

The Lutheran AMBASSADOR

August 8, 1995



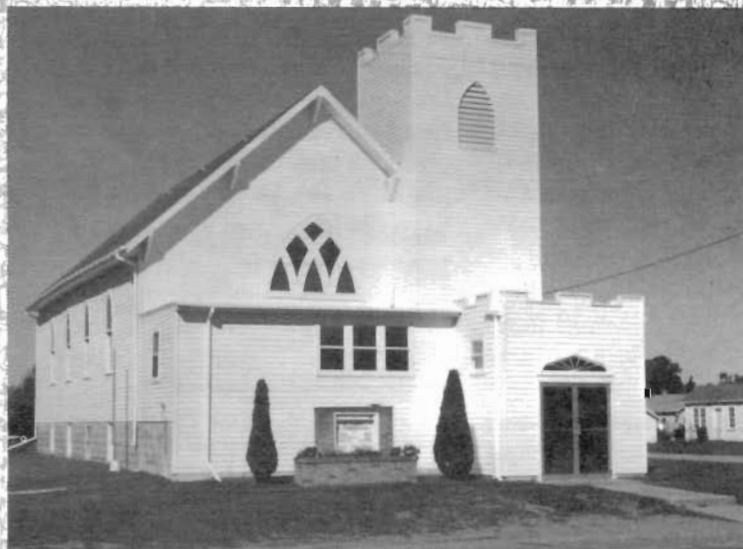
Dovre Free Lutheran, Winger, Minnesota

Three congregations celebrate 100 years

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Landstad Lutheran, Shelly, Minnesota



Bethany Lutheran of Blue Grass, Sebeka, Minnesota

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

August 8, 1995
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Editor: Rev. Craig Johnson

Assistant to the Editor: Solveig Hjermstad

Editorial Board: Rev. John Mundfrom, Dr. Craig Jennings, Oryen Benrud.

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AN ENCOURAGING WORD

Praying for the unsaved

If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

— John 15:6

Motivation to pray

This verse bothers us because it is true and it convicts us of our failure to pray for those who don't know Christ. Despair wears many faces, and one of the most subtle tempts us to manipulate someone to profess faith in Christ. In those tough cases it is best to pray for the Holy Spirit to reveal God's Word to them.

Who are the "anyones"

If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away as a branch. The anyones are all around us. They sit next to us in the church pew. They work with us on the job. They live next door and their children play with our children. They are rich and poor. They are pretty and ugly. They sit in jail and on bus benches. Open your eyes and you will see them.

Separated from Christ

It does not say how the anyones became separated from Christ. Some once knew Christ but gradually drifted away. Some were violently broken off because of a bad experience in church. Some just dried up and fell off the vine. It doesn't matter how they were severed from Christ — just that we recognize their plight and begin to pray for them.

What Jesus said

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus said, "What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does

not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture, and go after the one which is lost, until he finds it?" Matthew 18:12.

Jesus was not concerned with quantity. After all, 99% saved would be a successful evangelism campaign. We pastors would get very excited if we had that kind of success. Jesus was concerned for every person. What an encouragement for us to keep praying for that one lost person until they are found.

Lesson from my apple tree

Last January when I pruned my apple tree, I stacked the branches in a pile beside my burn barrel. The green, supple branches have turned dry and brittle because they were separated from the tree. Some day I will burn them — after all what else can you do with dry branches? But there is another spiritual lesson here. In Revelation 20:15 it plainly says, "If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."

Think about it for a moment!

II Peter 3:9 states, "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." May God grant us motivation to pray this promise for those separated from Christ.



— by Rev.
Joel Lohafer
Ferndale,
Washington

Excuse me, please



“By the way, will you be able to teach Sunday school again this fall?”

“Oh — I am awfully busy and I taught last year. Besides that, those boys are so disruptive and I’m not very creative ... I’m just too busy.”

Or perhaps you’ve agreed to teach and the following scenario is admittedly too common:

Every muscle aches as you sink into the sofa to watch the Saturday night news when suddenly your heart almost skips a beat as you realize you haven’t done your Sunday school lesson. Thoughts rush into your mind as you remember how you had promised to do something real special with the class and then there were those tough questions you had promised to look up the answers to.

The panic button has been pushed. You prepare the “midnight special.” Those good intentions will simply have to wait.

Sadly, I speak from experience.

With today’s busy schedules, working outside the homes, commitments to other functions, school activities, etc. it is difficult to find time to teach Sunday school, let alone prepare for it.

It is helpful to remind ourselves at times of the real purpose of Sunday school, and the awesome privilege it is to share the life-changing gospel message with the students. It is not a glamour job but it is one that requires a special calling. There is a passion to teach God’s Word in the hearts of those who have been truly converted and in some small way comprehend what Christ has done for them. They have a zeal to get the message of salvation to the next generation.

Preparation for teaching a class is no easy task but it is a delightful one. Last minute things can be a blessing sometimes but one needs to seriously study God’s Word so it can be thoroughly and clearly presented in a simple way to young ears and open hearts. God’s Word is always exciting, never boring and should be presented in such a way as to

Preparation tips for the busy Sunday school teacher.

make children want to know God more!

Here are some preparation tips for the busy Sunday school teacher.

1. Sincerely pray about your preparation time. Commit it totally to the Lord. Pray for each student by name and for yourself as you prepare.

2. Read ahead in your lessons, at least the next one if not the entire book.

3. Make a list for the week. Include on your list a day and time for your preparation and stick to it if at all possible.

4. Re-read your lesson on Sunday morning. If you are a few miles from church, make use of the time on the road. On the way home is also a great time to jot notes and begin thinking about next week’s lesson.

5. At home, keep Sunday school materials convenient to look at during the week. Enrich your heart and mind with helps. A good concordance is basic. Our AFLC parish education office has tools to offer. Ask for help.

6. Set teaching goals for yourself.

7. Prioritize your time.

8. Be careful to avoid over commitment. Evaluate what is important. The children and the church need you: not someone else.

Nobody said it would be easy to teach but the rewards can be immeasurable. Someday one of your former students may tell you that you had an influence on them, and perhaps even it was in your class that they came to know Jesus as their personal Savior. Only in heaven will the results be known.

Sunday school teachers, keep on keeping on! May God richly bless you for being faithful in teaching God’s Word.



*But they all
alike began to
make excuses.
The first said,
‘I have just
bought a field,
and I must go
and see it,
please excuse
me.’*

Luke 14:18

— by Linda Mohagen
Towner, North Dakota
Member of the AFLC
Board of Parish Education



What makes a good teacher?



It all begins with an encounter with the Master Teacher.

The title question presents an interesting topic for study. Our first response to this question might be: "A good teacher is someone who has a degree, creative ideas, activities and philosophies, enthusiasm, all the answers, a good (if not large) library and a drawer full of plans, papers and pictures. A good teacher is someone quite resourceful in himself."

However, even a brief study in the Word of God presents a different conclusion. All these other things are fine, but unless we put first things first when it comes to teaching the Word of God, our teaching will be lessons in futility.

First of all, the making of a good teacher begins with an encounter with the Master Teacher. Look at John 3 and you will find that Nicodemus recognized Jesus as THE Teacher and so he came to Jesus to discuss spiritual things with Him. Jesus, knowing the real question of Nicodemus' heart, said, "You must be born again" if you expect to understand spiritual truths. The Master Teacher gave Nicodemus clear, straight, narrow, one-way directions to find the way of salvation and understanding of spiritual truths. And Nicodemus understood that he must believe, look and live, and be born again, if he was going to understand Jesus. So too for each one of us; we must come to the Master Teacher and be born again and enter into His classroom if we expect to understand spiritual truths and make the WAY clear, straight and simple to those whom we may be called to teach.

A good teacher will know he is called by God to teach His Word. Ephesians 4:11 tells us that "He gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, some as pastors and some as teachers." Just as not all are called to be evangelists, so not all are called to be teachers of the Word.

The responsibilities and challenges which go along with teaching the Word are clearly stated in the Bible. A good

teacher will know what they are.

True instruction was in his mouth, and unrighteousness was not found on his lips; he walked with Me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many back from iniquity. For the lips of a priest should preserve knowledge, and men should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts (Malachi 2:6-7).

*And those who have insight (the instructors) will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those **who lead the many to righteousness**, like the stars forever and ever (Daniel 12:3b).*

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, ... Preach the Word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths (II Timothy 3:16; 4:2-3).

The Jews therefore were marveling, saying, 'How had this man become learned, having never been educated?' Jesus therefore answered them, and said, 'My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me' (John 7:15-16).

The good teacher will exhort and reprove using the law in sternness and he will present Jesus using the gospel in compassion. He will instruct believers in sound doctrine.

The good teacher will take the time to learn the heart's need of each of his students and the appropriate methods to teach and reach each one for the Savior.

The good teacher will continue in the Master Teacher's classroom so that his teaching is that of the Master's; living as an exemplary model of Christ both in and out of his own classroom and always ready to give witness of the hope which lives within him.



— by Katha M. Tjelta
AFLC Director of Parish Education
Minneapolis, Minnesota

As our children grow older, parents and congregations often ask, "How do we keep our children interested in church and the things of the Lord?" There is no easy answer and no perfect solution to this problem.

Our preschool children look forward to Sunday school as it is a definite highlight of their week. This is often their main social event.

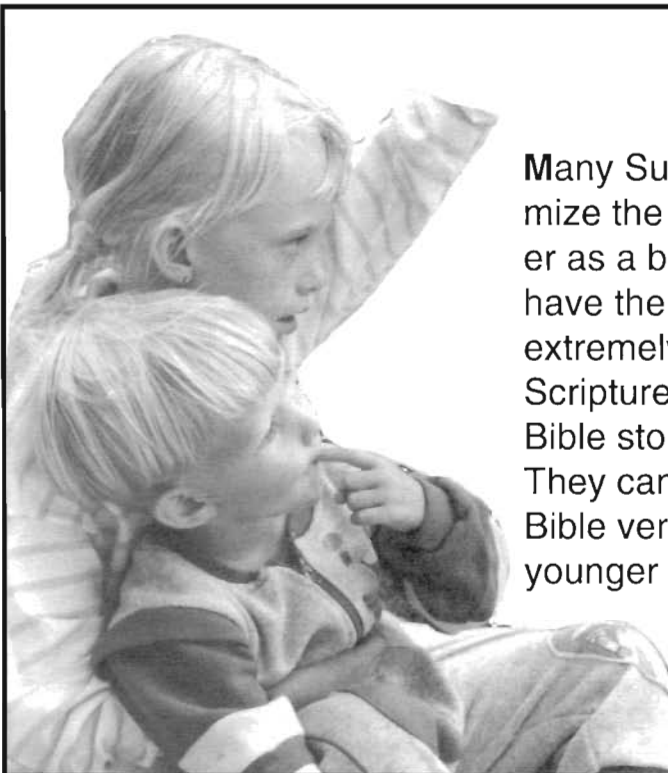
Then they begin school and they enjoy daily social contact, but Sunday school and church is a break from the everyday routine. (It does not last all day and the rules are less regimented than school.) It is good when friends attend the same church or when we as parents encourage our children to cultivate friendships within our own congregation.

Preschoolers and early elementary age children can easily be encouraged to develop some of these friendships if we take the time and effort to provide opportunities to be together. This usually means your family developing a relationship with that child's family. The local church can play a major role by sponsoring activities away from the church building with a wholesome atmosphere and Christ-centered activities for the entire family.

Keeping children **INTERESTED** in church

"Picking" friends for our children doesn't usually work, especially as they grow older. Friendships develop at school, in the neighborhood, at the swimming pool, playing or watching sports, in Scouts or in whatever our children are doing. This is where we have some influence. Look at these activities and who is participating before the children get involved. We can't just send them out the door and assume everything will work out fine.

It is amazing to watch our children grow and branch out. Sometimes we look at this as a threat to our parenting because we are losing control of what is →



Many Sunday schools and Bible camps minimize the younger classes and treat the teacher as a baby sitter. However, these children have the most impressionable minds and it is extremely important to teach the truths of Scripture to them. They are fascinated by the Bible stories and the characters involved. They can learn the books of the Bible and Bible verses at a young age. Teach the younger children, don't baby-sit.

— by Pastor Henry Mohagen, Towner, North Dakota

The most important educational ministry in the congregation

My whole thinking concerning Christian education was dramatically affected — for life — about 17 years ago by a simple statement from an article in a Christian teacher's magazine:

The Bible was written by adults for adults.

What do you think? Does the truth of it hit home? Don't jump to wrong conclusions — yes, the Bible is for all ages! Yet, the fact remains: The Bible was written by adults for adults.

How many children do you know who can understand such words as justification, sanctification, pro-

pitiation and the like. And what about all those "adult themes" in the Old Testament and even in the New? What about Paul's letters, Jesus' parables and the "hard" sayings? This is not to say that children cannot understand the Bible or even some of these more difficult aspects of the Bible. But the saying is true both historically and practically: The Bible was written by adults for adults.

Don't get me wrong! I am for children's Sunday school. I am for children studying the Bible. But I am more for adults studying the Bible. Why? Because the Bible was written by adults for adults!

Would you like to hear of a revolutionary old way of Christian education: parents study the Word of God and teach it to their children day by day in everyday life. (The role of Sunday school teachers is to compliment and reaffirm what the children are learning at home.) This concept is very old and very biblical. Look at those famous verses in Deuteronomy 6:

"And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up" (v.4-7).

What is the age-old, God-ordained method of spiritual education? It is adults studying the Word of God and nurturing and teaching their children. It is parents "discipling" their children. (That is what "discipline" really is — discipling. Don't just discipline your children; disciple them. You may quote me here but don't quote me out of context.)

Need more proof? Look up Psalm 78:1-8 and Ephesians 6:4. Notice what else stands out here. It



KEEPING INTEREST

happening in their lives. The goal of parenting is to train our children to become responsible individuals, capable of making decisions and accepting the consequences of those decisions.

Most of us have had some type of formal education or training for a job or career. Not many of us have had that same type of training to be a parent. A lot of what we do is trial and error. And not two children are alike so what we do with one will not necessarily work with another.

A verse that helps when faced with the traumas of parenting is: "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13). God does have the answers even when we don't. We need to pray continually so that the way we guide our children is Christ-directed.

Our activities should be family-centered.

All family members need to stay informed and involved with what the other members are doing. That doesn't mean we have to do everything together, but we should know what everyone is doing.

Showing a genuine interest in what our children are doing and experiencing and who they are with is a must. The tables are also turned when we let our children know what we are doing. Why should they have to show and tell if we don't?

Christian examples are a must in order to keep children involved in the church. Younger children look up to those older. VBS helpers can leave an amazing impression on smaller children. They can't wait to be a helper when they get big!

As they grow, it becomes the older leaders

is the fathers who should take the lead in discipling their children.

How about you single parents, older parents, grandparents? Look at II Timothy 1:5 or Titus 2:2-6. (Note also the emphasis on older believers teaching younger believers.)

God's plan of Christian education is for it to be passed on from generation to generation through the family — both natural families and the family of God.

If we are to pass the faith along and nurture our children and younger believers in the faith, we must be growing and maturing in it ourselves. There is no other way than to personally be studying the Word yourself. There is no other way than to personally be studying the Word yourself. (No, this is not a misprint. It is such an important statement I had to say it twice.)

So how can we encourage and strengthen our adult Sunday school classes? Preach about it. Exhort adults to get into the Word for themselves. Offer classes for adults and emphasize the importance of them.

Every adult focus in Christian education should have two main parts: doctrinal foundation and practical Christian living. Paul and other New Testament writers had both emphases. Many feel that doctrine is not practical. Not so! If our doctrine is not practical it probably is not sound doctrine. Our behavior flows out of our doctrine. Sound Christian behavior, therefore, flows from sound doctrine.


Include classes such as: Basic Doctrine, Lutheran Distinctives (including baptism and the concept of "sinner-saint"), Apologetics and Understanding the Cults and Other World Religions.

The Christian living classes should include classes on: How to Study and Apply the Bible for Yourself, Parenting — Discipling Your Children, Sharing Your Faith (not how to win an argument but how to share the love of God and His wonderful plan of salvation), How to Have Healthy Relationships, Disciple a New Believer, Experience Freedom in Christ and the list goes on.

Often in smaller churches there is a lack of resources — space, teachers and adult students. Perhaps most of your adults are already teaching youth or children's classes. Don't let that discourage you. Start small if necessary.

There are many fine video series available for adult classes. At our church we have three or four adult classes at a time, one or two of which are video classes. It is important to supply a discussion leader with videos for follow-up. Videos can be rented at local Christian bookstores or can be purchased. When finances are a concern, perhaps another church would share theirs. Emmaus Lutheran is willing to share their videos.

Adult Christian education is the most important of all. For the sake of our children and for new believers, let's all commit ourselves to continued spiritual growth.


Psalm 1 says, *Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked ... but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on His law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water.* 

— by Steve Papillon
Emmaus Lutheran
Bloomington, Minnesota

in the youth groups that can be those examples. Even after they graduate and leave the local congregation, the need to continue encouraging those younger is vital. Allison and Janelle Mellgren, our former pastor's daughters, have been that encouragement to our oldest daughter. We all have the responsibility as Christians to uphold and encourage one another.

Another way to keep our children in the church is by being in church. If we wait until Saturday night or Sunday morning to decide whether we are going to church or not, we will probably choose to sleep in or do something else. I clearly remember a sermon from my youth about making church a habit. A habit is something we do without thought. If church is a habit we do not need to make that decision whether we will be going to church or not.

Staying home is no longer an option because we will automatically just go to church without thought. The same applies to attending Sunday School, Bible study, youth group, ladies group, etc. These church habits learned as mere children can continue for a lifetime.

Our children are actively involved with our church. We as parents try to influence and encourage Christian friendships and activities. We keep in touch with one another as a family. We have not let them make the decision of not attending church. Church is a habit for our family. With God's strength and grace as we all grow older, my prayer is that our family's interest and love for His Church will continue to increase. 

— by Georgia Blestrud
Zion Lutheran
Tioga, North Dakota

Monica

Church history has many shining figures. Among them is the Church Father, Augustine. His glorious place in God's Kingdom on earth is due, next to God's grace, to his God-inspired mother, Monica.

Monica was a Christian from childhood on, in name at least. A Christian slave woman was her tutor in her childhood and youth. When Monica was grown, she married Patricius, a heathen.

Unfortunately, Patricius proved himself unfaithful in his vows to Monica. She did not complain, but prayed for her husband that he would come to faith in God.

A great difficulty for her was that her mother-in-law lived with them and was similarly disposed. But Monica tried to preserve a spirit of peace with her also.

Monica became the mother of several children who she, of course, loved dearly, but it was the boy Augustine who became something special for her.

Augustine was born November 15, 354 in the little town of Tagaste in North Africa. Monica was then 23 years old. She didn't attempt to give the boy Christian baptism because of his heathen father, but Monica dedicated her son to God in prayer.

Augustine was sent to school at an early age and showed himself to be very able, but he was not an easy child to work with. He was quarrelsome, arrogant and, at times, dishonest. He was also infected by paganism in his schoolwork and by his friends, although occasionally he prayed to God. When he came as a 16-year-old boy to Kartago to study, he threw himself into an immoral life.

It was a bitter time for Monica. She attempted to influence him toward other thoughts. One day she confronted him and warned him earnestly not to practice immorality, but the boy replied by saying that this was only old women's talk that she came with and it was a shame for him

to have to listen to it. The boy's father saw no wrong in his son's wild ways.

But in the campaign of prayer in which Monica was ardently engaged, she experienced a great victory: her husband, Patricius, turned to God. His life revealed that he became a quiet and good Christian. A while later he took sick and died.

Augustine was in Kartago, first as a student and later as a teacher. His mother heard that he had begun to live a quieter life, but he was gripped by heathen idealism. Now he was living with only one woman, and the son he had by her received the name Adeodatus, which means *gift of God*. However, he didn't come any closer to Christianity — nor did he scorn it.

Still one day he felt so restless that he felt an inner longing "to vault himself up to God," but it didn't cause him to turn to his mother's faith.

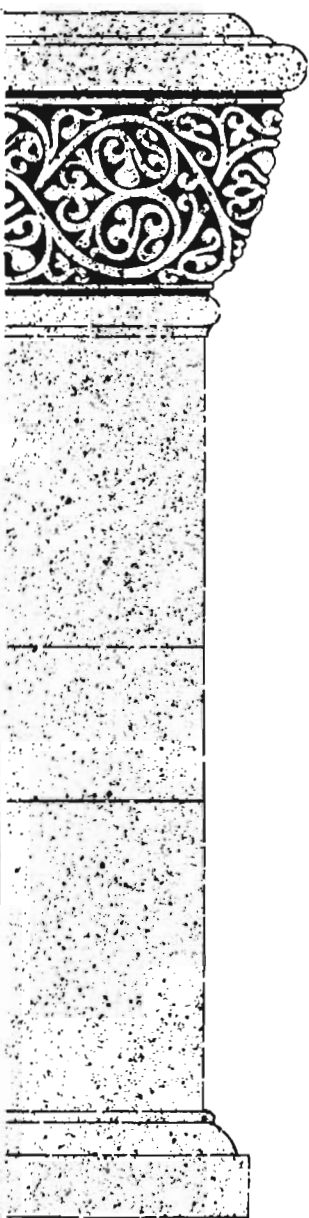
Monica wept over his delusion. Many a mother could be tempted to give up, but Monica prayed incessantly. Augustine shone in his talents, but Monica's mother-heart was continually distressed. She knew only one honor for her son and that was that he would become a Christian.

One night Monica had a strange dream. She dreamed that she stood on a wooden plank. Sorrowfully she stood there when a shining young man came and asked why she was crying. She replied that she grieved over her son's depravity. The man answered, "Only be calm about it. Only look up and you will see that where you are standing, there he stands also."

She told her dream to her son and he said, "It means that you won't be as I am."

"No," Monica said, "It wasn't said that where **he** is **you** are, **but where you** are, there **he** is. It means that you shall be as I am."

That dream gave her new strength in her struggle in prayer. Yet Augustine became a doubter of everything that is holy.



A mother's struggle in prayer for her son.

He decided to go to Rome to live, as things had not gone well for him in Kartago. His restless mind and his ambition lured him to the world city of Rome, so that if possible he might find a field worthy of his abilities and plans. He didn't want to tell his mother about this because he knew she would oppose the move. It would mean that her son of tears would be removed from her personal influence.

Monica had a presentiment about his intended trip. So she journeyed to him at Kartago and said to him that either he had to follow her home to Tagaste or she would follow him to Rome. Augustine replied pleasantly that she would be welcome to join him on his trip. She would stay overnight in Kartago while he went to say farewell to a friend.

The next morning Monica arrived at the dock and learned that her son had already left. She stood on the wharf and felt overcome by her son's conduct, but she gathered her thoughts in prayer and determined to follow him.

She went to Rome but Augustine was not there: he had already gone further to Milan. And in Milan she met him.

And now something great began to happen. Monica's persevering prayer for her son began to show results.

In Milan Augustine sought contact with Bishop Ambrose who was known for his powers of oratory. Augustine became gripped by the bishop's preaching, yes, so much so that he let himself become a catechumen (one receiving instruction in Christianity), to the great joy of Monica.

Augustine hadn't become a Christian yet, but the unrest and longing of his soul were constantly before God.

At that time Augustine's friend, Alypius, talked with him about his feelings and longings. They agreed to go to Monica

and tell her how it was. Monica became radiantly glad. It is said that she shouted with joy, exulted and praised God.

This happened in September, 386 when Augustine was 32 years old. Later he was baptized by Bishop Ambrose together with his son Adeodatus, who was then 15 years old and had become a Christian with gifts of grace from God.


Monica had now had her heart's deepest desire fulfilled and she longed for home in Africa. Augustine went with her and they would live in Tagaste.

On the way home they stopped for a while in the Rome suburb of Ostia. It was there that mother and son had a talk together which was of the kind and nature that it formed the basis for a painting of Monica which was made by a prominent artist.

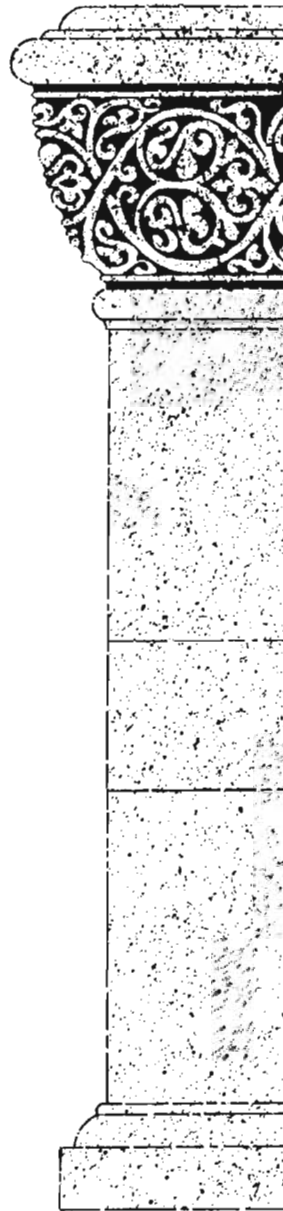
Monica now felt that she was ready. Five days after that conversation, she died in Ostia at the age of 56. Augustine was then 33. His heart was ready to break from sorrow, but it was tempered by the memories of a loving and consecrated mother.

Monica is a rich source of inspiration for all mothers who pray for their children and, for that matter, for all who pray to God for the salvation of those nearest to them.

When we think about what Augustine became, we understand better the scope of prayer and the hearing of prayer. In 391 Augustine was called as a priest and four years later became a bishop. Through his preaching and his many writings, he became the leading personality in the whole life of the Church in the west.

Back of the whole history of the Church Father, Augustine, stands (next to God's grace) **a mother in persevering and unrelenting prayer.** 

— taken from *Evangelisten*
translated by Rev. Raynard Huglen,
Newfolden, Minnesota



Confirmation — a firm foundation

God uses so many people and events in our lives to let us know beyond a shadow of a doubt that He is alive and loves us immensely. When I was growing up, God revealed Himself repeatedly through my parents, grandparents, pastor, church members, teachers, Bible camp counselors and many others. However, it was during confirmation classes when I really developed a firm foundation in the Bible and a clear understanding of who God is and how I should communicate with Him.

I almost missed out on taking confirmation because the year before I was going to start lessons, our pastor moved away and our congregation still did not have a resident pastor. By fall it appeared that my classmates and I were not going to receive confirmation lessons. We were relieved as we had heard confirmation meant lots of memorizing and homework. Besides my friends and I thought we had heard every Bible story there was by the time we were 12 years old.

Unfortunately for us, or so we thought, a very godly woman in our church, Janice Peck, volunteered to teach our confirmation class, at least until we found a new pastor. Each Wednesday after school we met and, just as predicted, we had a considerable amount of memorization and homework. No longer could we memorize our lengthy passages on the way to church as we did for those short Sunday School assignments. Confirmation stuff was time consuming.

Fortunately my grandma was a very good friend of mine. She would often ask me during the week if I knew my confirmation passage. Of course, I hardly ever did so she volunteered to be my personal tutor.


With my grandma's help, I was able to memorize anything. Through our many afternoons spent together memorizing Scripture, a new dimension was added to our already close relationship. We discussed topics like heaven, hell, death, God and many others that we would not have

normally discussed.

Before I took confirmation classes, I had not reflected too much on what phrases like: "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name," really meant. Neither had I thought much about: "I am the Lord thy God. Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." As I repeated the meanings of these phrases over and over to memorize them, my eyes were opened to the awesome nature of God. I also became even more aware of my inherent sinful nature and my desperate need of a loving God. Saying the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments during church became a real act of worship for me now that I knew what some of the phrases really meant.

I have gone back to my catechism several times to aid me in my prayer times. Going slowly through the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments and reflecting on the meanings of each phrase has resulted in many wonderful times of worship and confession for me.

As I reflect on those two years, I am very thankful that my confirmation training was rigorous and that I actually came away remembering something. Knowing what I believed gave me the courage and resolve to stay true to God in high school. I believe that my confirmation education also helped me make a decision to go to the Association Free Lutheran Bible School and become more familiar with God's Word and will for my life.

I thank God for all who pushed me along and encouraged me to discipline myself. As Hebrews 12:11 says, "All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained in it, afterwards, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness." Hopefully, this verse will encourage us all to continually discipline ourselves and our children in the ways of God, knowing that the "fruits of righteousness" are eternal. 

— by Teri (Olson) McNelis
Vermillion, South Dakota

The author's home congregation is Slim Buttes Lutheran, Reva, South Dakota. She is a 1991 graduate of AFLBS. She and her husband are students at the University of South Dakota's medical school.

I Enjoy Being a Woman

I enjoy my trials and troubles. "I do?" is the natural response I expect from the title of this lesson. I am not suggesting an abnormal response of masochism which finds pleasure in abuse or punishment. A normal human does not like to suffer. Yet with almost every mention of suffering in the Bible comes the accompanying admonition, "Rejoice." Why does Scripture instruct the Christian in this way?

I Enjoy My Trials and Troubles

1. Consider for a moment, a trial you have known. Define "trial" in your own words. Describe some of the times in life when one experiences trials.

What we consider a trial may range from an annoying head cold to separation from a loved one. Of this we can be sure — suffering and trials are common to all. How severe it is does not matter when you are the one experiencing trial. Each one's trial is still a trial to him and requires comfort, encouragement, inward strength and an acceptance of God's purpose and sovereignty. As the Day of the Lord draws near, more Christian families seem to be affected by major trials. Let us examine the paradox of enjoying our trials.

I. Why rejoice?

2. What attitude does the Bible say I am to have during trials? Why?

James 1:2-4

Romans 5:3-5

Luke 6:22-23

I Peter 4:12-14

3. The attitude we have during a trial will sustain us or defeat us.

What is the exemplary attitude of Jesus? Hebrews 12:2



A Christian's response of joy during a trial is undoubtedly an outstanding witness to an unbeliever.

II. Reasons God allows suffering

4. Suffering may be a natural consequence of sin. What does Galatians 6:6-7 say?

Is there suffering that is not honored by God? I Peter 2:20; 4:15

What is the purpose of this suffering? II Corinthians 7:9-10, Lamentations 3:40-42

5. The Lord disciplines us because He loves us. Review God's motive for discipline and the results of it in Hebrews 12:6, 10-11. Then read John 15:2. Who does the purging, to whom, and why?

6. Every Christian has attitudes and practices which require spiritual correction. What is God's purpose? Isaiah 48:10, 17-18.

What is my plea? Jeremiah 10:24 and Psalm 119:71

7. Trials may be a means of testing my faith. An ivy which flourishes is highest, thickest and greenest when growing against a brick wall. In the midst of rejoicing, Peter gently warns that our faith will be tested. How and why? I Peter 1:6-8

8. Is there a difference between testing and temptation? James 1:13-14 and I Corinthians 10:13

9. God may seem far away when your faith is being tested. Two men of old give what insight? Job 23:8-10 and Isaiah 30:20-21

10. God's glory may be uniquely manifested in times of trial. What does John 9:3 and 11:4 say about this?



God's highest purpose for each of us is to mold us into the image of His Son. He uses His Word to teach and encourage us. He intermingles trials with blessings to reveal His grace and mercy.

III. God's inscrutable ways

While we are experiencing trials we are tempted to question God. We don't understand all His ways. Peter questions Jesus about John's death when it was revealed how he would die. Jesus settles the matter with, "What is that to you? Follow me!" He does expect us to trust Him.

11. How we accept our trials depends on our picture of God. What picture do you get from these verses?

Isaiah 40:13-14

Romans 11:33-36

Isaiah 64:4

12. Is it so hard to understand how good can come out of trouble? What is the connection between Exodus 19:9a and Isaiah 45:3?

IV. How to respond to suffering

God designed us with a full spectrum of intense emotions — those which burst our hearts with joy and those which break our hearts with sorrow. Yet as we grow in our understanding of the character of God, He enables us to respond with more than emotions. Our intellect and will are also involved. God's Word teaches that many responses are appropriate and helpful in our trials.

13. List the response indicated in each verse. Discuss how it may help us to rejoice in our trials.

Psalms 30:5b; 56:8

Psalms 119:15,28, 49-50

II Corinthians 4:18

I John 5:14-15

Micah 7:7

Deuteronomy 33:25

I Thessalonians 5:18

Exodus 15:2

Nehemiah 8:10b

II Corinthians 1:3-5

14. What are the specific promises regarding suffering?

Deuteronomy 31:8

Psalms 56:3,11

Psalms 28:8-9

John 16:33b

I Peter 5:10

Next month: I Enjoy Being Part of the Body

Learning to learn

As I thought about the theme this month, the chorus "Learning to Lean" kept coming to mind. As Christians, we have the special privilege of putting life's situations into the hands of Jesus. "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Joshua 1:5b).

My husband was in his last year of seminary when our fourth son, Caleb was born. Because of a prenatal ultrasound, we knew that our baby had a large cyst filling most of his left chest cavity. The doctor gave him less than a 1% chance of survival. Caleb's first four months of life were spent at Minneapolis Children's Medical Center.

We then moved to Park River, North Dakota and Caleb continued to be very sick. This was a traumatic move, but now it is exciting to look back and see how God provided the people to fit into the areas of Caleb's needs.

Today we have a very joyful little seven-year-old in our home. Against the predictions, he can walk and talk. His brothers

think the world of him and even go to him for a lift if they've had a bad day.

I'd like to share some personal suggestions with you as we learn to lean when going through difficult times.

1. "Knowing that God is good is the first and most important step in learning to cope," so says Helen Lescheid in *Christian Parenting*, May, 1990. She continues: "Just as in nature light and darkness are necessary and follow a purposeful design, the same is true in our lives. God thoughtfully engineers our days, using both the light and dark experiences to weave a beautiful and meaningful pattern into our lives." Psalm 100 reminds us to "Know that the Lord is God. It is He who made us, and we are His; we are His people, the sheep of His pasture ... For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations."

2. Let others help. Receiving

healthy meals gave me peace of mind about the rest of my family, although this was hard to accept at times. Rejoice when others say they are praying for you. A few weeks ago we received a phone call from an AFLC pastor's family. They wanted an update on Caleb and shared that they had been praying for him for over five years. Wow! What an encouragement. This is especially important when we are in the midst of the situation, and sometimes we are just too weary to pray on our own behalf.

3. Play some Christian music. A picture may be worth a thousand words, but Christian music lifted a ton of weight from my weary soul. I remember many times feeling so low as I left the hospital. I'd put on a Christian tape as I drove to our house and feel God ministering to me through the beautiful melodies and inspired words. We continued the "therapy" when we brought Caleb home, often playing Christian music throughout the night.

4. Share your experience with others. I'm thankful for this opportunity to share with you. I ask for continued prayer that the results of Caleb's immunodeficiency tests will be much improved. This will mean that he can go off monthly I.V. therapy. Also pray that as Caleb gets older, the cruel ways of the world will not destroy his joy and love for life.

*I lay all my cares upon You,
I lay all of my burdens down
at your feet,
And anytime I don't know
what to do,
I lay all my cares upon you.*

— by Mrs. Jane Rasmussen
Park River, North Dakota



Eagan, Minnesota — Living Word Lutheran WMF hosted a special spring program focusing on the theme: "the wedding of the Lamb has come, and His Bride has made herself ready." Pictured are the ladies dressed in wedding gowns. The program consisted of Scripture reading and wedding music, closing with thoughts shared on the celebration of the wedding feast in heaven, when Christ the Bridegroom calls the Church home to glory.

Revival on my college campus

If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and forgive their sin and will heal their land. II Chronicles 7:14

Many Christians here in America have heard of the movement of the Holy spirit that occurred on college campuses this last spring. Many of these students have returned home and shared with their congregations which in turn have made things right with the Lord.

I graduated from AFLBS in 1994 and continued my education at Crown College (formerly called St. Paul Bible College) in a western suburb of Minneapolis.

Last March I attended a school retreat during which we watched a video depicting a first-hand account of a revival on a Christian college campus in the 1970s. After that chapel service, one by one, students came forward and asked God and their classmates or fellow faculty members for forgiveness for personal sins.

That chapel service lasted for days with only short breaks to sleep and eat. They were sinners beseeching the holy God for forgiveness. The film continued to show how that event changed the spiritual life of that college and community for years. And it had all begun when six students started praying.

Last March, six of us Crown College students committed ourselves to pray each day for the sins in our own lives and in our classmates' lives to be exposed by the Holy Spirit so we would no longer hinder His work on our campus and community.

Within a few weeks we heard

several Christian colleges were experiencing what we desired so much! Admittedly we were surprised God moved so fast. Finally two Northwestern College students from Roseville, Minnesota spoke to our student body and told how God had moved in their lives. Then they opened the microphone for anyone who needed to confess a sin. One by one people came up to confess specific sins in their lives.

It was a cleansing time. Some confessed some very private sins they had never before made public because of the serious consequences. Even some faculty came forward.

Classes were canceled so chapel could continue. Faculty privately counseled with students and said how many of them had been praying for this to happen.

Before that chapel ended several hours later, students planned another one for that evening. The next day we again had two long chapel services.

By Sunday night we thought it was appropriate to praise God for what He had done and share how lives had already been changed. Many students experienced such a freedom from guilt that their faces shined. Many had called home to their parents and pastors.

National Free Lutheran Youth Convention breaks attendance record!

During July 17-22, 1099 youth gathered at Estes Park, Colorado, for the largest event ever sponsored by the AFLC. Two years ago over 900 attended the FLY convention. Watch for the convention report in the next *Lutheran Ambassador*.

So what are the lasting effects? I know that I personally take God's promises more literally. I also am more aware of the fact that people are constantly hurting from either others hurting them by their sins, or guilt from their own sins.

I realize my own need to be constantly in prayer throughout the day as I interact with people to be a caring confronter or comforter.

Our campus life is different. People are more aware that sin has to be dealt with daily so that not only can we be healed, but that we can also bring other sick sinners to the Great Physician for healing.

— by Stephanie Johansen
Calvary Lutheran
Bismarck, North Dakota

Become an ARC supporter

How can you become involved in the ministry of the Association Retreat Center? Prayer warriors are a must! Attend camps and retreats at the ARC and enjoy the blessings available. And become an ARC Supporter or ARC Supporter — 900 Club Member.

An ARC Supporter is one who contributes \$100 or more per year to the ministry of the retreat center. An ARC Supporter — 900 Club member is one who makes a Faith Commitment of \$15 per month for a 5-year period. The money from ARC Supporters goes to fund the "Three M's" — Ministry, Maintenance and Mission.

For more information contact Eric Westlake, 2372 30th Ave. & King's Way, Osceola, WI 54020; (715) 755-3131.

World Mission Committee announces new missionary candidate

Sonja Dahl, 25, has been approved to begin the process of completing the requirements needed to go to the Brazil field under AFLC World Missions. She expects to complete her LPN training at Winona Tech, Winona, Minnesota, on August 18, 1995. Her assignment is to live and work at the Campo Mourão campus and Miriam Infant Home.

Sonja's home church is Jevnaker Lutheran of rural Borup, Minnesota. She is the daughter of Jerry and Jewel Dahl, Felton, Minnesota. Her one sister is Joan Korhonen, Monroe, Washington, the wife of Earl Korhonen the pastor of Monroe Free Lutheran. Three of her four brothers have graduated from AFLBS: Steven, Nathan and Wesley.

After graduating from Felton High School in 1988, Sonja attended the AFLC Bible School in Minneapolis for two years. After her graduation, she lived and worked for eight months with missionaries David and Janet Abel and their family in Vitoria, Brazil. The next three years were spent at Winona State University and this past year at Winona Tech. Each summer she has returned to Brazil to assist the missionaries. Two of those times were with the AFLC's FLY team.

When asked to describe her call to the mission field, Sonja said, "As a child missionaries often stayed in our home from the Norwegian Lutheran Mission. One question they all would ask is: 'Who will go?' At the time I just figured it was something I'd do later — when I was older. Then after Bible school when I spent time in Brazil I also visited the Norwegian Lutheran mission-

aries in Bolivia, but God was giving me a burden for the people of Brazil. I returned home and then the Lord really worked on my heart and I knew He was calling."

Sonja is familiar with the ministry at Campo Mourão and the people she will work with. "I'm excited to return with my schooling behind me so I can really get to work. I know I need a better grasp of the language but my short-term trips have given me a big jump." She went on to say, "I know what is waiting for me in Brazil, it is just the process of getting there that is scary."

Pray for Sonja as she com-



pletes the details in the application process. Pray for God's guidance and provision of a job during deputation work.

Her current address is Sonja Dahl, 303 Winona St., Winona, MN 55987, (507) 453-0889. Or contact the World Mission office at (612) 545-6472 or 545-5631.

Showing compassion or passing by

She came to our home and asked if she could stay with us until she found a permanent place. She was young and a single mom from one of the mountain churches.

I was more than reticent. While within me I silently pleaded no, my conscience began to work and I was quickly reminded by the Holy Spirit of the story of the Good Samaritan in the Bible. I wanted to pass by on the other side and justify my action even as the lawyer did in the story related by Jesus in Luke 10.

I felt like those to whom Jesus had said in Matthew 25: "I was a stranger and you did not invite me in." The evidence stood in front of me and I couldn't even ask, "Lord, when did we see you ... a stranger ... and did not take care of you?"

What does it mean to be a neighbor?

She stayed with us for a couple of weeks while she realized her plans for securing permanent housing were not working out. We took her to the brethren of our local church to discuss the matter. Little did I know the lesson in compassion I was about to receive.

These brethren are poor people, with humble, very humble dwellings. Without a moment's hesitation they offered her the use of rooms in their very humble church building, carrying water to her daily. They were so eager to be used.

While she left to look over the rooms in the church, we visited with others in the neighborhood.

AFLC Mexico annual conference held

Saint Andrew Apostle Lutheran Church in Leon is hosting the AFLC-Mexico Annual Conference, August 10-13, 1995. Pastors serving congregations in Mexico are Samuel Flores, Milton Flores, Raul Hernandez and Gabriel

Mercado. AFLC missionaries Dan and Debbie Giles are ministering in Aguascalientes. Missionaries Todd and Barb Schierkolk, currently in language school in Edinburg, Texas, are attending the conference.

Tour group to Brazil planned

Pastor Del and Karen Palmer of Thief River Falls, Minnesota will be leading a tour group to Brazil in January 1996. The group will visit the various parts of the AFLC mission work in Brazil as well as participate in the 30th anniversary annual conference of the AFLC-Brazil. The tour

will last for approximately two weeks. Further details regarding the tour will be coming in future issues of The Lutheran Ambassador. For more information contact Pastor Del or Karen Palmer, PO Box 269, Thief River Falls, MN 56701; phone 218-681-4643 (office), 218-681-6239 (home).

Question: Does God want to do a more effective work through me than I am interested in?

We stopped by Marta's home and she invited us in. Poor as she is, she had a hot meal waiting for us: meat, veggies, tortillas, Coca Cola. "Just a little taquito" (taco), she said.

As we sat around Marta's table, she began sharing her deep longings to be a witness to her neighbors. She told us in tears how God is speaking to her to witness, and yet she doesn't know how to lead someone to Christ. She told us of her own salvation and how God spoke to her and her husband through the death of one of their babies. (Because of Jesus in their lives, they understand the value of life itself and cannot dismiss the death of a baby in the way most do in Mexico.) And so it was a time to encourage her, to pray with her and to bind our relationship a little closer.

On the way home I thought of how Marta, out of her humble means, had given to us — to the

Lord — all that she had. And I, in my surplus and comfort, had hesitated to give lodging willingly to someone in need.

I remembered crossing the border between the United States and Mexico a few months ago and thinking, now will I be a good missionary? Will God have more freedom to work through me here in Mexico than He did in the U.S.? How far am I willing to go for Him? How much am I willing to be used of Him in the lives of my neighbors?

Whether to pass by or to show compassion; it may always be a struggle within my heart, whether in the United States or Mexico. My needed response to being a good neighbor is allowing God's Spirit to move, opening my heart in obedience to His Word and doing it in Jesus' Name.

— by Clara Gunderson
Puebla, Mexico



Check out the

AMBASSADOR PUBLICATIONS

The Senior Confirmation Book
by Jacob Tanner

A Faithful Guide to Peace With God

by Rosenius is an excellent choice for deeper study and meditation with your church council.

Catechism Posters

Does your church have a set? These four beautiful posters with full color illustrations and the time-honored text of our catechism will be at home in any classroom, fellowship hall, library, school or office.

New resource materials for '95-'96:

Fourth grade student devotional booklets (CEF). Order one for each student.

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is an excellent Bible picture resource for all teachers.

AMBASSADOR PUBLICATIONS

3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.
Plymouth, MN 55441
(612) 545-5631

CAMPUS

Time is running out!

The AFLBS Fall Quarter begins September 10, 1995, with the 4 p.m. opening service at the chapel at 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, Minnesota. Call 612-544-9501. Apply today!

Schools receive Lutheran Brotherhood money



The Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary and Bible School recently received \$4,093 and \$4,813 respectively. The money came from Lutheran Brotherhood's IMPACT/IMPACT PLUS programs (Inviting Member Participation in Aiding Lutheran Colleges and Theological Seminaries). This second quarter payment represented 45 gifts to the seminary and 54 to the Bible school.

The IMPACT/IMPACT PLUS programs match Lutheran Brotherhood members' gifts of \$25 to \$100 per year to Lutheran institutions of higher education nationwide. Since 1979, the seminary has received \$99,481 and the Bible school \$184,941 in IMPACT funds.

Pictured is Lutheran Brotherhood representative Ford C. Droegemueller presenting the check to AFLBS Dean Donald Greven.

Senior seminarian killed in National Guard training exercise

1st Lt. Michael J. Hogan, 25, was killed during a National Guard annual training exercise at Camp Ripley,



Minnesota, on July 19, 1995. He was to begin his senior year at the Free Lutheran Seminary in September after completing his internship at Monroe Free Lutheran in Monroe, Washington, and Stillwater Free Lutheran, Kalispell, Montana.

Michael was born June 10,

1970 in Elkorn, Wisconsin, to Leonard and Carol Hogan. His family moved to Kalispell, Montana, in 1976. He graduated from Flathead High School in 1988. He attended Carol College on a debate scholarship and graduated in 1991. During the 1990 legislative session he was an intern for Senator Bob Brown.

Michael began serving in the National Guard as a field medic. He was commissioned a 2nd Lt. in the Armor Corps in 1991, and was a member of the Company D, 2nd Battalion, 136th Infantry.

He loved to read, mountain bike, cross country ski and work with youth. He had recently been certified as a trainer for "Evangelism Explosion." His wish for everyone was that they would know Jesus as their Savior as he did.

He is survived by his widow, Diane (Morton); his parents; his sister Michelle and her husband Dave Kemp; his niece Jamie; in-laws Patsi and Doug Morton; and grandparents Robert and Donna Kobbervig and Frank Smith.

The funeral service was July 24, 1995 at Stillwater Free Lutheran Church with Rev. Stephen Snipstead officiating. At the service he received, posthumously, the Meritorious Service Medal. Burial was at Glacier Memorial Gardens with military rites by the Montana National Guard.

Those wishing to give a gift of money in memory of Michael are encouraged to send it to Stillwater Free Lutheran Church, 1401 Church Dr., Kalispell MT 59901. A memorial has been established to help future seminary students with housing expenses.

AFLBS Concert Choir plans Norway tour for summer of 1996

Eighteen years ago, in 1977, the choir traveled to Norway for the second time. We are now planning a return trip! Phone calls are being made and letters written in preparation for this event.

Please pray for us as we continue to plan for this unique ministry opportunity to Bible schools, churches and prayer houses in Norway.

Perhaps you would consider sponsoring a choir member next spring to help them with the added financial costs. I know each student would be greatly encouraged to receive assistance from family members and home congregations. Thank you for all your support and prayers for the music ministry at AFLBS.

— by Jerry D. Nelson
Music Director

Three congregations celebrate 100 years

Dovre Free Lutheran Church, Winger, Minnesota

Dovre Lutheran Church was established in 1895 after the controversy in the newly-formed United Norwegian Lutheran Church. Originally the church was called Saron and later was changed to Dovre.

Sixty-five members were part of the congregation then and their first pastor was Rev. J.A. Brynjulfson. His salary was forty dollars a year.

During the early years, services were held either in a member's home or a nearby schoolhouse. In the spring of 1900 a church was built on the site of the cemetery which is located north of Winger. In 1908 the church was moved to the village of Winger which at that time had no church.

In the early years the congregation was served by pastors from the Maple Bay Church. From 1915 to 1928, Dovre was served by Pastor J. Mortenson of Foston. In 1928, Dovre joined Union Lake and Maple Bay in a three-church parish. In 1962 they voted as a parish to withdraw from the Lutheran Free Church and in

1963 became charter congregations of the AFLC. That parish continued until 1989 when Dovre and Union Lake withdrew and formed a new parish.

The original building was enlarged in 1915 and a basement and steeple were added. In 1967 a new chancel and vestry were added. The large entry and conference room were built in 1987 and, in 1989 the basement was enlarged and a new pastor's study constructed.

In 1904, a Ladies Aid was organized which continues to support missions and assists in local projects. The Luther League was organized in 1908 with meetings twice each month that included the congregation. Today it is only the youth who meet once each month.

In the early years the nine-month school year consisted of seven months public and two months parochial. It was not until 1915 that Sunday school began as is known today.

Dovre Free Lutheran celebrated their Centennial on June 24-25, 1995.

Landstad Lutheran Church Shevlin, Minnesota

Early homesteaders in this north central Minnesota community were Scandinavians. They brought with them a strong devotion to God and as laymen conducted services in homes for some time before they loosely organized a congregation in 1895. The first pastors were Olav Refsdal and A.K. Lockrem.

The Landstad Norwegian Lutheran Church of Shevlin formally organized in 1899. Since then pastors who have served the congregation are: H.J. Villesvik; O.P. Grambo; George E. Nelson; Hans E. Bode; J.P. Leeland; David Dale; A.P. Anderson; Carl Berg; Lutheran Gronseth; Reinhart G. Pederson; Morris Eggen; I.M. Norum; Marvin S. Undseth; Walt Beaman; Dennis O'Neil and the present pastor, William Goodman.

After meeting in homes, the schoolhouse, city hall and the Congregational Church, Landstad Lutheran held its first worship service in its own church building in 1904. Several additions and

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Bethany Lutheran of Blue Grass, Sebeka, Minnesota

In the late 1800s a small group of Norwegian pioneer families settled in this central Minnesota area of small streams, hills and woods. The first settler named the area Blue Grass because he had come from Blue Grass, Kentucky and Kentucky Blue Grass grew in the area.

In 1895, Pastor Jens Jensen came to the community from time to time to organize a church. The next year, Carl Amundson was called to be the pastor after his ordination and took up the work of the pastorate and farming in

spite of the hardships. That year the first ladies' meeting was held. After Bible study, coffee, bread and butter was served. Jelly on the bread was seldom served as that was a real treat.

The meetings were held in homes until 1899 when a one-room log church was dedicated. The chancel and steeple were added in 1905 and 1908 and later the log church was sided. Pastor Amundson served until 1912. He was followed by Pastors Edmund Holland, John Grindland, Olaf Braseth and H.M. Bueide.

In 1927 the Norwegian constitution was translated into English and revised. The name became Bethany Free Lutheran Church and plans were made to build a new church. It was dedicated in 1929 and continues to be used.

Rev. H.M. Bueide served the congregation until 1934. He was followed by Pastor Edwin Peterson, Carl Berg, O.J. Haukness, N.A. Nelson, A. Halvorson, Aage Carlsen, Charles Eidem and student pastor Ralph Tjelta. At that

→

LANDSTAD

changes were made to that building but the biggest change came in 1960 when the building was moved across the street and added the fellowship hall in 1963. The enclosed entry with two additional classrooms was built in 1975.

Landstad Lutheran was a member of the Lutheran Free Church and in 1957 voted to stay independent and not join in the merger. In 1963, Landstad was one of the charter congregations to form the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations. It is a part of the Shevlin Parish along with Trinity Lutheran of Wilton and Sell Lake of Shevlin.

The congregation is grateful to the founders and leaders for their convictions and faith in building on the Word of God. To God be the glory and honor for these first 100 years. In looking forward, may our eyes be on Jesus. Romans 3:23-24 reminds us that "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."

Landstad Lutheran celebrated their 100 years on July 1-2, 1995.

BETHANY

time in 1970, the congregation voted to leave the ALC (a member since 1963) and join the AFLC and become a self-supporting church.

In 1971, Rev. Fred Carlson accepted the call and served until 1984. The next full-time pastor was Rev. Walt Beaman followed by Rev. Stephen Mundfrom, the current pastor.

No longer does Vacation Bible School last ten days to a month each summer. But the ministry of the church continues through various means in accordance with the articles of incorporation that there be "promotion of the spiritual welfare of the members here and of those who may hereafter become members

Astoria, Oregon — A Bethany Free Lutheran family has been involved in international ministries this past year. Peter Moberg returned from an eight-month ministry in Russia on May 28th. He received one year's college credit for his work in the Moscow Public Schools. Rebekah and Esther Moberg taught Chinese children in Singapore from June 17-26, at a week-long seminar in biblical principles. They are the children of Pastor Bill and Pauline Moberg.

Rev. John and Ruby Abel, Melbourne, Florida are in Brazil this summer holding evangelistic services, including the four Free Lutheran churches in Campo Mourão. Along with visiting their family, they attended two Bible camps and a conference for the AFLC Brazilian pastors and their wives.



Rev. Kermitt C. Grundahl, and his wife Alice continue to reside at Colorado Springs, Colorado. He will be 90 years old on October 7, 1995. He has suffered with prostate cancer and a severe cataract this spring. They continue, however, to live in their own home. Their address is: 423 Redwood Dr., Colorado Springs, CO 80907. He is the second oldest pastor in the AFLC, next to Rev. Hans Tollefson, Astoria, Oregon who will be 93 on September 22, 1995.

Thank you from Rev. Elden and Faith Nelson

We were deeply touched during the WMF service at the annual conference when we were presented with a trip to the Holy Land. We were humbled by your kind words as we visited with many of you during the reception. Your partnership and fellowship will continue to be special for us.

Thank you for the generous gift. We look forward to visiting the Holy Land and trust that our lives will be enriched as we do.

The Nelson's new address is 1633 Co. R. 8 SE, Kandiyohi, MN 56251. Their home phone is (612) 382-6550 and the office is (612) 235-0487.



Lisbon, North Dakota — A non-denominational VBS was held this summer in the Lisbon elementary school gym. Over 40 children registered. Pictured are the students enjoying a hayride during one of the afternoons. The closing program was held at the North Dakota Veterans' Home. The families who sponsored the VBS are praying for a future AFLC congregation to be established in Lisbon.

and for the promotion of the Christian religion throughout the world."

Bethany Lutheran celebrated their Centennial on August 6, 1995.

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Rev. Norman Dornquist, Weslaco, Texas suffered a heart attack at the end of June and is now recovering from quadruple by-pass surgery. He is the pastor of Faith Lutheran Church in Weslaco.

Upsala, Minnesota — Word of Life Lutheran has voted to begin plans for constructing their first church building. The congregation, organized in 1988, was a home mission church and already has a parsonage. They have had a pastoral vacancy for a year and are in the process of calling a pastor.

Committee of Reconciliation meets

The Committee of Reconciliation, which was formed in response to a 1995 annual conference resolution, met from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the AFLC headquarters building, July 13. The sixteen members of the committee listed in the previous issue of *The Lutheran Ambassador* were present along with a further addition to the committee: Pastor Emerson Anderson of Cloquet, Minnesota.

Areas of common ground were listed and issues in need of discussion were identified. No rec-

ommendations were made.

The next meeting of the committee was set for August 18, beginning at 8 a.m. at the AFLC headquarters meeting room.

In memoriam

Mrs. Ralph (Margaret) Johnson, Upsala, Minnesota passed away on July 12, 1995, after a lengthy illness. Funeral services were held on July 17, with AFLC President, Rev. Robert Lee officiating. The Johnsons have been active in AFLC annual conferences and most recently, Ralph was on the AFLC's Stewardship Board.

Mr. Stanley Holmaas, Newfolden, Minnesota passed away on June 24, 1995 at the age of 70 years. He was born on January 24, 1925 to Andrew and Julia Holmaas. He was a life-long member of Westaker Lutheran Church in Newfolden.

He attended the Lutheran Bible Institute in Minneapolis after which he worked in North Dakota and northern Minnesota. After he was married he opened a grocery store and continued in that as his life's work.

He was very active in the community, serving for 40 years in the Newfolden Fire Department and eight years as mayor. He held many offices in the congregation throughout the years. For 12 years, he served on the AFLC's Board of Trustees.

He is survived by: his wife, Ruby (Lindstrom); sons, Rev. Jerry and his wife Ruthie (he is a professor at the AFLC Schools), Russ and his wife Vickie; daughters Marlene and her husband Rev. Phil Rokke, and Wanda and her husband Kevin Spading. He is also survived by eleven grandchildren, a sister, Alice Knutson and brothers Arthur and Emil.



AFLC Board of Trustees in the late 1970s. Seated, Rev. Rodger Olson, Dr. Philip Dyrud and Mr. Ralph Peterson. Standing, Rev. Dennis Gray, Mr. Kenneth Rolt, the late Mr. Stanley Holmaas and Rev. Michael Brandt.

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences — January 1 - June 30, 1995

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN JUNE	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$268,591.00	\$12,709.06	\$104,391.93	39
Seminary	163,200.00	4,916.70	56,852.97	35
Bible School	244,800.00	9,489.43	74,668.94	31
Home Missions.	335,040.00	14,184.63	129,083.02	39
World Missions.	359,927.00	18,515.63	140,056.44	39
Capital Investment	35,425.00	601.19	4,875.07	14
Parish Education	67,868.00	3,162.01	26,192.30	39
Church Extension	10,000.00	364.30	4,745.63	47
TOTALS	\$1,484,851.00	\$63,942.95	\$540,866.30	36
TOTALS 1994	1,422,890.00	92,482.40	525,671.18	37
Goal 50%				

NEWS YOU CAN USE

Indianapolis, IN — At the Second Indianapolis Conference held April 24-25 at St. Matthew Lutheran Church, the formation of the new "Lutheran Synod and Ministerium-USA" was announced. The LSM-USA is described as a church body in the "Conservative Middle" or "Moderate Conservative" position of American Lutheranism today.

Major Theological emphases of the new entity include 1) A view of Holy Scripture as divinely inspired, inerrant, and infallible; 2) the complete autonomy of the local congregation; 3) a practice of liturgical worship; and 4) an understanding of the Holy Spirit as working with the church "solely through Word and Sacrament."

In regard to the last point, the LSM-USA has taken a stand in "opposition to those who would narrow or limit the work of the Holy Spirit through undue insistence on the legitimacy of the 'sign fits' [i.e., tongues, healing's, prophecy, revelation] as being operative on a normative basis in our day."

The LSM-USA traces its roots to four American Association of Lutheran Churches (AALC) pastors, who met in Chicago in March of 1994 to organize an effort to counteract the inroads of new-orthodoxy and Charismatic renewal movement theology in the AALC. These four pastors, with backgrounds evenly divided in the former ALC and LCA formed the "AALC Forum" as an instrument of reform within that Synod.

At the June 1994 convention of the AALC, it became evident that all such efforts were futile. Following that convention the Forum added another pastor and congregation and subsequently organized the first Indianapolis conference on Inerrancy which met in Indianapolis in August 1994. The result of that conference was

the "Indianapolis Statement on Holy Scripture," which was given final form and adopted as the position of the new LSM-USA at this year's second Indianapolis Conference.

The LSM-USA will be an ongoing Forum for theological discussion for clergy and laity. Synodical membership for pastors and congregations shall be by subscription to a series of doctrinal statements. These include the "Indianapolis Statement on Holy Scripture," The "Ecumenical Creeds" (Apostles, Nicene, and Athanasian); "The Unaltered Augsburg Confession;" and "Luther's Small Catechism."

The Rev Ralph Spears, pastor of St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Indianapolis was named temporary President Pastor of the Synod. Congregations involved in the formation of LSM-USA are located in Wisconsin, Indiana, and Pennsylvania.

Atlanta, GA — Evangelist Billy Graham closed the 150th Southern Baptist Convention in Atlanta on June 22, and commended the group for passing a resolution apologizing for past failings in race relations. "I have been heartened that in this convention you have been dealing with the struggle of racism and the issue of slavery in our history," Graham said. "Only when we individually and as a corporate group renounce racism in all of its forms and repent of all transgressions will God choose to use us in the future to reach all people throughout the world. God help us to pull down the barriers that divide and to cooperate together to end racism and injustice wherever it may be."

Washington, D.C. — A poll released in late April by Public Opinion Strategies found that 56 percent of Americans say the problem facing the nation is a moral crisis. Only 28 percent describe America's problem as an economic crisis, and 15 percent say it is both moral and economic.

Marysville, WA — The Rev. Robert Overgaard Sr. of Fergus Falls, Minnesota, was reelected for a fourth three-year term as head of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren during that denomination's 95th annual convention, held June 13-14. Some 256 delegates gathered for the meeting. The Rev. Armin Jahr of Fergus Falls, Minnesota, was installed as executive director of Lutheran Brethren Home Missions, and Nathan Lee of Fergus Falls, Minnesota, was installed as executive director of Lutheran Brethren Youth Ministries.

Chicago, IL — The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) continued as the fifth largest Protestant denomination in the United States in 1994 with a total membership of 5,199,048, down 12,752 from the previous year. The largest Protestant denomination in the U.S. is the Southern Baptist Convention, followed by the United Methodist Church, National Baptist Convention USA, and Church of God in Christ (Memphis, TN). Despite the drop in membership, giving to ELCA churches increased in 1994 by 3.65 percent to just over \$1.7 billion. The average regular giving per confirmed ELCA member increased in 1994 to \$367.55, up from \$355.69 the previous year.

Complicating lives

Calvin, of the comic strip Calvin & Hobbes, returned a book to his mother saying, "I read this library book you got me." "What did you think of it?" his mother asked. "It really made me see things differently. It's given me a lot to think about." "I'm glad you enjoyed it," his mom said. "It's complicating my life. Don't get me any more," was Calvin's final statement on the subject.

Nothing can complicate our lives quite like learning. For that reason it can be in some ways a frightening thing we try to avoid. Reading, listening to others, studying; it may give us something to think about, it may force us to see things differently, it's scary!

The Sunday schools of our congregations are places that can bring many complications into our lives, because they are places where learning happens. They are places where students of all ages should be encouraged to grow in their knowledge of the Lord and His Word. They should be places where we are forced to examine our thoughts and actions and see if they are in conformity with the Word of God. They are to be places where we meet the One who complicates lives like no one else: Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul confessed that he would not have known what sin was if he had not been confronted with the law of God (Romans 7:7). He had a false satisfaction without a knowledge of the Word. When the Holy Spirit made the Word clear to him, however, his life got very complicated. His false contentment disappeared. He could not be happy to remain as he was. He needed to get right with God. The Word brought complications, and the Word brought life.

Sunday schools are to be places where the Word of God is presented in such a manner that people's lives are stirred to the very core of their being. They are to be places where, along with biblical facts and information, encouragement, application and challenge is shared.

People are to be prepared for more than answer-

ing questions on a Bible quiz show. Sunday schools are to be preparing people for life. Students should be challenged to ask: what difference does this make in my life? what changes are necessary? Students should be challenged to think.

Our desire should be that of the Apostle Peter who said he was writing in order "to stimulate you to wholesome thinking" (II Peter 3:1, NIV).

In their book *Why Nobody Learns Much of Anything at Church: And How to Fix It*, Thom and Joani Schultz say, "Today's students have been trained not to think. They aren't dumber than previous generations. We've simply conditioned them not to use their heads. ... Learning is a consequence of thinking. If our people aren't thinking they're not growing in their faith."

Os Guinness, in his book *Fit Bodies, Fat Minds*, says, "we are no longer people of truth. Only rarely are we serious about theology at a popular level. We are still suspicious of thinking and scholarship. We are still attracted to movements that replace thinking and theology by other emphases — relational, therapeutic, charismatic, and managerial (as in church growth). Guinness also says, "although we often succeed in teaching our pupils 'subjects,' we fail lamentably on the whole in teaching them how to think: they learn everything, except the art of learning."

It has been said that if you give someone a fish you feed him for a day, but if you teach him to fish you feed him for life. In a similar fashion, if we have told someone what to think, we have prepared them for a time. If they have been taught through the Word of God how to think Christianly, they are prepared for life.

May the goal of our Sunday schools and congregations be to prepare minds for action (I Peter 1:13), to encourage thinking that is growing to maturity (I Corinthians 10:20), so that we might each better "love the Lord your God ... with all your mind" (Luke 10:27, NIV).

Who might be in your neighborhood?

Walt asked a nine-year-old boy playing marbles on a Philadelphia sidewalk if he would like to go to Sunday school. Anything with school in it didn't sound like much fun. Walt then asked the boy if he would like to play marbles. That met with a much different response. After a number of games the invitation to Sunday school met with a different response as well.

That boy came from a broken home where he wasn't hearing anything about Jesus and His Word. After he met Walt, however, he started going to Sun-

day school and there he met Jesus, and his life was never the same again.

That marble-playing boy was named Howard Hendricks. He went on to become a pastor, an author, a seminary professor, a nationally-known speaker and one of the most respected Christian leaders of our day. It all began with someone showing a sincere interest in his life and inviting him to Sunday school.

I wonder how many future Howard Hendricks live in my neighborhood?

SOMETHING TO SHARE

A demonstration of God's power

How well I remember the sickening feeling I had as a young boy seeing our neighbor's barn lying flat as a pancake. It was the devastating result of a tornado that ripped through our northern Minnesota community. Scanning beyond the shredded remains of what had been a corn field, I witnessed another marvel. Incredibly, a grain bin had been rolled across the field like an empty tin can. It was wrapped around a couple of oak trees like a piece of aluminum foil.

What a mind-boggling demonstration of power! Some years ago, *Life* magazine carried a full-page photo taken in the aftermath of another midwestern tornado. In the center of the picture was a telephone pole with a piece of straw driven through it. Some of you may have witnessed similar wonders. How can anything as weak and helpless as a piece of straw be driven through something as rugged as a telephone pole?

The answer packs a terrific lesson for us. That straw, being weak in itself, is surrendered to the tornado. And because of this surrender, the power of the tornado becomes the power of the straw. That frail and seemingly helpless piece of stubble actually moved in the power of the torna-

do. Guess what! A shy, weak and timid Christian can do the same — in the power of God!

Here's what the Word says: "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8; NASB). Chew on these words for a moment. They are the parting words Jesus gave to His disciples before He was taken up into heaven. How they needed such reassurance. So do we!

Why? Because it is so easy to focus on our own failures when it comes to sharing Christ with others. At least that's true for me. But when we recognize how frail and weak we really are, then God's power can be demonstrated through us. If we would focus on the fact that it is the powerful gospel which is the "seed" the Spirit uses to bring forth spiritual life (Romans 1:16), what a difference that would make!

"Little is much when God is in it!"

No, a seed may not appear to be so powerful or impressive. My boys found that out as they helped plant our first-ever garden this summer. But they also learned that there is life in the

seed. Plant the gospel seed and watch for a demonstration of the power of God. Even a little seed of witness God can use. It may be a word to the teller at the bank or bowing for prayer at McDonalds.

The encouragement is to recognize that God is able to bless even our little. The power is His. All authority has been given to Christ. That's our motivation and reason to "go therefore" in obedience, sharing the good news about Jesus (see Matthew 28:18-19).

Christian, be encouraged today. The Spirit who indwells you is the One who will also empower you as a witness for Christ as you surrender yourself daily to Him. Open your mouth in the name of Jesus and begin planting seeds wherever you go. Then open your eyes and watch for a demonstration of the power of God. He who goes to and fro weeping, carrying his bag of seed, shall indeed come again with a shout of joy, bringing his sheaves with him (Psalm 126:6; NASB).



— by Rev.
Jerry Moan
New Testament
professor,
AFLC Schools