently voted to call their church "Castelo Forte." Pray for three new converts: Sebastian, Veralucia and Cintialucia, who are faithful in attendance and have joined several others in the new members class. Missionaries David and Sarah Nelson thank God for Rachel Amanda's quick adjustment to their family and for her second birthday celebrated on May 24. They continue to trust the final adoption papers will be completed shortly.

Pastor Ray Klug, Blackduck, Minnesota, was married on May 4, 1996, to Geri Whitinger also of Blackduck. Pastor Klug, had served last spring as interim pastor at the nearby Northome parish. The new address of Pastor and Mrs. Klug is: RR 1 Box 1B, Blackduck, MN 56630, where they continue to enjoy their retirement.

Campo Mourão, Brazil — Pastor Jim and Lorene Winter have just returned from Brazil and are beginning their ministry at Faith Lutheran in Lake Alma, Saskatchewan. Before leaving the Miriam Infant Home in Campo Mourão, Lorene wrote of their experience these last months:

"We arrived in Curitiba, Brazil, just as the Paul Abel family was leaving for the U.S. David Nelson drove us to Campo Mourão on March 1st where Missionaries Connely and Carolyn Dyrud are also serving. It was a blessing to be back among friends and acquaintances from our last visit. The communion of saints is special in spite of language difficulties.

"Since our arrival, Jim has 'fixed' things and built new. He put in two walk-in closets to replace the broken dressers. All the beds and cribs were rebuilt. We were able to get new hospital-type mattresses for the cribs and single beds which were desperately needed.

"The Home is full and overflowing with 19 children under the age of 11 years. We took in the three youngest ones: two 4-month-old infants (like having twins) and an 18-month-old boy with Down's Syndrome. The babies are for adoption. So it has been back to bottles, diapers, and midnight wake-up calls (after 25 years). The children are well and contented and that makes 'mothering' a pleasant experience.

"The song, 'Little is much when God is in it,' keeps running through our minds. It's the little things we do in Jesus' Name that God uses. All the vitamins sent by the WMF groups, the quilts, clothes, diapers, shampoo and toothpaste may seem like 'not much' but are a tremendous blessing to these children.

"Continue to pray for the children and those who care for them. Pray also for parents who will adopt these little ones and give them a home."

Ishpeming, Michigan — Hope Free Evangelical Lutheran ladies have been making 30 to 40 quilts annually for the past five years and sending them to Mexico. Pictured are Dorothy Pentti, Roini Zeige, Vi Williams, Nancy Langness, Sylvia Pezzotti, Ardys Knutson, and Gladys Schauland.

Pastor Del Palmer, Thief River Falls, Minnesota, has resigned as pastor of Our Saviour's Lutheran and Reiner Lutheran of Goodridge, where he has served since 1989. His future plans are not finalized.

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Minneapolis, Minnesota — Youth from Medicine Lake Lutheran and Solid Rock Lutheran filled a bus to attend the Billy Graham Crusade on June 22. Thanks to some friends who waited in line for five hours, most of the teens got seats on the floor. The Metrodome was filled with 82,000 people. Several choir members from AFLC Minneapolis area churches joined with the 7,500 singers in the Crusade Choir.

Six new congregations placed on AFLC Congregational Roster during past year

Abiding Word Lutheran Church, Melbourne, Florida

Faith Lutheran Church, Glens Falls, New York

Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Manhattan Beach, Minnesota

St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Whitestown, Indiana

St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Branson, Missouri

Zion Lutheran Church, Silverhill, Alabama

Pastor Emerson Anderson, Cloquet, Minnesota, has resigned from the pastoral staff at St. Paul's Lutheran where he has served since 1989.

AFLC-Canada — As of January 1, 1997, congregations in Canada will be free of subsidy from the AFLC Home Missions Department. At a meeting of their Coordinating Committee on April 12, 1996, the Canadians voted to reduce their monthly subsidy from $500 to $250. They voted to then eliminate all subsidies at the end of the year. The money had gone to support two mission congregations in Canada. Pastor Gerald Gettis of Vernon, BC, wrote on their behalf: "I believe these words of Paul best express the gratefulness we have toward our Heavenly Father because of your gifts to us. 'I thank my God upon every remembrance of you' (Philippians 1:3). As I look back it has only been eight years ago that we were only one congregation. We have since grown to include seven congregations throughout Canada. Thank you again for the part you have shared in this growing process."

Luther Klug, 36, Hastings, Minnesota, passed away July 16, 1996 as a result of a car accident. Klug was a 15-year veteran of law enforcement. He worked in Hawley and Cannon Falls, Minnesota, before joining the Dakota County Sheriff's office in 1990.

He is survived by his widow, Geri, and 14-year-old son, Jordan; his father, Pastor Ray Klug, Blackduck, Minnesota; sisters, Becky Bakken, Moorhead, Minnesota, and Debi Jo Orf, Western, Nebraska; and one brother, Pastor Daniel Klug, East Grand Forks, Minnesota.

Connie Grothe, 73, Tucson, Arizona, passed away on June 29, 1996. She was an active member of Badger Creek Free Lutheran in Badger, Minnesota for many years before moving to Tucson. She was a founding member of Living Faith Free Lutheran in Tucson. She is survived by brothers: Dallas, Walter and Pastor Alvin Grothe; and one sister, Elva Auestad.

Vernon, British Columbia — Pictured above is Living Word Lutheran, the host for the AFLC-Canada annual conference last spring. Their new building was dedicated at that time. Pastors attending the conference are shown: (back row), Les Johnson, Ron Hundeley, Gene Sundby; (front row), Erick Jensen, Kelly Henning, Gerald Gettis, and Olaf Frigstad.

Barnabas XXV — Janell Quanbeck, Dave Chamberlain, Holly Roed, Ben Deubner and Marnie Anderson.

Barnabas XXVI — Jenny Wiener, Ben Nelson, Katie Skramstad and (not pictured) Brent Olson.

Ministry opportunities

Oceanside, California — A qualified and experienced kindergarten teacher is needed for September. Please phone (619) 731-0980 at Community Lutheran School, 4507 Mission Ave. Oceanside, CA 92057.

Ferndale, Washington — Triumph Lutheran is seeking to hire a youth worker. For more information, contact: Pastor Joel Lohafer, 2554 Norway Rd. Ferndale, WA 98248, or call (206) 384-1129.

Pastor Paul and Josie Pillman, Menomonie, Wisconsin, are the parents of Andrew Joel, born June 6, 1996. Thirty-one minutes later Andrew passed away due to undeveloped lungs. Andrew is survived by his parents and siblings: Justo, Jessica, Lucas, David, Peter, and Matthew. Pastor Pillman serves two Home Missions congregations: Good Shepherd Free Lutheran in Menomonie and the Free Lutheran Church of Ella in Pepin.

AFLC Home Missions Barnabas teams — After training at the AFLBS campus in June, Barnabas XXV is working in churches with Vacation Bible Schools and youth camps in the Midwest while the southern team (Barnabas XXVI) is serving in six states from Missouri to California. Included will be the first youth camp week ever scheduled for AFLC youth in Loveland, Colorado. Keep them in your prayers as they travel long distances in vehicles (known as Barnabeasts) which are getting old.

Pastor Daniel and Roselyn Uzupan, Glens Falls, NY. Pastor Uzupan was placed on the AFLC Clergy Roster in June.

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations
3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences – January 1 - June 30, 1996

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN JUNE	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	$241,472.00	$10,977.62	$96,172.94	40
Seminary	122,626.00	4,869.01	36,687.89	30
Bible School	184,696.00	9,130.34	58,263.75	32
Home Missions.	253,270.00	14,906.05	94,982.00	38
World Missions.	341,257.00	27,271.63	189,427.86	56
Capital Investment . .	24,639.00	1,073.86	6,825.15	28
Parish Education . . .	49,289.00	1,981.82	21,224.07	43
Church Extension . . .	15,018.00	559.31	5,127.32	34
TOTALS	**$1,232,267.00**	**$70,569.64**	**$508,710.68**	**41**
TOTALS 1995	**1,484,851.00**	**63,942.95**	**540,866.30**	**36**
Goal 50%				

Crusade at Billy Graham's home-base sets records, leads thousands to Christ

Billy Graham returned to his "home territory" of Minneapolis and twice shattered attendance records at the Metrodome during his five-day Greater Twin Cities Crusade June 19-23. The crusade cut across generational, denominational and racial boundaries, providing a gathering place for a city full of people hungry for the "Good News."

"This has been the greatest week of my life. I never dreamed God would pour out His blessings as He has," said Graham. Recalling earlier crusades in the Twin Cities, as well as his many other local involvements, Graham added, "We've had some wonderful times here, and this crusade has been the most wonderful time of all."

For the final Sunday meeting, an overflow crowd of 95,000 people — including 25,000 watching a Jumbotron screen outside, some from rooftops several blocks away — flocked to hear Graham's sermon and music by Amy Grant. This huge audience was 30,000 more than the stadium's precrusade attendance record, set during a college football game.

Graham's "youth night" sermon spoke directly to youth concerns. "There is a sense of not belonging, a restlessness among youth today, a feeling of emptiness and dependency, a sense of guilt and a growing disillusionment with drugs and cults," said Graham. "There is a strong desire for an ideology that will make sense to your existence."

Graham presented Jesus as the only solution to the problems facing young people today. "If you forget everything I say tonight, I want you to remember one thing: God loves you, regardless of what you have done," he said.

Using such contemporary examples as Oscar-winning actor Nicholas Cage and Nine Inch Nails lead singer Trent Reznor, Graham made it clear that money can't buy happiness; people can be empty inside even though they are rich and famous. "Without a proper concept of God we can't understand life at all," Graham said. "It doesn't make sense to come on this planet for a few years and then die."

The human race has a fatal disease called sin, explained Graham. "We're all guilty, we're all on death row. We're all under a death sentence and there's only one way out."

Graham invited the young people to make a commitment to Christ. "When you leave this stadium tonight, you can be absolutely sure that Jesus lives in your heart — not because of anything you've done, not because of Billy Graham, but because of Jesus Christ and His willingness to die on the cross for you."

Those young people who wanted to make a commitment to Christ were asked to stand. When about three out of four young people stood, Graham was sure he must have been misunderstood, and asked them to sit down again. "It's not easy to follow Jesus," he warned, sounding for all the world like he was trying to talk people out of coming to Christ. "You'll face temptations you never dreamed of. You're going to face decisions you never dreamed you'd have to make. You're going to face satanic opposition. Are you ready for that?"

They were. Faced with altar call response beyond any reasonable expectation, counselors and crusade staff scrambled to find a way to reach each young person who was ready to make a life-changing decision. Graham told them, "You've come tonight not to Billy Graham, or to Michael Smith or DC Talk, but to Jesus, and He doesn't turn His back on you." A full half-hour after the scheduled end of the event, the floor of the dome and the aisles were still crowded with young people.

A total of 348,000 people attended the crusade during the week. Of those, 33,194 came forward at Graham's invitation to confess their sins and come to Jesus Christ by faith alone. Through the crusade's Love-in-Action emphasis, people coming to the stadium brought 12,000 care kits containing personal hygiene items for the homeless.

(The above story used by permission of the EP News Service.)

Fergus Falls, Minnesota — Delegates numbering 296 convened for the 96th Annual Convention of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren (CLB) at the denomination's headquarters in Fergus Falls, Minnesota, June 9-12. Officials at Lutheran Brethren Schools announced plans for a $4.2 million renovation and expansion. Rev. Joel Egge was reelected for a third 3-year term as president of the Schools. Home Missions reported new congregations forming in Lake Stevens, Washington, and Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Three new congregations in Pennsylvania and Arizona were accepted into membership. Delegates heard reports from its much larger sister churches in Chad and Cameroon and authorized plans to assist mission work in China. CLB had missionaries in central China from 1902 until the revolution in 1948.

Knowing where we are going

Driving just to drive, having no specific destination in mind, can be enjoyable — if you have plenty of time on your hands. If time is limited, however, you want to figure out where you are going and what is the best route for getting there.

Time is limited in regards to the work we have been called to do on this earth. We do not know how many more days God will give us to share the good news of Jesus Christ and love people into the kingdom of God. Jesus said, "As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work" (John 9:4, NIV).

We do not have time to simply "drive around" and take in the scenery. We have work to do. For the purpose of making effective use of this limited time, we need to be clear as to where we are going.

As we look at the Gospels we see that Jesus most definitely knew where He was going. He "came to seek and to save what was lost" (Luke 19:10, NIV). In praying to the Father He said, "I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do" (John 17:4, NIV). Sick people were still suffering. Corrupt governments were still in place. Injustice still abounded. But Jesus said, "It is finished" (John 19:30, NIV). He did the work which was most important. He completed the mission He had been given. Sin was paid for and new life was available in Him.

"We are people with a destination, a purpose, a mission"

Annual conferences are a time for considering together where we as an association of congregations are going. It is a time for the various departments to share about the mission they have been given. It is an opportunity to stop and "check the map" and remind ourselves where we ought to be going and consider the best route to take to get there.

The president of our AFLC reminded us that our vision is "building free and living Lutheran congregations." Our mission is not about building and growing a denomination. When we consider where we are going, we look to the **congregations**. As our first fundamental principle states, "According to the Word of God, the congregation is the right form of the Kingdom of God on earth."

Where we are headed is building **free** congregations. We are not to be seeking congregations that are controlled by some hierarchical authority and marching the exact path prescribed by the headquarters office. We desire congregations that are free and following the direction of God over the dictates of man. As fundamental principle number five says, "The congregation directs its own affairs, subject to the authority of the Word and the Spirit of God, and acknowledges no other ecclesiastical authority or government above itself."

Our vision is of **living** congregations. A congregation may have physical life — it can own a building and have people who meet within its walls on a regular basis. It may have legal life — it can be registered as a legal corporation. It may have a history and memories of life. But we seek more than that.

We rejoice in congregations that are spiritually alive today. We long for congregations that are doing more than perpetuating an appropriate appearance. We want congregations where the Spirit of God is at work and life from Christ exists. We are more interested in inner life than outward show. Our world does not need any more churches like the one in Sardis which had "a reputation of being alive" but was dead (Revelation 3:1, NIV).

Our direction is toward planting **Lutheran** congregations. Some brothers and sisters in Christ never have been and never will be part of a Lutheran congregation. They do not have to be in order to be equal members in the family of God. Nevertheless, we should not be ashamed to confess that we believe in the Lutheran understanding of Scripture. We desire to plant congregations that hold to that type of understanding. We do so out of a belief that holding to a Lutheran understanding is good for the congregation and the community in which it serves.

At the close of our recent annual conference mention was made of "a new sense of direction." We praise God for the direction He gives us. We do not have to aimlessly "drive around." We have the opportunity to do more than simply take up space on the planet until Jesus calls us home. We are people with a destination, a purpose, a mission.

Let us praise God for the privilege of being used by Him, the calling to serve, the promise to equip us for whatever task He gives us and the assurance that He will walk beside us every step of the journey.

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR
3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

Periodicals

BUILDING THE BASE

Dying to live

We noted in our last article that it is the sacred obligation of the congregation "to purify itself by the quickening preaching of the Word of God" and that any preaching that is not the Word of God cannot be quickening since only the Word has power to bring forth spiritual life. There is, however, a preaching of the Word of God that is not quickening. Instead of producing life it produces death. That is its purpose. That's the role God's Law serves.

In the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 32:39), God introduced Himself through Moses as the God who puts to death and brings to life, wounds and heals. We can understand when God says that He heals and brings to life. But when we hear of Him wounding and putting to death we are puzzled. Theologians have labeled these things God's alien work since such works seem out of character for the God who is Creator.

But when God creates He creates out of nothing. He doesn't patch up the old or even find the old necessary in making what is new. He gives health where there was not health. He raises to life where there was nothing but death.

In order that God might bring life to those who have no spiritual life, He must first put to death what was there. What was there was an old nature, proud, self-righteous, and rebellious. The Law brings death to this nature. Paul writes of this experience: "Once I was alive apart from law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died" (Romans 7:9). What brought death to Paul and does the same for anyone else is the holy Law of God — the Word that closes every mouth and makes men accountable to God (Romans 3:19). A great disservice is done for the kingdom of God when preachers proclaim a law that people can keep. When that happens God is robbed of His holiness and sinners are kept from knowing the sinfulness of their sin. They remain satisfied with their own works, grow in self-righteousness, are not put to death, and thus are kept from the life to which God would otherwise raise them.

The holy Law of God is a Law that we cannot keep. For us to be as holy as God is holy is not accomplished by our efforts to keep the Law. The requirements of the Law are met by us only when God graciously credits us with the merits of Jesus Christ. When we have despaired of any hope to be holy in ourselves and trust in God who justifies the wicked then we have been made alive. The Law doesn't make us alive, neither does it keep us alive once we have been raised to life. It always brings death (II Corinthians 3:6). We must have this death brought upon our old nature daily for it is too easy for us to fall back into a confidence in ourselves to meet God's holy standards. God must tear us from any confidence in ourselves so that we would always cling only to the righteousness of Jesus as our hope for life and holiness.

So quickening preaching must be accompanied by this preaching that brings death. Without the death there cannot be the life.

— Pastor Bruce Dalager Trinity Lutheran Grand Forks, ND