

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

August 8, 2000

**Proclaiming
the Message
of the Cross**



The 2000 AFLC Annual Conference



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AN ENCOURAGING WORD

Exulting in tribulation

"We also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance, and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint" (Romans 5:3-5a).

The above verses are clearly written to those who believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior. Verse one of the same chapter says, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." All such people are to exult in their tribulations. But this goes against human nature. It is much easier to complain about tribulations. Why in the world should I, as a Christian, exult in my tribulation?

For starters, tribulation brings about perseverance which leads to proven character. It has been said that if you want to see a person for who they really are, watch them during times of tribulation. Are they greatly worried, anxious, irritable, angry or depressed? If so, where is their focus? Their focus is most likely on their situation and not on Christ. Tribulation offers believers the opportunity to exercise their faith in Christ. Many times unbelievers are drawn to Christ because of the way believers exult in their tribulations.

So, why is it that Christians can exult in their tribulations? Because tribulation brings about perseverance which leads to proven character which leads to hope. And the Bible says, "Hope does not disappoint."

A man approached a little league baseball game one afternoon and asked a boy in the dugout what the score was. The boy responded, "Eighteen to nothing — we're behind." "Boy," said the spectator, "I'll bet you're discouraged."

"Why should I be discouraged?" replied the little boy. "We haven't even gotten up to bat yet!"

That kind of hope should drive every believer in Christ. Second Corinthians 4:8, 9, 17 say, "We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed. For momentary, light affliction is produc-

ing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison."

An old missionary couple returned to America after years of ministry in Africa. They arrived in New York to retire with no pension, their health broken, discouraged and afraid. The couple discovered that they were on the same ship with President Teddy Roosevelt, who was returning from one of his big-game hunting expeditions. All through the journey they observed passengers trying to catch a glimpse of the president, while no one even knew they existed. When the ship docked in New York, the mayor and other dignitaries were there to greet the president and a brass band played in his honor. No one noticed the missionary couple as they slipped quietly off the ship, found a cheap apartment, and hoped to find some way to make a living. That night the man's spirit broke. "This is all wrong!" he cried out. "We have given our lives in service in Africa and no one even cares. It isn't right! God isn't treating us fairly!"

Patience, his wife suggested that he go to the bedroom and tell it to the Lord. A few minutes later he emerged from his prayer room with a completely different expression. "What happened?" his wife asked. "The Lord settled it with me," he said. "I told Him how bitter I was that the president should receive this tremendous homecoming, when no one even met us as we returned home. And when I finished, it seemed as though the Lord put His hand on my shoulder and simply said, 'But you're not home yet!'"

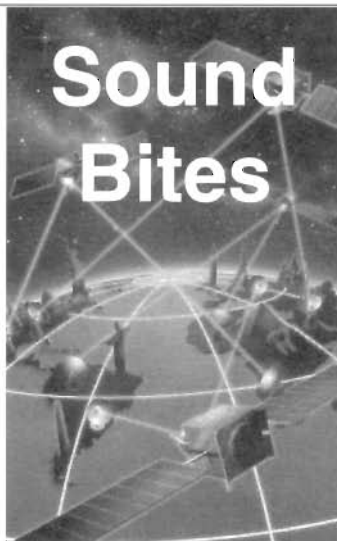
Dear reader, in Christ there is hope! And that hope does not disappoint. It is not subject to your trials and tribulations. Even if it seems like you're behind eighteen to nothing, in Christ, you win. So exult in your tribulations.

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

Our Father is looking upon us and calling each one to be a proclaimer of the Word

1 of the cross. It is this Word that brings faith and forgiveness. It is this Word that saves us, washing and making us in the eyes of God, "whiter than snow."

—*Pastor Eugene Enderlein*
AFLC World Missions Director



2 Our congregations need a renewed vision for reaching the unsaved, rather than for recycling the saints. Our AFLC needs a renewed vision for planting new churches, not only waiting for established ones to join us.

—*Pastor Robert Lee*
AFLC President

The members of the congregation are called to the work of nourishing and strengthening the faith of the children with

4 the Word so that they will not die spiritually. This is a holy work and an important

work. The parish education department exists to support the congregations in this work and produce materials for this work.

—*Pastor Martin Horn*
Chairman, AFLC Board of Parish Education

The mission of the AFLC is to provide a nurturing environment in which free and living congregations can be planted and grown, resulting in the salvation of souls and the building up of the Kingdom of God.

—*Pastor Ken Moland*
Chairman, AFLC Coordinating Committee

The seminary remains unswerving in upholding the Bible as the inspired and inerrant Word of God and continues to saturate every course taught with thoroughgoing exposition of the Scrip-

5 tures.

—*Dr. Francis Monseth*
Dean, Free Lutheran Seminary

6

**It is the message that has the power...
The message of the cross is the only message
that takes us into the new millennium.**

—*Pastor Michael Brandt*
Sioux Falls, South Dakota



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

2000 AFLC Annual Conference

Under the theme: "The Message of the Cross for a New Millennium," the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations met for their 38th Annual Conference June 14 to 18, 2000 at the Association Retreat Center in Osceola, Wisconsin.

As in other years, the conference began with a Wednesday evening worship service. This type of beginning is intended to serve as a reminder that the purpose of the conference is spiritual renewal more than the conducting of business. This type of reminder was also given during numerous times of worship and prayer which were held throughout the conference.



Pastor Michael Brandt

Pastor Michael Brandt of Sioux Falls, South Dakota preached at the opening worship service on the conference's theme text: I Corinthians 1:18, "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." He spoke of "the old message for a new millennium." "It is not time to retreat

but to advance, to be positive with the gospel," Pastor Brandt declared.

Registering for the business sessions of the conference were 430 people representing congregations from throughout the United States. Visitors from sister AFLC bodies in Canada and Brazil were also in attendance.

Congregations and pastors

In his report to the conference, AFLC President Robert Lee spoke of how "Our AFLC family of ministries is blessed with the prayer support of many friends, adequate provision from the Lord for all of our needs, and open doors for outreach as well as expansion."

Serving in his role as a pastor to pastors, President Lee spoke of the dangers associated with "commercializing" the ministry, both on the part of pastor and congregation. He expressed his concern that a pastor's role should be more as a

Proclaiming the in a new

minister and shepherd rather than as a type of CEO and manager. "Calling a pastor is not the same as hiring an employee; it involves a pastor and congregation seeking the Lord together for His will, not for our own."

Regarding pastors, President Lee was encouraged by the response to "Shepherds' Prayer Summits" held during the past twelve months — times of gathering pastors together for prayer. He also described research that has been done on the topic of sabbaticals for pastors.

The chairman of the AFLC Coordinating Committee, Pastor Kenneth Moland of Kirkland, Washington, reported on the eight new congregations from seven different states that have been placed on the congregational roster of the AFLC during the past year and the six AFLC congregations that have disbanded. In addressing the topic of congregations disbanding the conference resolved "that we pray for the well being of all the individuals affected by these changes ... that we seek to pray faithfully for all of our AFLC congregations, especially those passing through special struggles ... that we seek to serve struggling congregations with all the resources of encouragement and training possible."

Finances and elections

One of the elections conducted at the conference resulted in Pastor Elden Nelson



Pastor Edward Strom,
Kenyon, Minnesota led the morning prayer sessions.



Some of the first-time conference attendees were: Bill and Jessie Piel of Good Shepherd Lutheran in Ponca City, Oklahoma, pictured with their new pastor, Rev. Mark Homp

same message millennium

of Willmar, Minnesota being re-elected vice president of the AFLC. Re-elected secretary was Pastor Brian Davidson of Plymouth, Minnesota.

The chairman of the stewardship board, Pastor Mark Antal of Park River, North Dakota, spoke of how "Prayer continues to be the primary focus of the AFLC Stewardship Board. ... Our purpose is to gather prayer needs and items of praise and then pray with and for that ministry on a regular basis." He also shared about Dr. Richard Fredrick's presentation to the winter pastors' conference on personal and congregational giving and his availability to make a similar presentation to congregations.

In the report of the pension board it was noted that approximately 38 percent of AFLC pastors participate in the AFLC medical plan. "To assure stability within the plan, it is important to have a broad base of participation. Developing this broad base of participation is a major goal of the pension board for the future." Increasing health costs resulted in the rates for the plan having to be raised 17 percent.

The pension board also administers the



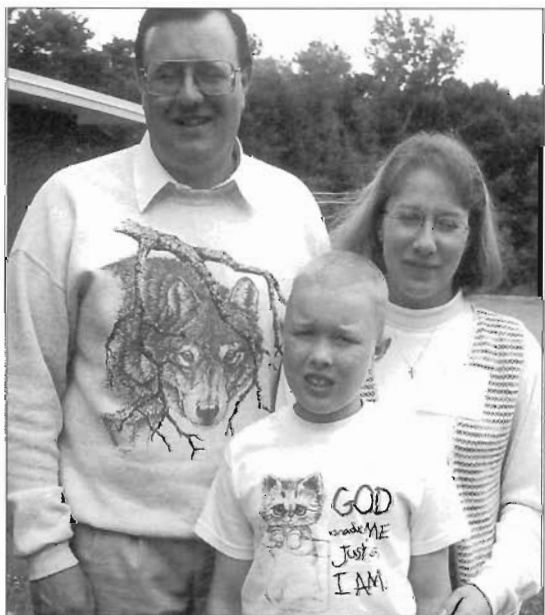
AFLC School's Board of Trustees met during the conference.

H.I.S. (Help In Service) Fund. The conference endorsed "the efforts of the pension board to assist the medical plan by asking for additional individual and congregational contributions to the H.I.S. (Help In Service) Fund because of the needs of Aaron Johnson, son of Pastor Rodney and Candice Johnson." Aaron has been battling leukemia.

Bible school and seminary

In reporting on the work of the AFLC Bible school and seminary the deans of the schools and the chairman of the board of trustees spoke about things God has done, expressed thankfulness for those who have served, and shared hopes for the future. Free Lutheran Seminary dean, Dr. Francis Monseth said, "Our new seminary apartment building is fully occupied for the coming year. In fact, if we had a second building of equal size, we would have filled that also."

Association Free Lutheran Bible School dean, Pastor James L. Johnson reported on



Pastor Rodney and Candice Johnson, Stanley, North Dakota with their son Aaron. Continued prayers are needed for them as Aaron battles leukemia.



Conference attendees enjoyed the ALC's new gymnasium.

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the 146 students who attended the school this past year. A similar number is expected this coming year which will result in dorms being full once again. This coming year will also see the start of the Ministry Training Institute at AFLBS, a missions training ministry.

Pastor Johnson and board of trustees chairman, David Borg of Cokato, Minnesota, spoke of the possibility of courses being offered in the future through distance learning, via the internet and video. Mr. Borg also shared about his excitement "about the future and the vision for our campus. Our

seminary is growing. ... Our Bible school continues to gain momentum. Our students recently told us as a board that they want more Bible classes. They yearn for the truth in a truthless society."

Information was also shared about Vision 2004 — a proposed vision for the future of the AFLC schools and campus. The conference stated, "we look forward with spiritual anticipation to continued expansion and support of Vision 2004 with a holy boldness and dependence on God." It was also reported that at the annual meeting of the AFLC Schools Corporation, "There was much discussion concerning Vision 2004 regarding the financial status and the magnitude of the project. Decisions were made asking the board to clarify the financial picture and redefine the size and scope

of the building project. The corporation will meet again on Saturday, October 21."

Missions and evangelism

The chairman of the AFLC World Missions Committee, Vernon Russum of Grafton, North Dakota and Pastor Eugene Enderlein, world missions director, shared about the various things happening in the area of world missions.

Missionaries David and Sarah Nelson recently returned to Brazil after a year of furlough. They have begun teaching again at the AFLC-Brazil Bible school and seminary. The plan is for them to continue at that until



Conference is not just business. Pastor Les Galland, Everett, Washington took advantage of the opportunity to spend time with his Minnesota granddaughter, Hollyce Galland.



World Missions Director Eugene Enderlein and Youth Ministries Director Kevin Olson set up a video presentation.

December at which time they will move to Portugal to be the first AFLC missionaries to that country. Their arrival in the capital city of Lisbon will permit national pastor Artur Villares to begin a new congregation in the city of Porto.

Pastor Enderlein also shared about his travels to India during the past year. Property has been purchased that now serves as the headquarters site for the AFLC-India.

According to Pastor Enderlein "the greatest need that we currently have within our world missions outreach is the need for



Missionary Todd Schierkofer

full-time workers, those who would say yes to the calling of the Lord to take up the task of reaching the unsaved souls who are found in the various areas where we are currently carrying on mission work.”

The need for workers was also a topic of discussion in the report of the home missions department. The need for people to serve in the work of planting new congregations was shared by Pastor Allen Monson, chairman of the home missions committee, and Pastor Paul Nash, director of home missions. They also gave information about works going on in Oklahoma, Colorado, Arizona, California and elsewhere. A report was shared by Lavon Bohling about the work of Free Lutheran Association of Pilot Supporters and in particular, about a plane that is now being used in the work in Naknek, Alaska.

The home missions department works with the church extension loan program to assist congregations with building projects. It was stated that the program can service loans from \$60,000 to \$100,000. Church projects, however, often cost \$700,000 or more. Thus, the conference resolved “that the home missions committee look at other options for the financing of new church buildings.”

Another area of work the home missions department is involved in is the training of



Pastor Steve Mundfrom presented a plaque honoring LaVern and Marilyn Thompson of Fergus Falls, Minnesota, for completing three units of support with the Home Missions Builders Fellowship. One unit is \$17 a month for five years.

pastors and congregations in developing vision and doing outreach. In that regard, the conference stated, “a living congregation is one that reproduces itself.” Therefore, it was resolved “that we encourage other congregations to look for opportunities to mother new churches.”

Training is something also done by the evangelism department. The director of evangelism/evangelist, Pastor Jim Rasmussen, told of opportunities to teach, train and preach during the past year. He expressed thankfulness for ones who support the work of evangelism in various ways.

Parish education and youth

“The goal of parish education in the new millennium continues to be to lift high the cross and to “hold fast the faithful word” (Titus 1:9) by encouraging the regular ministry of teaching the Word of God in the local congregation,” stated Marian Christopher, parish education director. A new work put out by the department and available at the conference was a book entitled “The Quest for Freedom” written by Loiell Dyrud of Thief River Falls, Minnesota. It is “an attempt to help us understand our common heritage and many of the principles and practices that continue to guide the AFLC today.”

In the area of youth work, the youth



Missionary Becky Abel and Elsa Hartmann from Mighty Fortress Free Lutheran Church in São Braz, Curitiba, Brazil.



Parish Education Director Marian Christopherson and Jean Olson, Thief River Falls, Minnesota.

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board and youth ministries director, Pastor Kevin Olson, told of their department's work of "encouraging the local congregations to win, build, and equip youth in Jesus Christ."



"Until we meet again ..." Lois Grothe, Astoria, Oregon, and Eunice Will, Springfield, Missouri, prepare to leave for home.

They do this through involvement in biannual events such as the Youth Leadership Conferences and the Free Lutheran Youth Conventions, providing mailings and resources for youth workers, assisting congregations in finding youth workers and various other activities.

One area of ministry that was given special attention at the conference was the Youth Ministries Training Team that had been involved in training congregations in youth ministry during the past year. The youth board was encouraged by the conference "to continue with this kind of ministry."

Included in the area of general resolutions adopted by the conference was one stating again the AFLC's position affirming the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death, denouncing abortion and extending "a heart and voice of compassion and forgiveness in Christ to those who are experiencing crisis pregnancies or who have been involved in abortion." Also adopted was a resolution reaffirming "love in Christ for every person including those involved in the homosexual lifestyle while rejecting their lifestyle itself as sin" and one reaffirming an "uncompromising stand on God's Word that marriage is instituted by God to be between one man and one woman."

As the conference closed, thanks was expressed to the staff of the ARC and the host congregation of Amery, Wisconsin. The 2001 annual conference will be hosted by the congregation in Williston, North Dakota. In 2002 the conference will be held in El Campo, Texas.



Allan Anderson and Robert Dietsche manned the sound system during the conference.

Lutheran leader shares his burden for his nation.

The closing worship service of the 2000 AFLC Annual Conference featured a guest speaker: Janis Vanags, the archbishop of the Latvian Lutheran Church.

Latvia was under the control of the communist Soviet bloc until gaining its independence in 1990. The last decade has seen it enjoy blessings from experiencing freedom and democracy, but at the same time it has also faced some difficult challenges. Archbishop Vanags is involved in helping the country deal with all of this.

In his position as archbishop of the capital city of Riga, Vanags is responsible for doctrinal issues — defending the church from false doc-

A country in transition

trines. He also seeks to maintain unity in the church, encourages the preaching of the gospel, supervises pastors and represents the church in public affairs, serving as its senior executive officer.

Latvia has one Lutheran church, with approximately 300 congregations, 120 pastors and 100 lay preachers. Some of these workers began when communism was still in control, but many are young and have just recently begun serving the church. Vanags himself was ordained in 1985 and assumed the position of archbishop in 1993.

Supporting the pastors is a major concern of the archbishop. They need good training. They also struggle financially. The average pastor's salary is approximately \$200 a month. Some of the small country churches can hardly pay that and have much difficulty getting a pastor. The cost of living, housing in particular, is quite expensive in Latvia, higher than in parts of the United States. According to Vanags, this creates many complications.

Part of the complication for Latvia has been the influx of many consumer goods into the country. Things have come in that many citizens want but can't afford. This type of consumerism can cause serious challenges spiritually. "It would be a pity if we give away easily the

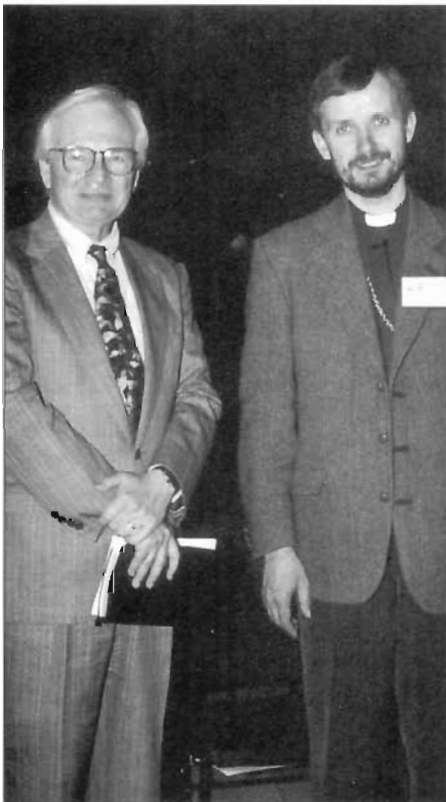
lessons gained during persecution for a sandwich," said the archbishop. He asks for prayer for his people that the Holy Spirit would give them strength to withstand the difficulties that have come with their new situation.

Latvia is a unique country for it stands somewhat in the middle of the eastern and western parts of Europe. This has made it an open market in some respects economically and also spiritually. Eastern religions, New Age teaching, false cults have all come in with a desire to establish a work there and then attempt to expand elsewhere. They have brought with them some finances which has made them attractive to people hurting financially. They are "buying people's souls" is a fear expressed by Vanags. For this reason Christian education is of great importance.

They are thankful in Latvia that the persecution they suffered for 50 years is no more. But because of the time of Soviet brainwashing, because of sin, many while living in freedom are still under spiritual bondage. Archbishop Vanags, as he looks at his country, sees a people in need, a people who are spiritually hungry, a people who must be taught the wonderful truth of Jesus.



— Pastor Craig Johnson



Pastor Ivars Krafts, Circle Pines, Minnesota, and Archbishop Janis Vanags of the Latvian Lutheran Church. Pastor Krafts was born in Latvia and as a young boy immigrated to the U.S. with his parents. He serves Faith Lutheran in Minneapolis.



2000 annual conference election results

Vice President — Rev. Elden Nelson, Kandiyohi, MN 1-year term.

Secretary — Rev. Brian Davidson, Hopkins, MN 1-year term.

Coordinating Committee — Vince Larson, Buffalo, ND 5-year term.

Commission on Evangelism — Rev. Michael Brandt, Sioux Falls, SD 5-year term.

Board of Trustees — Rev. Jon Wellumson, Williston, ND 5-year term and Dr. Dan Mundfrom, Greeley, CO 1-year term.

Board of Publications & Parish Education — Rev. Philip Haugen, Crystal, MN 5-year term.

Board of Pensions — Rev. Rodney Johnson, Stanley, ND 5-year term and Jon Galland, Everett, WA 2-year term.

Stewardship Board — Rev. Mark Antal, Park River, ND 5-year term.

Christian Academic Education

Board — Rev. Gerald Peterson, Oklahoma City, OK 5-year term and Karina Olson, Eden Prairie, MN 5-year term.

Youth Board — Rev. Alan Arneson, Ottawa, IL 5-year term.

World Missions Committee — Tom Caouette, Brooklyn Park, MN 5-year term.

Home Missions Committee — Rev. Steve Mundfrom, Sebeka, MN 5-year term.

The ARC Board — Alan Anderson, Clear Lake, WI 5-year term.

2001 Nominating Committee

Eastern North Dakota — Tim Berntson, Valley City, ND

Western ND/Eastern MT — Wayne Deubner, Culbertson, MT

South Dakota — Nathan Dalager, Brookings, SD

Lake Superior — Ray Miller, Duluth, MN

Northwestern MN — Glenn Espe, Thief River Falls, MN

North Central MN — Rev. Martin Horn, Foston, MN

Southwest Central MN — George Hartman, Dalton, MN

Nebraska/Colorado — Dan Mundfrom, Greeley, CO

Minneapolis — Kevin Olson, Eden Prairie, MN

Central Tri-State — Oryen Benrud, Goodhue, MN

Northern Michigan — Pastor Dean Franz, Dollar Bay, MI

South Central — Rev. Gerald Peterson, Oklahoma City, OK

Southwestern — Vinton Bruflat, Chandler, AZ

Pacific Northwest — Jon Galland, Everett, WA

Eastern — Jim Taylor, Bethel Park, PA

Illinois — Stan Dale, Ottawa, IL

Colloquy Committee — 1-year term

Rev. Jon Benson, Upsala, MN

Rev. Michael Burke, Ishpeming, MI

Rev. Bruce Dalager, Grand Forks, ND

Rev. James Fugleberg, Fargo, ND

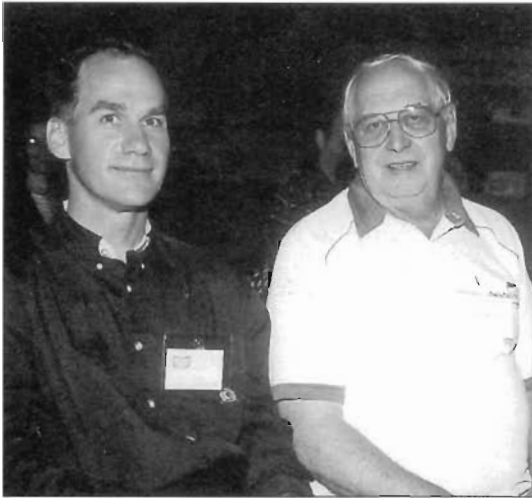
Rev. Joel Rolf, Valley City, ND



Some of the conference tellers.



Newly elected member of the AFLC Schools' Board of Trustees, Dr. Dan Mundfrom, Greeley, Colorado, and AFLC Home Missions Director, Pastor Paul Nash.



Newly elected member of the world missions board, Tom Caouette, Brooklyn Park, Minnesota, and board chairman Vernon Russum of Grafton, North Dakota.

Budget Analysis Committee - 3-year terms

Jeff Jacobi, Wheatland, IA
Loren Tungseth, Fergus Falls, MN
ARC Corporation — 5-year terms
Oryen Benrud, Goodhue, MN
Don Berge, Fargo, ND
Rev. Tim Carlson, Wheatland, IA
Nathan Dalager, Brookings, SD
Rodney Kjersten, Roseau, MN
Rev. Tonnes Pollestad, Andover, MN
Lee Schierkolk, Prairie Farm, WI
Peter Ward, Newfolden, MN
Don Balmer, Thief River Falls, MN

Missions Corporation — 5-year terms

Wendell Berg, Mayville, ND
Dr. Peter Dyrud, Plymouth, MN
Pastor Dale Finstrom, Glyndon, MN
Gene Finstrom, Buxton, ND
Phil Grothe, Thief River Falls, MN
Arley Hartsoch, Tioga, ND
Rev. David Hinrichs, Ortonville, MN
Rev. Ted Kennedy, Nogales, AZ
Dr. Lyle Mattson, Greenbush, MN
Rev. Steve Odegaard, Tioga, ND
Kevin Olson, Eden Prairie, MN
Ralph Peterson Portland, ND
Jerry Richman, Valley City, ND
Dr. Wayne Sletten, Faith, SD
Loren Tungseth, Fergus Falls, MN
Eunice Will, Springfield, MO
Rev. Vincent Will, Springfield, MO
Ken Williams, Ishpeming, MI
Rev. Lynn Wilson, Roslyn, SD
Kenneth Wold, Fosston, MN

Schools Corporation — 5-year terms

David Borg, Cokato, MN
Loiell Dyrud, Thief River Falls, MN
Rev. Raynard Huglen, Newfolden, MN



Pastor Alvin Magnuson, Reva, South Dakota, presented resolutions from Committee #5. Also pictured are Secretary Brian Davidson and President Robert Lee.

Rev. Dan Klug, East Grand Forks, MN
Rev. Lyndon Korhonen, Cokato, MN
Rev. Kenneth Moland, Kirkland, WA
Rev. Rodger Olson, Fergus Falls, MN
Brent Peterson, Brookings, SD
Kenneth Rolf, McIntosh, MN
Wendy Westlake, Osceola, WI

Committee #1 (Administration)

Rev. Bruce Dalager, Grand Forks, ND
Rev. Raynard Huglen, Newfolden, MN
Willis Kettlehut, Deshler, NE
Mark Sivertson, Sioux Falls, SD
Sharon Tungseth, Fergus Falls, MN

Committee #2 (Schools)

Sylvia Armen, Bethel Park, PA
Glenn Espe, Thief River Falls, MN
Rev. Orville Heipier, Fallbrook, CA
Rev. Wayne Hjermstad, Bruce, SD
Nathaniel Olson, Fargo, ND

Committee #3 (Missions & Evangelism)

Myron Compton, Beulah, ND
Bill Fish, Everett, WA
Rev. Tim Johnson, Fertile, MN
Carlton Knutson, Ashby, MN
Marcia Pavesi, Bethel Park, PA

Committee #4 (Publications, Parish Education & Youth)

Rev. Lyle Aadahl Byron, MN
Mary Christianson, Fergus Falls, MN
Terry Fladland, Hatton, ND
Gayle Kruse, Mankato, MN
Rev. James Molstre, Bethel Park, PA

Committee #5 (Stewardship & Pensions)

Rev. Craig Benson, Radcliffe, IA
Rodney Kjersten, Roseau, MN
Clyde Lundgren, Bethel Park, PA
Tony Onnen, Cokato, MN
Roger Tollefson, Crookston, MN



The AFLC's first conference was held at Thief River Falls, Minnesota in 1962. These people pictured were in attendance then and in 2000. Pictured are: (L. to R., row 1), Carol Haugen, Mabel Quanbeck, Ernie Meidema, Millie Strand (widow of the first AFLC president, Pas-

tor John Strand), and Aini Myking. (Back row), Albin Haugen, Kent Quanbeck, Robert Knutson, Pastor Raynard Huglen, Ralph and Phyllis Peterson, Marilyn Gray, Pastor Steve Snipstead and Karen Floan. Not pictured but in attendance at both conferences: Pastor Robert Lee, Darlene Meidema, and Herbert and Dorothy Presteng.

I was asked to comment on our recent annual conference from the perspective of one who was at the first AFLC conference and has attended the majority (thirty-six of the thirty-eight) of AFLC conferences since.

An old adage describes our conferences: "The more things change, the more they stay the same."

We still begin on Wednesday evenings and close on Sundays; although ordination services are now part of the Sunday morning worship service rather than a separate Sunday afternoon event.

We still begin each session with devotions, devote time before noon to prayer, and have a worship and praise service each evening - all of which support our belief that we are not only a church organization, but a spiritual movement. We continue to have a mix of pastors and lay people, but we still see some congregations not represented at all. And the chair still struggles to get the delegates to stop visiting and return to their seats after the coffee break!

But there are changes. A few years ago, in order to save time, the reports to the conference were either

shortened, or a summary or brief comments were offered instead. This year, hi-tech entered, with audiovisual presentations. They gave information and were interesting, which is what the reports ought to do or be. But I'm not sure we are saving time. Often, reading the reports would be quicker than even a condensed summary or comments.

Our devotions used to be a stanza or two of a hymn, a portion of Scripture, and a brief prayer. This year we had meditations, some lengthy - all challenging and edifying, but they took time.

We are slowly, gradually running out of conference time. As the scope and area of our AFLC grows, we have more committees and boards. This means more reports. If you subtract the time taken for reports, devotions, and coffee breaks, you end up with an ever-diminished time for meaningful discussion or comment. The conference delegates are not only to get information, but they are there to advise, recommend, and provide guidance to the boards, committees, and corporations. This requires time. If we don't have enough time, we will find

the whole conference becoming what it usually is now around 4:00 p.m. on Saturday - delegates either "rubber stamping" what has been done or planned, or so aware of the unfinished business remaining that things are voted on with little or no time to discuss them. That is not good for any organization or fellowship - the AFLC included.

We have never spent much time on the financial report of the AFLC at our conferences. This year we spent none on the treasurer's report. The information is printed, and the few delegates who digest the written report can perhaps find what they want to find, but a brief report of the income and expenses indicating if the boards ended the year in the red or the black, is not too much for any of the delegates to handle. And as vital as our Bible camps are to our fellowship, their financial reports which are read, pale in importance to the overall financial picture of our AFLC.

Perhaps thirty-eight years from now, things will be perfect. Let us consider future conferences with this guide - to change, simply to make a change, is of no value; but to refuse to change, if only because "we've always done it this way," may be even worse.



— Robert Knutson
McVie, North Dakota

This was the first conference of the AFLC that I have attended. I was very impressed. It was Christ-centered and I sensed the presence of God. Prayer and the Word of God were central in the meetings.



What struck me about many of the resolutions was that they focused on thanking God for what He has done. As I leave for home I have a strong desire to walk closer to Christ. It is a pleasure to serve as the pastor of Our Saviour's Lutheran Church in Dickinson, North Dakota.

— Pastor Noel T. Vold



Coffee breaks offer time to fellowship. Pictured are: Willis and Marilyn Kettlehut (left) and Pastor Jerome and Phyllis Nikunen of Deshler, Nebraska with Pas-

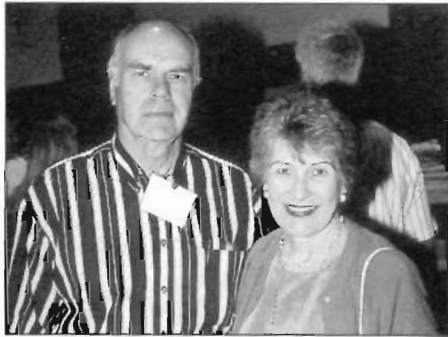
tor Paul Jecklin, Silverhill, Alabama (2nd from right).



From a first-year seminary student and a bondservant in Christ Jesus, greetings. The AFLC 2000 Annual Conference at the ARC was a great blessing to me. My first time proved to be informative and a real insight on the operations of the AFLC. It was a great time of worship and praise to our Lord. Coming from Community Lutheran in Oceanside, California, I had the opportunity to meet the AFLC seminary and Bible school faculty, pastors and lay people from throughout the nation. The ARC staff as well as the host congregation in Amery is to be commended on their efforts and success in providing for the needs of almost five hundred for a week. I can see the Lord's hand, as He works through and with the AFLC. I look forward to next year's conference in Williston, North Dakota during June 13-17. If you have never attended a conference, you are missing something special.

— Terry M. Wall

Conference perspectives



We read in the newspapers of other church assemblies debating issues like abortion and worldly lifestyles. Here the discussion is not, "Are we going to adopt these issues?" but rather it is, "How can we help free people who have fallen into them?" The emphasis is always on evangelizing the lost through home and world missions.

We feel proud to be a part of this association and we wish every member of our congregation could experience this conference to learn first hand about the structure, the standard and the objectives of the AFLC.

— Jim and Joann Segerdahl

When our church, Ruthfred Lutheran in Bethel Park, Pennsylvania, left the ELCA and united with the AFLC, we agreed with the change because of all the controversial issues that concerned us. Once this change was finalized, we were happy to hear good reports from all who attended that year's conference.

But it was not until we attended the conference this year that it became a reality to us. You have to be there to experience the spiritual atmosphere and the priority given to the Word of God and prayer — especially the small group prayers. The music, devotions and the messages all made the business part seem minor. It was more like a retreat.

Service appreciated

Honored at a conference coffee break and thanked for years of faithful service were Marlene Unverzagt and Dale Hertle. Marlene served for over 11 years as the AFLC bookkeeper. Andrew Anderson recently stepped into her position. Dale assisted the AFLC as the agent for the health and pension plans. Rodney Kjersten has assumed those duties.

Workshop on witnessing held during WMF sessions

Before the annual conference began a workshop on witnessing about Jesus to friends and neighbors was held. The two-hour, Wednesday afternoon, June 14 workshop was put on by the AFLC Commission on Evangelism. Topics covered included growing in your personal witness, teaching in how to become intentional in sharing what you believe and looking for opportunities to do so, and the work of the Holy Spirit in witnessing. Pastor Jim Rasmussen, director of evangelism/evangelist, was encouraged by those who came, pleased with the interest shown and looking forward to how God would use those wanting to share about Jesus.



Christie Jacobsen, Burlington, North Dakota entertained at the ladies' luncheon.



Bea Anderson and Anna Dahle were two of the pastor's widows honored at the evening banquet.

WMF

It's the start of what is coming. The Women's Missionary Federation convention day on Wednesday sets the tone for the rest of the week. For Bunny Meyer of Milford, Illinois, "It's the fellowship part I always look forward to. What a joy to see my sisters in the Lord. I get a glimpse of someone and am reminded of previous visits and I think of their blessings and burdens that have been shared."

The convention focused on the

theme, "God, and God Alone," from Psalm 62:1-2, "My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from Him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; He is my fortress, I'll never be shaken." Dee Berkas, Snohomish, Washington, the morning Bible study leader and the 2001 WMF study writer, spoke on God, the Alpha and Omega — the plan and the promises. She encouraged



Dee Berkas, (center) was the morning Bible study leader.



Mae Huebner, Bushnell, South Dakota, and Clarice Softing, Hawley, Minnesota.



Ruth Carstensen, Byron, Minnesota, modeled her family's hat and shawl brought from Germany.



Sandy Anderson and Shirley Zim of Amery Lutheran stand in front of the WMF banner which they created.



Florence Heipler, Oceanside, California, and Geri Graham, Camarillo, California.



Marge Jacobson, Champlin, Minnesota and Mary Nash, Colfax, North Dakota.

convention report

the women to accept the challenge to read through the Bible while studying next year's lessons.

Cary and Rosalie Dietsche led the inspirational singing time and special music was provided by Wendy Westlake, Karen Floan, Anne Presteng, and Gwen Berge, the four daughters of the late Richard and Leone Snipstead.

President Faith Nelson led the business meeting which included discussion of proposed changes in the WMF constitution. This will be voted on at the 2001 convention and copies of the change will be included in the fall packets. Erna Jochum, Bethel Park, Pennsylvania was elected as first vice president and Marilyn Thoreson, Argyle, Minnesota was re-

elected as secretary. Tammy Vukonich, WMF treasurer, encouraged the Sonlife Seminar that will be offered to all women of the AFLC at the Women's Retreat next May 4-6 at The ARC near Osceola, Wisconsin. More information will be given later.

The noon luncheon featured a fun program on hats, coordinated by Carol Dietsche and Laurel Johnson. After musical entertainment and prizes awarded in several hat categories, the program ended with a narrative on wearing the crown of Christ.

Four afternoon workshops were led by Avis Dyrud, Phyllis Nikunen, Michele Deubner and Wendy Westlake. "I found the luncheon and the afternoon workshops encouraged more interaction. There was lots of

visiting going on and the changes in the traditional agenda helped us to get better acquainted with one another. I didn't hear one complaint about moving around to different crowded rooms. It was good to hear various ladies share," said Rose Carlson of Wheatland, Iowa.

Instead of the traditional early Thursday morning breakfast, the convention concluded on Wednesday with a banquet. Mary Pollestad emceed the program which honored AFLC pastor's widows. The speaker was Missionary Barb Schierkolk. Jennifer Dryburgh of Grand Forks, North Dakota said, "I especially enjoyed the banquet. I'm not a morning person and it was at the banquet that the Welsch sisters of Amery, Wisconsin sang those beautiful a cappella songs."

The Mission Festival Service on Friday evening, June 16, concluded the 38th Annual Convention for the WMF at which missionary to Mexico, Pastor Todd Schierkolk delivered a strong mission message.



— Marilyn Thoreson
and Solveig Hjermsstad



A Bible school summer team led daily vacation Bible school for the children during the week. Babysitting and a youth program were also available for families.

FLAPS director fulfilling his dream to serve others



He was a high school teacher and part of Cessna Aircraft Company's flight training program before landing a job in the business world in 1976 which included serving as a corporate pilot. Lavon Bohling, 59, of Hebron, Nebraska had every reason to keep on in his successful career, for a few more years at least. In his spare time, he was involved in a national network of pilots who volunteered their time and flying expertise to help transport those with medical and financial needs to treatment centers. He and his wife Fern enjoyed being active in a young AFLC congregation in nearby Deshler, Nebraska. They were at an age to enjoy their three grown children and, of course, the grandchildren while looking forward to retirement. But the Lord was stirring in his heart and Lavon knew it was God leading him to make a change.

"We saw friends come to retirement age with plans and then something happened to one of them. Fern and I thought, 'Wouldn't that be sad if we weren't able to do anything we dreamed of doing when we arrived at that age.' God had been leading and I had a long-time desire to apply my flying experience for the work of the church."

In the fall of 1999, Lavon realized that it was time to see the ful-

fillment of that dream. Last October, he announced his plans to leave the business world and on January 1, 2000, he woke up ready for a new beginning in volunteer service for the Lord. On February 25, 2000 he accepted a call to be executive director for the newly formed Free Lutheran Association of Pilot Supporters, Inc. (FLAPS).

FLAPS is still in the formation period with three areas of development envisioned.

The first area is to oversee the expansion of the aviation presence in Alaska as well as in other parts of the world. There are areas in the world where aviation is essential to missions. So far, FLAPS has one small plane currently in use by Alaskan Missionaries Tom Olson and Henry Mohagen.

The second is to coordinate available human resources within AFLC congregations. "We have a vision to develop a resource pool of volunteers who go out and meet the needs of others both at home and abroad. We have congregations with lots of retirees who have skills in construction trades, medicine, teaching, aviation, etc. We just need to learn who is available for short or long-term service, what skill they have, and to identify areas of need," said Lavon. He added, "Simply stated, it's people helping people and matching resources with needs." He

foresees a lot of application on the home mission side. He and his wife have already worked with a team of teenagers from Medicine Lake Lutheran Academy on a week-long mission trip to help an AFLC congregation in Springfield, Missouri.

Developing a "Disaster Response Team" or a group of "First Responders" is the third area. The concept is used especially in smaller communities, however, this team would work through the church. Small groups of skilled volunteers around the country could arrive quickly to help in crisis situations such as floods, tornadoes, etc.

FLAPS does not determine where its services are needed. Needs are identified through the home and world missions departments and communicated to FLAPS for follow-up. FLAPS is a service arm of the mission departments. As executive director of FLAPS, Lavon is building a data base of interested people and looking for every opportunity to inform AFLC congregations of this new organization.

Contact Lavon at the AFLC headquarters office: 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55441; phone 763-545-5631 or e-mail at flaps@aflc.org.



— Solveig Hjermstad



Pastor Henry Mohagen, Towner, North Dakota is pictured with the Mission Aviation Training Academy plane on June 5, 2000. On that day he passed his private pilot exam with his instructor, Pastor Michael Crowell. MATA is based in Arlington, Washington and Pastor Crowell is the executive director. Pastor Mohagen received his license before he and his wife Linda departed for mission service in South Naknek, Alaska on June 20.

Missionary Todd and Barb Schierkolk and family have moved near the Bible school campus for the next few months while they continue to do deputation and serve as director of the Ministry Training Institute at AFLBS. They are now living at 1768 Kirkwood Lane North, Plymouth, MN 55441; phone 763-559-2744; e-mail aguadevida@earthlink.net or todds@aflc.org. Missionary Schierkolk expects to participate in the ordination service of Ricardo Varela and Fernando Herrera at Spring of Living Water Lutheran Church in Aguascalientes, Mexico, on September 3, 2000. The Schierkolk family plans to begin their second term in Mexico in January, 2001. They expect to take some MTI students with them and will supervise their second semester of student internship.



Medicine Lake Lutheran Academy, Minneapolis, Minnesota sent its high school students to work for Immanuel Lutheran in Springfield, Missouri, for a week last May. The academy youth painted at Verona Jacobsen's home. She



is a member of Immanuel Lutheran. When the week was over, the church had a new coat of paint and the cross on the roof was rebuilt.

Missionary Dan and Debbie Giles are now residing and working in Jerez (pronounced *Herez* and not to be confused with Juarez, a city just across the border from El Paso, Texas). They continue to use their same postal address and may be reached at Apartado Postal 1515-C, Aguascalientes, AGS, Mexico. Their new e-mail address is giles@jereznet.com.mx.

Jerez is a two-and-a-half-hour drive north of Aguascalientes. The Giles have begun a Bible study in

that community of about 50,000 people. According to "Operation World," this is the least reached area of Mexico. The Giles are the only missionaries working in Jerez. They also are working on translating the *Ambassador Sunday School* curriculum into the Spanish language.

They recently wrote, "We have about three lessons completed, including all of the activity pages. Pray for us! We enjoy this new work, but it requires hours every day of intense concentration, and life in

Mexico does not lend itself to that. Pray, too, that the Lord will raise up a church here in Jerez through our ministry. He will have to shine through us and do most of the work Himself because the translation work is so different in nature, and so all consuming."

Their son Danny and his fiancée Marcela plan to attend the Lutheran Bible Institute in Mazatlan, Mexico, this fall. They plan to be married on June 23, 2001.

Campo Mourão, Brazil —

Pastor Oseias Camara was recently commended by the mayor of Campo Mourão for the excellent youth program he coordinates for the city. One of the first things he did was post the 10 Commandments and Bible verses around the youth facility. The staff at the AFLC-Brazil campus in Campo Mourão work with troubled youth who are bused out to the facility each day where they are served meals and work in the citrus orchard, woodworking shop, and other projects.

AFLC World Missions Director Eugene Enderlein visited some of the homes of these teens when he was in Brazil earlier this year. "I found these tar shacks to be in unbelievably poor condition in the back corners of the city. It's a marvelous opportunity to impact the lives of these street kids," said Pastor Enderlein. It seems the political leaders in the community agree and want to see more. They have given their bus that is used for transporting the teens to also be used at the campus.

Chirala, India — The AFLC-India is operating an orphanage in the same building that serves as their headquarters. There are 20 children currently being cared for. A radical Hindu party is now in control of the government and thus there are increased reports of conflict and open persecution of Christians in India, especially in the northern part of the nation. The country of one billion people is only two percent Christian with the majority of them living in the southern states. The AFLC-India is located in the southeastern state of Andhra Pradesh.

On July 11, D. Luther Sastry, President of AFLC-India wrote to AFLC World Missions Director Eugene Enderlein: "Recently attacks on Christians in India are increasing. Pray that our Lord would protect them and guide them in this horrible situation. There are bomb blasts in the churches and mosques. Continual tensions are going on in our area."



Missionaries Paul and Becky Abel, Osceola, Wisconsin, are already booked to Christmas in their schedule of visiting supporting congregations. The world missions committee has encouraged the Abels to focus on congregations already supporting their ministry in Brazil. Missionary Todd Schierkolk continues to do some deputation while serving as the director of MTI. The missionaries are now making their own arrangements for speaking and no longer will the schedules be made by the missions office. To contact the Abels, call 715-294-3645. To contact the Schierkolks, call 763-559-2744.

Pioneer Madagascar missionary buried in North Dakota

By the south fence of Tell Lutheran Cemetery, also known as Zion, in Emmons County, North Dakota, and to the right of the entrance, there is a granite monument on which is the name of Rev. E. H. Tou.

Of special interest is the fact that Pastor Tou was the second missionary pastor sent by Norwegian-American Lutherans to Madagascar. Rev. J. P. Hogstad was one of the very first to be sent to any

foreign field. He is, thus, one of the fathers of AFLC mission work.

Following a 14-year ministry in Madagascar, Pastor Tou served in the Pukwana, South Dakota parish (now AFLC) and in the Kintyre-Napoleon parish in North Dakota.

Norway-born, Tou learned the miller's trade and intended to continue that in Wisconsin. God however, had other plans. He was not to mill flour for bread but rather distribute the "bread of life." Specif-



Say "Yes" to Jesus

Missionaries David and Sarah Nelson, Campo Mourão, Brazil, are glad to be back in Brazil with their co-workers and students. They recently wrote, "It is bitter-sweet as we plan our move to Portugal. We are happy to report that we perceive a genuine excitement and support from our Brazilian brothers and sisters about the new ministry to which we've been called. It's encouraging to see the awareness of needs of other nations and the desire to be obedient to God's direction. Please pray not only for us as we leave for a new field in December, but for the Brazilian believers as well as they open their hearts and hands to other nations in need of the gospel. They along with you, are our sending team."

Traveling with the Nelson family to Brazil was Ruth Pollestad of Andover, Minnesota. She helped them as they unpacked and adjusted back to their life in Brazil. Ruth returned home on July 3.

ically, he felt the call to world missions and prepared for that in eight years of study at Augsburg Seminary in Minneapolis where he was taught by George Sverdrup, Sven Oftedal and J. H. Blegen among others.

E. H. Tou married Caroline Knutson in Fulton, Iowa in 1889 and they left for the mission field the same year. They were instrumental in establishing the station at Manasoa, which became the headquarters for the Lutheran Free Church work in the southwest part of that island country. But it was done at a price. The Touts buried three of their four children at Manasoa and after a furlough, their first, in 1900-01, Mrs. Tou was laid to rest shortly after their return to Madagascar.

Two years later Pastor Tou married a missionary deaconess, Alida Olen. They had two children.

Back in the United States, Pastor Tou maintained his interest in foreign missions to the last. He

(The author was told by the doctor she had to have a tumor removed immediately. She had guests coming and wanted to be at home for them so her surgery was scheduled the next week. This gave her time to share with her family and friends. Surgery was successful and four days later she read this poem before her church family, Christ the King Lutheran in Pipestone, Minnesota.)

A trip to Mayo Clinic brought news I could not have believed,
A tumor found in my body would come out; I was so relieved,
Because of all your prayers, God had changed His mind,
The tumor was taken out and found to be benign.

On the drive home, my husband told me my work must not be done,
"What am I to do?" I asked after hearing that wonderful outcome,
He said, "You've got some evangelizing to do,
"Tell people of Jesus and what God has done for you."

attended and took part in a meeting of the Lutheran Board of Missions in Minneapolis on September 20, 1917, but left early as he didn't feel well. On September 23, he conducted his church service but it was to be his last. Shortly after, he took to bed in his final illness, nursed by his wife as long as she was able and his sister-in-law and daughter, Anna. He passed away on November 14, 1917.

He had requested that money for flowers rather be given to missions, but knowing of his love for flowers, many were given anyway. The weather was beautiful for his funeral on a late November day, the sun shining.

Should anyone be interested in visiting the final resting place of Pastor Tou, the Tell Cemetery is 16 miles east of Hazelton on Highway 34, or from Kintyre, three and one-half miles south. If in any doubt, inquire locally.

— **Pastor Raynard Huglen**
Newfolden, Minnesota

So I'm here today to tell you to start praying for your children, grandchildren, neighbors, classmates, your relatives and friends.

For prayer is what moves the hands of God, He'll be with us to the end,

Can you imagine being in heaven, all alone, with unsaved family weeping and gnashing their teeth in the pits of despair,

Why didn't you tell me of Jesus so kind — not one word from you was spoken of Jesus. Didn't you care?

Now look where I am, death called me home before I could grow old,
You never even warned me of this place where the fires never turn cold,
So I'm standing here today in the pulpit of my church, to tell you the way,
Listen to what Jesus is saying, He wants you in His kingdom — you must not delay.

Jesus died on Calvary for you and for me,

But without a decision for Christ, we cannot enter heaven, it just will not be,

Say "Yes" to Jesus, tell Him loud and clear,

Ask Him to forgive you, He always has a listening ear.

Tell Him how much you love Him, don't be afraid to share,

He is here among us — listening to all your cares,

"I love you," He says, with arms open wide,

"I want you in heaven to be by my side."

So start telling others today, don't keep putting Him off,

For as a thief in the night, the enemy stalks,

Wishing to claim another man's life,

Or perhaps even possibly taking his wife.

For saying "No" to Jesus, the verdict is in,

After your death, there's no second chance when it comes to your sin,

Remember, God loves you, again He's saying it to you,

Make your decision for Jesus; in the end you cannot lose.



Vision 2004 presented at conference

Vision 2004 Project Director, Pastor Tonnes Pollestad presented a Vision 2004 update at the conference. He reported what has been happening and where things are financially. The presentation included several pictures of the inside of the new seminary student housing unit. He also shared the financial picture via a pie chart and graph. The housing unit cost \$680,435. Of that total, \$192,629 in pledges is left to come in. About \$45,000 in pledges have been made toward the project's next phase. Pastor Pollestad thanked everyone for praying and asked for continued prayer.

The conference passed resolutions regarding Vision 2004. The one stated, "... we rejoice over the completion of the first seminary housing unit, and ... we look forward with spiritual anticipation to continued expansion and support of Vision 2004 with a holy boldness and dependence on God" In similar action the conference resolved "...

that we vigorously continue to support Vision 2004, both prayerfully and financially, and ... we thank God that this fall the Ministry Training Institute will begin equipping students for worldwide outreach, and ... we urge the schools to continue to intensify educational efforts in evangelism and leadership."

If you would like a presentation of Vision 2004 in your congregation, please call 763-754-2669 or 763-412-2004 to schedule a date.

The schools' corporation and board of trustees asks for prayer as they continue to evaluate and direct the scope and sequence of Vision 2004. Comments, questions, input and support are welcome.

Those involved with the project give praise to God that there is a need for expansion at schools that solidly teach and train men and women in the Word of God.

Alumni summer reunion

**August 11-12
AFLBS**

The Bible school and the alumni association is welcoming home all graduates and former students on the weekend of August 11-12, 2000. The weekend begins with a first-ever AFLBS Golf Scramble at the Hollydale Golf Club in Plymouth at 7 a.m. on Friday. The cost is free but a donation to the student scholarship fund is encouraged. Golf registration is limited to the first 110 players.

An 8 p.m. concert that evening features the Ambassador Gospel Teams from 1980, 1989 and 1990 along with the Emmaus Worship Team led by Joshua Skogerboe. An ice cream social will cap the evening.

Saturday's schedule is highlighted by the Reunion Luncheon at the

Pray for us

Most college-age students look forward to those summer picnics, camps, family vacations, and lazy afternoons at the lake or beach mixed in with the summer job. However, many AFLBS students answer the call to spend their summer traveling on ministry teams. Some returned at the end of June from working at a English language camp in Russia. Others spend a week each at congregations, bringing a new burst of joyful energy to assist with vacation Bible school and youth ministry. Some weeks they provide valuable counseling at area Bible camps. One team is giving a concert almost nightly in eight states in the Midwest.

So do they become weary? What are the needs of our summer teams? *The Lutheran Ambassador* asked Dulcie Winkelman of Fosston, Minnesota and a member of the Ambassador gospel team to share how our

readers can better pray and minister to our summer team members.

"We have seen God work in many different ways. He has given our team power and strength to go on when we have felt the load of our hectic schedule and tended to become tired. But God has blessed us with wonderful host families who encourage us constantly.

"Our nightly concerts have been the best thing about the summer so far. It's fun to meet many different people and so many of them have the joy of the Lord radiating from their faces. During the concerts, that joy is evident to us while we are singing or speaking.

"We have seen how prayer has



AFLBS Chapel Cafeteria with a prime rib and lasagna buffet dinner at noon and a program beginning at 1 p.m. The speaker is former AFLBS faculty member and now AFLC President Robert Lee. Keith Quanbeck and Mike Palkie (class of '80) are the emcees and greetings are expected from class representatives from 1979-80-81 and 1989-90-91. The time is scheduled lightly to allow classes and alumni to visit, shop and enjoy each other's company. Families are welcome to stay in the dorms and babysitting will be provided all weekend with a free-will offering. For more information call the Bible school office at 1-763-544-9501.

Esther Moberg, Astoria, Oregon has accepted the position of librarian at the AFLC Schools. The 1999 AFLBS graduate will also continue to pursue her degree in library science. Esther begins her new work on August 9, filling the vacancy left by Louise Burton's resignation.

played a vital role in our daily routine. We pray that our unity together and to God can continue to grow stronger. We need prayer for our health as we struggle with colds and allergies. Each concert is to be fresh and new in spite of road fatigue. Pray that God will continue to give us strength and rest in Him. Of course we depend on God's protection as we travel and it would be nice to see lower prices at the pump.

"Yes, we even miss our families and we need to trust in the Lord that He is watching over them. Our host families treat us like one of their own and we pray that we can minister to them as much as they do to us.

"One very cool thing we hear about is the lives that the Lord has opened and touched during our concerts. Our constant prayer is that they would continue to seek the Lord and surrender their lives to Him. We want to hear God's calling and follow it with all our our hearts. Colossians 4:2-4 is always before us: 'Devote

Ministry Training Institute to start

Missionary Todd Schierkolk has established the schedule for the inaugural semester of the Ministry Training Institute or MTI. Faculty members joining him will be retired Missionary Dick Gunderson; AFLC mission directors, Eugene Enderlein and Paul Nash; and AFLC Schools' faculty members. Evangelism Director Jim Rasmussen is coordinating local cross-cultural ministry opportunities and Pastor Steve Mundfrom, Sebeka, Minnesota is leading the Boundary Waters trip in September.

Fourteen Bible school graduates have maintained serious inquiries regarding the new third-year missions program with several currently completing their applications. The class schedule includes use of foreign language software installed in the computers. The software is a practical instructional tool used by the U.S. Department of State. Portuguese and Spanish are the two languages initially available. The second semester of MTI is a practical internship to provide actual mission experience.

Matching funds given

The Free Lutheran Seminary received \$1,150 through Aid Association for Lutherans Member Gift-Matching Program. The total reflects AAL's matched portion of contributions received from members during the first quarter of 2000. Annual gifts of \$25 to \$100 made by AAL members to participating Lutheran institutions are matched dollar-for-dollar by AAL.

yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ ... Pray that I may proclaim it clearly as I should."

AFLC Foundation Board

accepted the resignation of Seminarian Rick Rasmussen. The coordinating committee appointed Paul Handsaker, Radcliffe, Iowa to fill the unexpired term.

The foundation is a permanent fund established and maintained by contributions to assist in carrying out the charitable purposes of the coordinating committee and AFLC corporations. Gifts come either through current outright gifts, restricted gifts or estate bequest.

For more information call Mark D. Johnson, CFP, AFLC Foundation at 1-800-950-2109.

New seminarians — To-date eight men have been accepted to begin their studies at the Free Lutheran Seminary on September 6, 2000. The number of new students could change as more applications are processed. The new seminarians are: Harrison Akubala, Kenya; Karl Anderson, St. James, Minnesota; Clint Hoff, Oceanside, California; Samuel Kariuki, Kenya; Mikhail Klus, Czech Republic; Jason Siemens, Camrose, Alberta; Roland Tonnison, Estonia; and Terry Wall, Oceanside, California.

Seminarian Dana Coyle, Minneapolis, Minnesota is the new AFLBS men's residence head. He and his wife, Heather and two young children have moved into the men's dorm while he completes his senior year at the Free Lutheran Seminary.

Pastor John Dennis, Bethel Park, Pennsylvania celebrated the 50th anniversary of his installation as the pastor at Ruthfred Lutheran on July 23, 2000. He continues to serve the Pittsburgh-area congregation along with Pastor James Molstre.

Pastor Peter Franz and family are now living at 7036 Viksburg Lane N, Maple Grove, MN 55311; phone 763-420-1388. Pastor Franz is pastor at Medicine Lake Lutheran in Plymouth Minnesota.

Pastor John Mundfrom, Beulah, North Dakota, has resigned from Prince of Peace Lutheran and accepted a call to Spencer Creek Lutheran in Eugene, Oregon.

Parish Education update

"A Faithful Guide To Peace With God" has a new cover on the recently reprinted classic. Written by the Swedish author, C. O. Rosenius 150 years



ago, the book plumbs the depths of spiritual truth to bring the reader to true peace with God. Rosenius passed through many spiritual struggles and his timeless insights are as much needed by the restless souls of today as they were during Rosenius' time.

"What is the calling of the local church according to the teachings of the New Testament? And what does it mean to be a free and living congregation?" With a passion to find and live out the answer to these questions, Georg Sverdrup and Sven Oftedal pursued building a "free church in a fee land." The Lutheran Free Church was established in the late nineteenth century, and its principles and practices continue to guide the AFLC today.

An examination of Sverdrup and Oftedal's vision and work and the establishment of the Lutheran Free Church is the heart of a 39-page booklet, "The Quest for Freedom" by Loiell Dyrud. This booklet, which was recently published, also explains what it means to be a "free and living congregation" today. This is recommended reading for every



Marian Christopherson and Loiell Dyrud.

youth and adult member of an AFLC congregation to better understand what it means to be a part of the AFLC. Consider it as a valuable tool for new member classes. Available for \$2 from Ambassador Publications at 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55441; phone 763-545-5631 or e-mail at parished@aflc.org

Pastor Brian Davidson, Hopkins, Minnesota will continue to assist the AFLC headquarters and campus with the computer networking through August 31, 2001. He was re-elected to serve for a third term as the AFLC secretary at the annual conference in June. He has also been serving this past year as interim pastor at Faith Lutheran in Ottawa, Illinois. He concludes that ministry on August 6, 2000 upon the arrival of Pastor Alan Arneson, the congregation's new pastor.

Pastor Douglas Lutz, Highland Ranch, Colorado, was accepted on the AFLC's Fellowship Clergy Roster at the recent coordinating committee meeting. He serves Community of Hope Lutheran in Littleton, Colorado, which recently joined the AFLC.

Pastor Gerald D. Blais, Jr. Fall River, Massachusetts, passed away April 4, 2000. He had served St. Paul's Lutheran for many years.

Valborg Aasgaard Chommie, 92, died on June 6, 2000. Funeral services were held on June 19, at Abundant Life Lutheran Church (AFLC) in Thief River Falls, Minnesota, of which she was a charter member. She was a daughter of Dr. J. A. Aasgaard, former president of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC).

Songbooks available —

Limited quantities of "Make Music to our God" are available at the closeout prices of \$12 for the music edition and \$1 each for the words-only editions. These books contain 120 Scripture and chorus songs with guitar chords and piano accompaniment and are useful in youth groups, Bible studies and worship services.

To order, contact Pastor Tim Carlson, P.O. Box 339, Wheatland, IA 52777; phone 319-374-1434 or e-mail at TACMAN3@juno.com.

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences (6 months) – January 1 - June 30, 2000

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN JUNE	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$252,865.00	\$25,439.41	136,054.67	54
Seminary	118,291.00	8,286.23	50,227.56	42
Bible School	164,270.00	10,339.16	79,185.60	48
Home Missions	262,125.00	16,563.97	125,475.74	48
World Missions	239,968.00	12,470.36	77,325.17	32
Capital Investment	15,226.00	731.22	4,877.31	32
Parish Education	69,480.00	6,459.33	37,387.05	54
Church Extension	25,285.00	726.95	13,177.84	52
TOTALS	\$1,147,510.00	81,016.65	523,710.94	46
TOTALS 1999	1,013,386.00	78,136.63	490,252.31	48
Goal 50%				

Taking time for what is best

He only had three years. There was so much to do. People with needs were all around Him. The disciples seemed ill-equipped to handle the responsibilities that would soon be thrust upon them. Much teaching needed to be done. And yet, with all He had to do, we see time and again in the Gospels, Jesus taking time to pray.

"Crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed" (Luke 5:15, 16, NIV). "One of those days Jesus went out into the hills to pray, and spent the night praying to God" (Luke 6:12, NIV).

Jesus spent much time talking about the Father, but He also spent much time talking to the Father. E. M. Bounds said: "Talking to men for God is a great thing, but talking to God for men is greater still. He who has not learned well how to talk to God for men will never talk well and with real success to men for God."

We need to watch that we do not let the time we spend talking to one another about God crowd into and overtake the time we spend talking to God. It can easily happen — at conferences, in worship services, at church gatherings and in our personal, private prayer lives.

During annual conferences of our AFLC, on Thursday, Friday and Saturday we have traditionally stopped the business sessions at 11:30 a.m. and spent the next 30 minutes in prayer. We have not always guarded that time as well as we should. Sometimes some of us have noon luncheon meetings that we want to get an early start on. It could probably wait; and it could be a more productive meeting if we first met with God. We have announcements that we feel are vital and just have to be made. They could probably wait too. Let us have the attitude, "I can't wait to talk with God." When the time comes to meet with the Lord, let's put the other things on hold.

When classes are in session at the Free Lutheran Seminary, each morning begins with a time of singing a hymn or praise song, reading some Scripture and praying. When I was in seminary, we kept finding it easy for our sharing "a few thoughts" about the Scripture we read to get longer and longer and our prayer time to get shorter and shorter. We had to remind ourselves, or be reminded by the faculty, that we spend plenty of time during the day talking with

each other. What we needed to do more of was talk with the Lord.

We are not any busier than Jesus was when He walked this earth. The items on our to-do-list are far less important than what was on His. If He took time to stop doing in order to pray, then we should do the same.

Our prayer time gets diminished often because we have too high an opinion of what can happen when we talk and too low a view of what can happen when we talk with God.

Our sinful pride urges us to focus on how supposedly beautiful and wise our words sound. In our view what we have done and have to say is so very important and vital to everyone else's well being. We think our opinions are so true. If everyone just heard them and shared them, all problems would be solved. It is

good to remember the wisdom found in the book of Proverbs: "A man of knowledge uses words with restraint, and a man of understanding is even-tempered. Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue" (Proverbs 17:27, 28, NIV). "When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise" (Proverbs 10:19, NIV).

Words spoken to one another need to be chosen carefully, for they have the potential to lead to much trouble. Words spoken to God have potential of resulting in great things.

Different times situations have arisen that I've prayed about, but at the same time I've tried to figure out what I ought to do. Before I've come up with "a

brilliant plan," God has been at working, answering prayer, dealing with the problem in ways much better than I could have imagined. Those cases have been times when I have been reminded to pray first and pray with confidence.

"The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective" (James 5:16, NIV). Let's take care that in our times of meeting together as Christ's body and in our private times we resist the temptation to cut short the time we spend doing that which is most effective. Announcements, telling one another stories about what we have done, conducting business, talking about what we have learned — those things have their place, but may they not take the place of talking with God. Let us cherish and treasure the privilege that is prayer.

— **Pastor Craig Johnson**

"Talking to men for God is a great thing, but talking to God for men is greater still."

BUILDING THE BASE

Jesus: Myth or reality?

Last night I watched a program that every true Christian in America should watch. The program was "The Search for Jesus" hosted by Peter Jennings on the ABC network.

Ever since I heard the program was to be aired I hoped that perhaps ABC would not look to the members of the Jesus Seminar as their primary source for historical information regarding the person of Jesus. However, my hopes were dashed early on. Within the first moments of the program, Jennings commented that the Gospels were written far after the actual events and it was further held that the "majority of scholars" denied that the Gospels were written by contemporary eyewitnesses of the events and that all four Gospels contradicted each other. Therefore, he expressed his conclusion that the Gospels were "unreliable" and hence must be viewed skeptically when attempting to extract a correct notion of the historical Jesus.

So why do I think that Christians should watch this program? Because it is this presentation that best represents the popular view of Jesus among Americans today, and is especially representative of the modern media and academic elites. Following is a short critique of this presentation. First, this presentation of Jesus is historically unreliable. Second, it is logically inconsistent. And third, it concludes with a Jesus who is experientially or existentially irrelevant.

First, it is historically unreliable due to the fact that it begins with a prejudice against the supernatural

that prevents any level of neutrality in its presentation. John Cominic Crossan, that star player in the Jesus Seminar, and the central "scholar" in the ABC presentation rejects out of hand the notion of the supernatural. The virgin birth, the miracles, and the resurrection of Jesus are not dismissed due to insufficient historical evidence, rather they are ruled out as possibilities before the investigation begins. It is like an umpire calling balls and strikes before a pitch is thrown. Any approach to historical investigation which begins with such a bias and more appropriately "bigoted" approach cannot be considered reliable. Surely one must attempt to separate fact from fiction in the investigation, however when supernatural events present not only the best but perhaps the only explanation for certain occurrences, then they must be given appropriate consideration.

Second, the presentation was logically inconsistent. What I mean by this is that one cannot hammer the Gospels for being contradictory and thereby inauthentic and in the same breath use the Gospels to authenticate their own ideas. Take for instance, Jennings' affirmation that Jesus' mother was Mary, or that He was raised in Nazareth, or that He was crucified on a cross, all of which are based on the Gospels, yet the Gospels have already been deemed unreliable. If a document has been found to be unreliable, one cannot then ascertain what may be reliable within it. It is clear that Jennings desires to point to the Gospels for making his case, however, he has already eliminated them and logically

cannot use them to affirm or deny his arguments. If a witness in a court of law is found to be unreliable the attorney cannot simply and arbitrarily formulate a case based upon what he believes may be reliable testimony from an unreliable witness.

Third, the Jesus presented becomes experientially or existentially irrelevant. If the Jesus presented by Jennings as the culmination of his search is indeed simply a peasant from Nazareth with rather eccentric political ambitions who was disposed of rather brutally by the Romans and any and all insinuations of divinity are simply myth and legend, then I would argue that this Jesus is no longer qualified to be the Son of God and the Savior of the world. His relevance only extends to the respect and honor one may give anyone who tries to help the needy, but in the end proves to be incapable of anything other than sympathy and political persuasion. If Jesus is only a man with political and social ambition, then all Christians in every time and every place must be branded the greatest of fools, for their hope is false.

The Apostle Paul came to the same conclusion in his first letter to the Corinthians, "If Christ has not been raised then our preaching is vain, your faith also is in vain." He adds, "If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied." Thankfully he went on to say, "Christ has indeed been raised from the dead."

— Rick Tollefson
Helmar Lutheran
Newark, Illinois