

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

FEBRUARY 2008

HERITAGE HALL



STUDY
GOD'S WORD

Iron

BY JOAN CULLER



sharp

The book of Proverbs tells us, "A friend loves at all times." It's hard to imagine who wouldn't want that kind of acceptance, isn't it? Yet recent studies reveal that 25 percent of Americans have no close friends at all; another 19 percent have only one confidante (usually their spouse); and that these unfortunate trends have been increasing over the last 20 years.

A good friend can be an important element in our spiritual life and development. Now, by good friend I don't mean the kind of friendly acquaintance with whom we share some common interests or activities. A true soul friend knows us and accepts us as we really are. We are honest and vulnerable with them. We trust them to hear our confessions and keep our confidences. They love us no matter what, and they always point us toward Jesus. David found such a friend in Jonathan, who "helped him find strength in God" (1 Samuel 23:16). One author says these are the friends who make us "run hard after God."

I have been blessed by a number of spiritual friendships, including a long-lasting relationship with my college roommate, Nancy. We don't see each other very often because we are busy people who no longer share a room or go to classes together. We stay in touch by writing letters and

sending e-mails. Once or twice a year we meet at a church about midway between our homes.

We bring our lunch and eat together. We pray.

We share our experiences. We talk openly about our families, our problems, our joys and struggles.

Nancy rarely tells me what she thinks I should do. Instead, she gently asks me to consider what God would have me do.

"As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another," says Proverbs 27:17. Nancy sharpens my awareness of God. Meeting with her, and writing to her becomes a spiritual *practice*, a life-giving activity that helps me to notice how God is working in my life.

Some spiritual friendships, like my friendship with Nancy, just seem to evolve and deepen over time. When this happens, it is a bit of God's grace. Give thanks if you already have this blessing! However, we can also be intentional in our pursuit of soul friends.

If you do not have such a friend, pray about it and see who God brings across your path. You might start by asking someone you respect and trust to become a prayer partner. Meet regularly, share concerns, pray with each other and for each other. You will be amazed to find your friendship drawing you closer to your true self, closer to other Christians and closer to God.

Culler is a member of St. Paul's Lutheran, Leitersburg, Md.

February 2008 >>

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR vol. 46, no. 2

Editor Pastor Craig Johnson
craigj@teleport.com

Managing Editor Ruth Gunderson
ruthg@afllc.org

Editorial Board Oryen Benrud
Pastor Jerry Moan
Pastor James L. Johnson

The Lutheran Ambassador (USPS 588-620 ISSN 0746-3413) is published monthly by the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations. AFLC headquarters and publications office is at 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441. Phone (763) 545-5631; fax 763-545-0079.

For subscription changes and information: The Lutheran Ambassador, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441. 763-545-5631 or e-mail at luthamb@afllc.org.

Subscription rates:
\$17 a year, Group Rate, U.S.
\$18 a year, Individual, U.S.
\$20 a year, International
Periodicals postage paid at Minneapolis, MN, and additional mailing office.

Postmaster: Send address changes to The Lutheran Ambassador, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441.

Do you have a career, or are you on a mission for God? The answer to that question makes all the difference in the world.

— Ray Pritchard

When you are diligent to absorb God's Word daily by reading, studying, and meditating, godly responses to all the challenges of your life will become second nature.

— John MacArthur

As we follow Christ, we are to model our lives after His — to learn what He is like and reflect more and more of Him in what we do and think.

— Richard L. Ganz

God's Word nourishes me, gives me courage to go on. ... It is by being nourished by His Word that I can give out to others.

— Nancie Carmichal



IDOLS STILL STAND

BY DARWIN PACCHA

It was just seven or eight years ago when I talked with my grandfather about his faith in Christ for the first time. My grandfather is a very funny and kind old man who always carries around a bag full of anything you can think of: food, medicine, toothpaste, a Bible. That bag lacks nothing. As far as I know, he is the first evangelical Christian in my family and one of the first in his own town.

Now, why is my grandfather's testimony important to me or to anyone else? Well, my grandfather happens to live in *El Cisne*, one of the most, if not the most, catholic town in Ecuador. El Cisne is a little town with no more than a thousand people located on top of a mountain, and nobody would even notice it if it were not for *La Virgen de el Cisne*.

It is not a secret. Inside of the town's cathedral, placed on a very high stand and surrounded by pillars of gold, sits the most worshiped Catholic idol in the entire country. They call her *La Virgen de el Cisne* (Cisne's Virgin). For hundreds of years, people have been worshiping this idol, and through the years, *La*

virgen de el Cisne has become the friend, healer, mother, and god of most of the Catholic people in Ecuador.

Cisne is the town where my grandfather grew up and where he still lives and openly testifies about Christ. When I asked him how he became a Christian, he told me that many years ago when he was still young, *white people* (missionaries) used to come to town. They usually came at night, bringing *little books* (New Testaments) with them. They gave these books away to the people whenever they could. However, back then the people in town were afraid to take these books because the priests had told them that the white people were *gente mala* (evil people) and a "good" Catholic should not take anything from them.

During these times, just a few people had enough character and confidence to reach out their hand and take one of those *little books*. My grandfather was one of those people. He was afraid to read it at first, but God, little by little, started to work in my grandfather's heart as he read more and more from this New Testament. Finally, after years of wrestling with the thought of salvation by grace alone and fighting against his unique cultural circumstances in that little town, my grandfather was reached by the grace of God. For his entire life he had been lost and dead. But, finally,



my grandfather was found and granted eternal life.

As I was growing up, I pondered many times about all those other grandfathers, young men, young women, children, and more who still need to hear that Jesus is the only way, the truth, and the life. As I pondered, I always found myself facing the same question: Who, then, will go to tell those people about Christ? For years, I thought of Romans 10:14-15, "How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news.'"

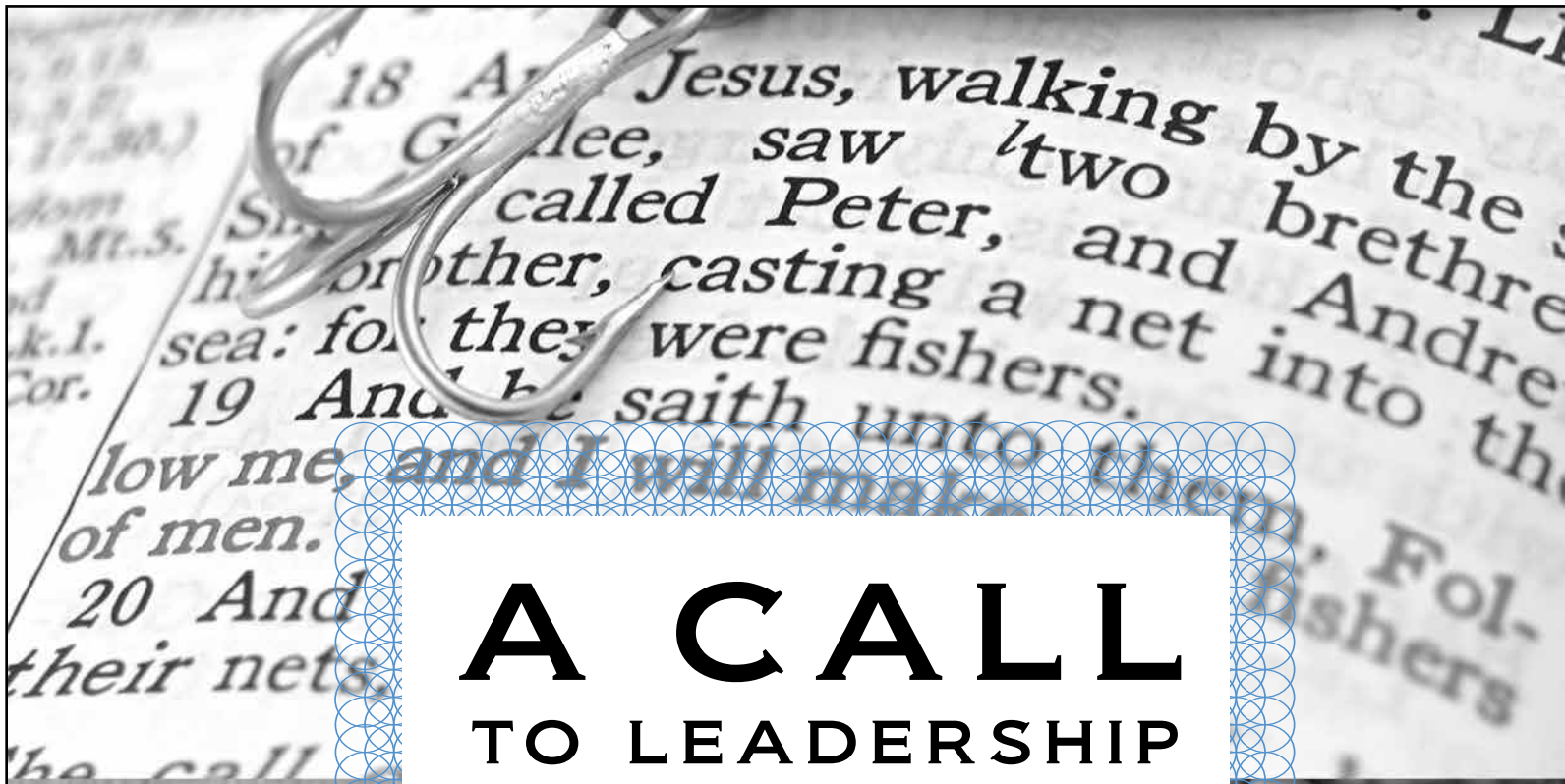
Interestingly enough, it was during the same years when I talked with my grandfather about his faith that God started to call me into the ministry. This calling became even more intense and clear during my years at Bible school (AFLBS). Finally, in His grace, God helped me to hear His answer to my much-pondered question. The answer was quite simple really. The answer was "you."

For years I had been wondering and, at times, even complaining to God about the harvest being so plentiful and the workers so few that I could not hear

Him calling me to go to the fields. But finally I did.

Many years have gone by since my grandfather came to Christ and the *white people* first went to his little town. Since then, much has been accomplished; however, the need is still great and the workers are still few. The idols still stand between pillars of gold and the people still bow down before them. As my wife and I prepare to go back to Ecuador to make disciples, God has been working in our hearts and reassuring us of two things. First, no matter where we go, there is nothing to fear because He has promised to be with us "even to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). Second, He is calling us to go because back home, in Ecuador, there are many grandpas in the fields eagerly waiting for a *little book*. There is a town, which is waiting to hear the gospel, not from an idol, but from the true God, and a nation, spiritually starving, waiting to hear the good news of Jesus Christ (Matthew 9:37).

Paccha, a second-year seminary student, is from Cuenca, Ecuador. He hopes to return to Ecuador as a missionary when he graduates from AFLTS.



A CALL TO LEADERSHIP



BY MICHAEL BRANDT

Pastor Brandt, how do I know if God is calling me to be a pastor?"

It has been and is an honor for me to be asked that question. It's exciting, sobering, and biblical. Great men of the Bible wrestled with the same question ... Samuel, Gideon, Isaiah, and Timothy, to name a few. As God sought them, they sought after the counsel of God. God did not disappoint them. He will not disappoint us.

Can a congregation or pastor be used of God to assist in answering such a question? Yes. Not only can they, but they should. Is there any caution that should be heeded? Yes. It must be God, not man, who does the convincing. Keeping this in mind, in what ways can God use a congregation to help clarify His call to future pastors?

PRAY

In Matthew 9:38, Jesus said, "Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest." Jesus had already practiced what He preached. Remember, He went away and prayed all night before calling His disciples (Luke 6:12).

A congregation devoted to the will of God will pray specifically. It will unashamedly beg God. There is a need. A need only He can meet. A need that is dear to His heart. It is a need He has commanded us to *beseech* Him to meet. Congregations that obey this command are an indispensable connection in God's calling process.

How?

Make this undeniable *must* the church's practice: Pastors and their congregations *must* make it a priority, not every now and then, but always. Pray like the church depends on it, because it does. The answer to such prayers is probably sitting right in the pews. When the church takes this mandate seriously, God listens and the men He is calling listen to Him!

EQUIP

Ephesians 4:11 clearly discloses that God is the One who calls pastors. Verse 12 also reveals that pastors are to equip the saints. This equipping leads to service and spiritual maturity. In II Timothy 2:2, Paul instructs Timothy to entrust to such faithful men the precious truths of Christ. Equipping is for laymen and future pastors, alike. Not all who are equipped will become pastors. However, it is often in the equipping process that God clarifies His call to a future pastor.

God will effectively use an equipping congregation, led by an equipping pastor. There is no better training ground than the local congregation. Where truth is taught and opportunities to serve are provided, the

Spirit convinces men of His will for their lives.

How?

Mentor those sensing God's call. Spend time with them discussing the inerrancy of God's Word, His work in baptism and communion, the value of confirmation, and the importance of the local congregation. Take them with you on visitations; show them how you prepare a sermon or Bible lesson; help them understand the necessity of administration; share with them effective biblical counseling tools; and, under your observation, provide opportunities for them to apply what they are being taught. This is God's will. When it is followed, He reveals His will to those He is calling.

RECOGNIZE

In the early church, God's people recognized those He was calling into ministry. In Acts 13:2-3, the church at Antioch committed themselves to prayer and fasting. Then the Holy Spirit revealed to them that Barnabas and Paul were to be set apart. Afterward, they laid their hands on them and sent them away.

In a similar way, God's Spirit gives His church discernment today. The spiritual leadership of the local church is commissioned with this responsibility. Often it has been taken lightly. Sometimes the church has not considered it at all. However, when the spiritual leadership prayerfully follows the discerning promptings of the Holy Spirit, what happened in Acts 15:22 comes to life, "... it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas ..."

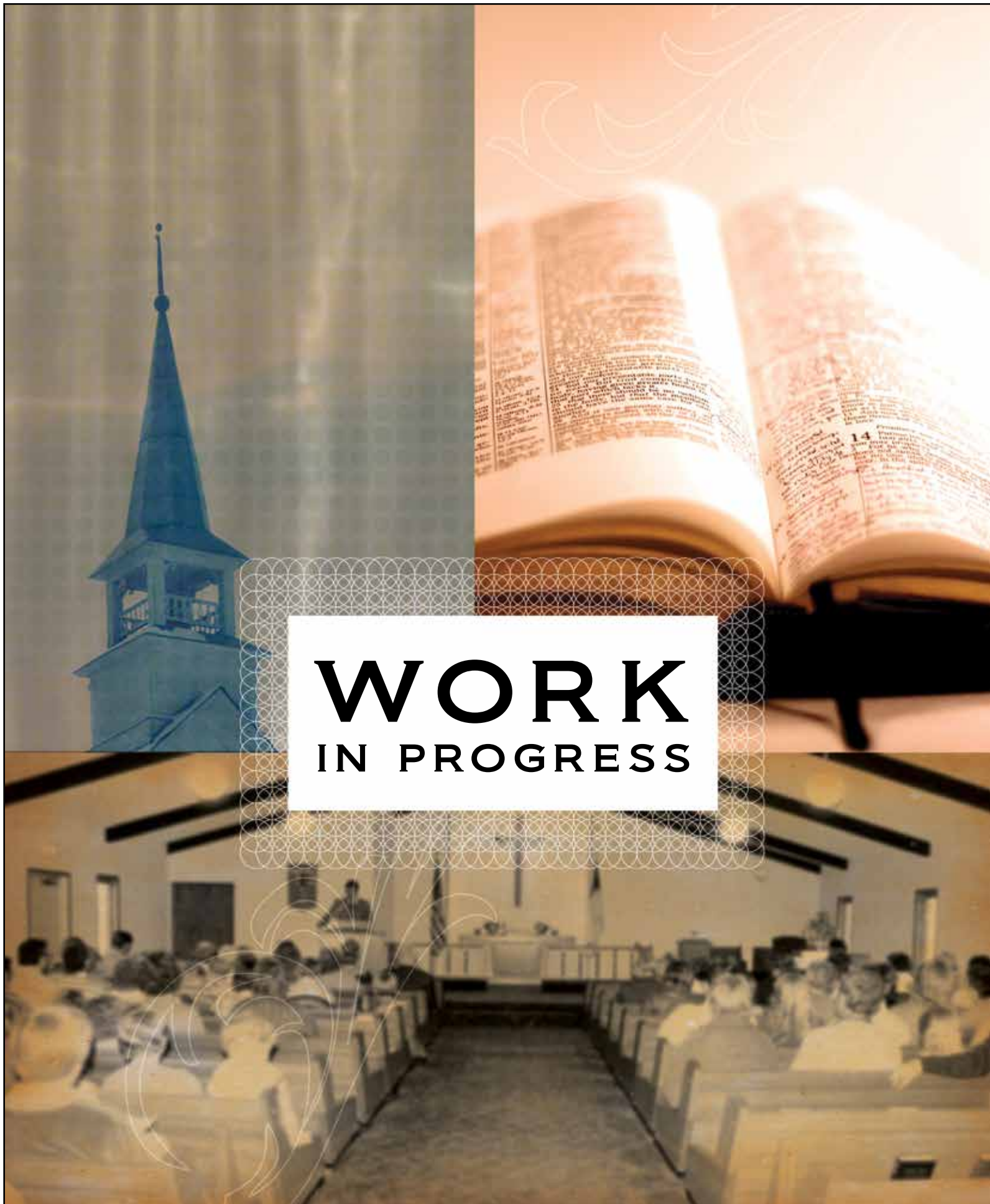
Where should the church's leadership begin? Start in the midst of your own congregation. Who should you seek to find? Heed God's advice in I Samuel 16:7, "God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." Note those who display the character of Christ: a servant attitude, loving husbands/fathers, a humble spirit, a pure heart, love for the lost, able to teach, free from addictions, and men with a good reputation. The local congregation is where future pastors will be revealed.

How?

Like the believers at Antioch, share with these men what God has revealed to you. Lay your hand of blessing upon them and send them. Send them with your prayer support, with your financial support, and with faithful ongoing encouragement.

What will happen when these ways are followed? Men will hear and answer God's call. The harvest will be gathered. The local church will rejoice!

Pastor Brandt, who has served Abiding Savior Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D., has begun a mentoring ministry focusing on serving the needs of pastors.



WORK IN PROGRESS

BY ANDY COYLE

Each year of my seminary studies, I waited in anticipation to hear the internship placements for my seminary classmates. It was an exciting time for them, as well as for me, because I knew my time was getting closer. This excitement continued to grow as each intern returned and presented part of his internship experience to the underclassmen.

To be honest, I was always more intrigued by the person rather than his presentation. The maturation process was evident in each one of them, and it was something that I longed for in myself.

As a young man preparing for the ministry, I know that I have much to learn. I have really enjoyed my three years of in-class training as it is foundational for future ministry. Having said that, I also realized that I needed the practical ministry training that comes with an internship.

One great desire that I had leading up to this internship year was the constant mentorship of an experienced pastor. Another desire was to become more comfortable leading people in worship. But my greatest desire for my internship was spiritual growth, knowing that I still have many rough edges that need the refining work of the Holy Spirit.

My wife and I have been greatly blessed to have been placed at St. Ansgar's Lutheran Church in Salinas, Calif., for my internship. It is a joy to serve a living congregation that loves Jesus and His Word. One has to look no further than their sanctuary — which has 56 flags from around the world representing the countries in which they have sent missionaries or support missionaries — to see their passion for ministry.

As my wife, Monica, and I look to our future, St. Ansgar's has been a real gift of encouragement to us. Being a part of this congregation, even though for just a short time, has given me a real passion for the local congregation that I was lacking in the past. I have studied in theory the value of the congregation, but until now never fully realized its great potential within the body of Christ.

My internship is only half complete, but I can already see how the Lord has answered my prayers

and granted desires during this time. In His love, He continues to expose new areas of need, and by His faithfulness He grants grace, guidance and growth.

I have also been very privileged to work under an experienced pastor who loves Jesus and shows this love brightly in his daily life. I appreciate very much being able to observe Pastor Herb Hoff and receive guidance in many areas of ministry.

As I reflect on my second desire, I marvel at the wisdom of God. St. Ansgar's is a more liturgical church than I am familiar with. I have really grown to appreciate its liturgy for a variety of reasons. I appreciate the liturgy mostly because it is grounded in God's Word and joins the body of Christ together as a choir of voices praising God. On a practical level, the liturgy has also been very helpful for me as it has given me many opportunities to develop my presentation skills. I still have much to learn, but by God's grace, I feel more comfortable leading the service now than I ever have before.

My final desire is still a work in progress and will continue to be throughout the rest of my life. God has, in these past months, given me a great desire to share His Word, as well as a continuing love for people. God has also in this time continued to show me through His Word how much of a sinner I am and my great need for Him each day. The Holy Spirit continues to impress upon my heart these gracious words: "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness" (II Corinthians 12:9).

In just a few months I will be completing my seminary education. Looking back, it has been a wonderful experience. I have seen the Lord change me and direct my steps in many ways. I value my in-class training very much as I was able to sit under the instruction of godly men who faithfully taught God's Word. Reflecting on my internship experience, I can say that I am a firm believer of the necessity of the internship year. The internship for me has been a practical opportunity to grow and put into practice what I have been learning these past years.

I praise God for His Great Faithfulness!

Coyle, who will graduate in May from AFLTS, is from Nicollet, Minn. He and his wife, Monica, have been accepted as AFLC missionary candidates.



AFLBS

A TRADITION

BY DAN & ELAINE MUNDFROM

We met at AFLBS in the fall of 1972. We both had older brothers who had attended and graduated from Bible school while we were in high school. In fact, all of our siblings are AFLBS alumni. Three of our four children have attended Bible school and number four is planning on attending in the fall. It has become kind of a tradition in our family — attending AFLBS. So what's the attraction? What led us, all of our siblings and all of our kids, to go to Bible school?

It is unlikely that there is any one influence that was the deciding factor in each of these individual's decisions to attend AFLBS. But there probably are several factors that contributed to every one of their decisions. We have identified a few that we think were important influences.

STUDENT INTERACTION

Both of us had opportunities to interact with our older brothers' Bible school friends through weekend visits, choir concerts, gospel teams, and the like. These

Christian young people were fun to be with, and it was obvious they were having fun. These interactions were often in stark contrast to the world's idea that fun and Christian activity did not occur together. The attractiveness of having fun with other Christians was likely an influence that made going to Bible school seem desirable. Our younger siblings and our kids had many of these same experiences through visits to the campus for alumni activities, concerts, and other events, as well as involvement with the Free Lutheran Youth activities.

LIFELONG FRIENDSHIPS

The bonds formed with the friends we made at Bible school are stronger than those typically made with other individuals down through the years. Even though long periods of time may pass between opportunities to be together, those strong ties allow for the relationships to "pick up where they left off," as if we were together all the time.

We have certainly had friendships with other Christians throughout the years, but the closeness of these Bible school friendships is not something that



was lost on our children. They could see the differences in these relationships. The closeness of these lifelong relationships, formed at Bible school, were likely another attraction that led our younger siblings and children to choose to attend Bible school, as well.

NATURE OF AFLBS

At the center of these fun interactions and the lifelong friendships is the very nature of what Bible school is — a venue for studying God's Word and learning how to apply biblical principles to one's life. Young people have been having fun with others and have met good friends and spouses at institutions of higher learning for years. It is not uncommon for siblings and children to attend the same schools that their older brothers, sisters, and/or parents attended. But there is something about Bible school that sets it apart from these other institutions and the experiences had there. And that something is the Bible, God's Word, which was given to us to point us to Christ and to guide our walk with Christ throughout our lives. It may not always be an overt presence in these interactions and friendships, but it is there, nonetheless, and its presence is the foundation upon which these relationships are built.

Neither of us had parents who pushed any of their children to go to Bible school. Although we always talked positively with our kids regarding our Bible school experiences and encouraged them to consider going, there was never any pressure to attend. They always knew, as we did when we were young, that if they went to Bible school it was because they had made the decision to do so.

For us and our families, attending AFLBS has become a tradition. But it is not a tradition that is void of any reason or logic, which may be the case with some traditions. It is a tradition based on relationships that are centered on God's Word and its work in our lives; relationships with fellow students that last a lifetime; and relationships with our Lord that last for eternity. It is our prayer that other families may experience the Bible school tradition as we have.

The Mundforns live in Greeley, Colo. Dan serves as the chairman for the AFLC Schools Board of Trustees.

BY COURTNEY JACOBI

When people ask me what my job is like, I find myself telling them it's about building relationships. As the women's dorm head at the Association Free Lutheran Bible School (AFLBS) in Plymouth, Minn., I don't have a typical 9 to 5 job. Instead, I'm on duty 24/7, having been given the responsibility of being a "den mother," as someone once put it, to each of the 70 girls on campus.

Yes, there are plenty of administrative tasks. Many hours are filled keeping track of the girls' late hours and honor points, keeping them responsible for abiding by curfew, conducting room checks, cleaning the guest rooms, doing laundry, posting notices, attending dorm staff meetings, preparing for Monday night devotions, and making sure the dorm is in order. But it's the relationships that matter in the end.

Needless to say, each day poses unique situations, challenges and victories, many of which I am unable to plan for in advance. I imagine that in some ways being the resident head is like parenting; there is a fine line between being a friend and being an authority. Like parents, I am responsible for overseeing the spiritual, emotional and physical needs of these women whom God has placed under me. Believe me, it is a blessing to see the work that God is doing in their lives, and it is a humbling experience to be a used in that work.

The process through which God works is both challenging and exciting at the same time. It is challenging to make time for 70 women, all of whom have different work schedules and various needs. Being unable to reach each of them all the time, I have come to realize that relational ministry takes a concerted effort by believers to effectively be the hands and feet of Christ.

In the women's dorm, we have been blessed by the help of three dorm assistants to share in the responsibility of building personal relationships with the residents, as well as sharing in the various tasks that need to be done. I appreciate the DAs very much, and I don't think that the dorm would run near as well without them. Not only are they my eyes and ears when I can't be there, they also take on the task of leading small group devotions, another key to building relationships.

We have also included the help of other believers by establishing a mentorship program in which we pair current students with former AFLBS students to encourage accountability and promote spiritual growth. At first this seemed to be a daunting task. It was difficult to pick which students should go with which mentor. I tried to match the groups based on

interests and personality. This wasn't the easiest because I didn't personally know each woman involved, but it still proved to be a blessing. God was faithful throughout this process.

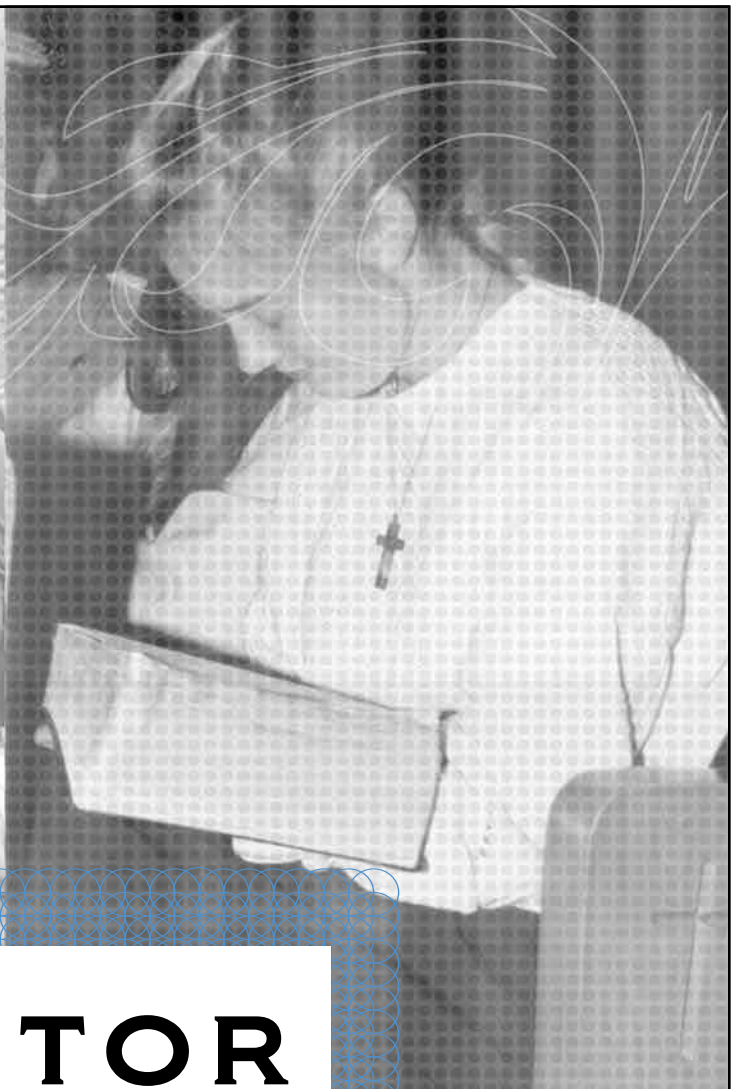
When we had our mentorship kickoff in early October, I received positive feedback from girls who were excited and surprised when they found out who their mentors were. This was such an encouragement to me, and it was a definite sign of God's grace and work.

I was blessed to have God work in me through my relationship with my mentor, and it has been humbling and encouraging seeing how He is using me as a mentor now, too. The young woman I meet with has been evidencing growth as we meet each week. I have also been growing by seeing her faith. It shows how true Proverbs 27:17 is, "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another man." Much of the time at AFLBS is spent in the classroom studying the Word of God, but this is lived out on a practical level as the students interact, fellowship with and encourage one another as they grow spiritually.

Ultimately, the main task that I have been faced with (and the one I am still learning), is the importance of building relationships with the students. I could go all year performing the necessary tasks to keep the dorm running. But I would fail to fulfill the purpose for which the Lord called me to this position in the first place if I neglected to actually get to know the students. I can only do this by interacting with them, by asking them questions like: How are you growing in your personal relationship with Jesus? What are your weaknesses and how I can pray with or for you? How are you being challenged in your classes? How is your relationship going with your roommates and others?

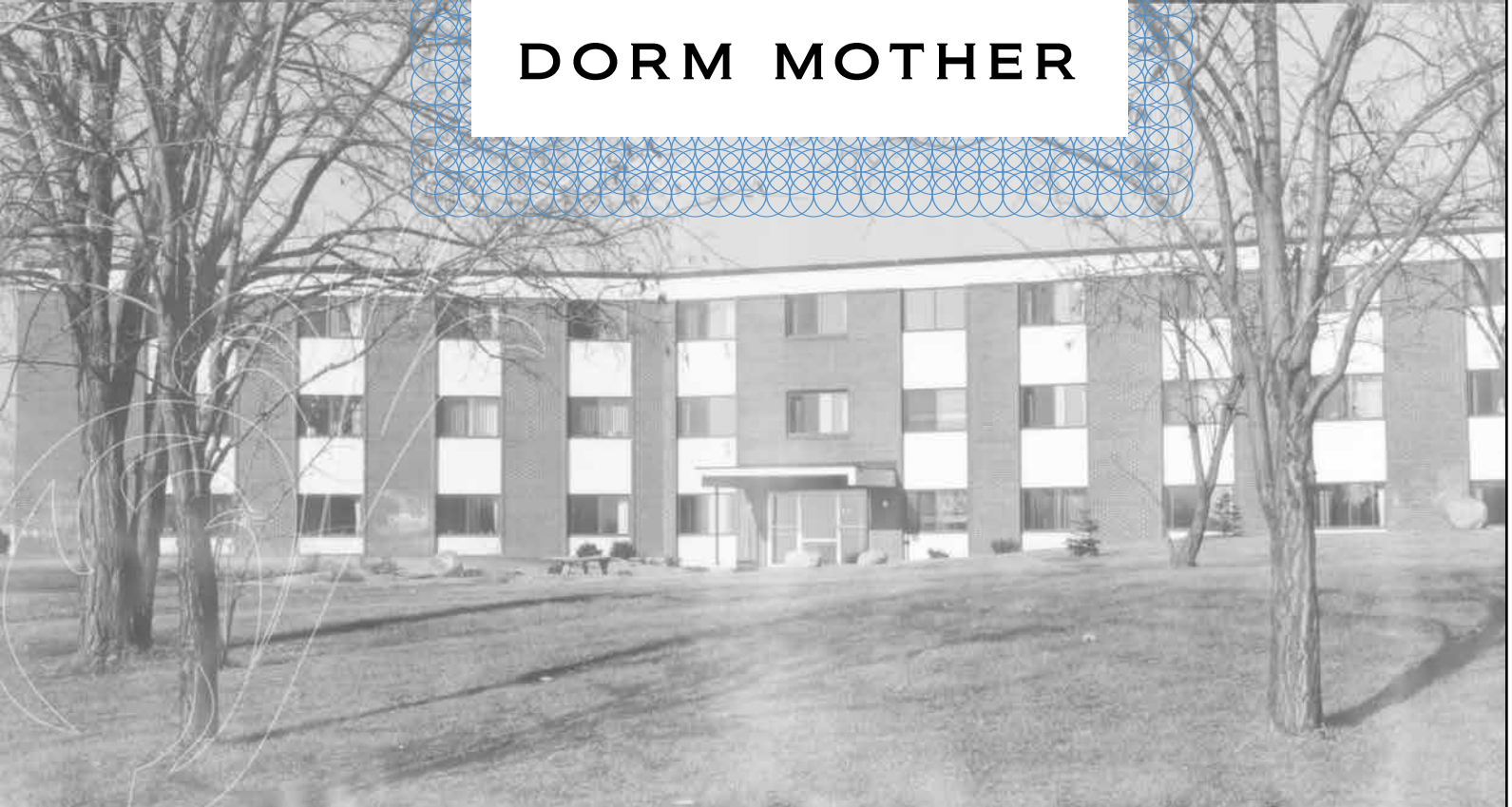
As I have shared with the girls at devotions, it is easy to get caught up in the act of doing something without thinking about why you are doing it. I have challenged the girls in the dorm to not just view their homework as an assignment, but to consider it an opportunity to sit at the feet of our Lord and Savior. What an awesome privilege it is to study God's Word. Similarly, I have been challenged to look at my job as the women's resident head not just as a job, but rather as an opportunity to be a mentor and friend to fellow sisters in Christ. It is for this that I believe God has called me to this ministry. I am thankful and honored that God has chosen me for it, and He has blessed me greatly by allowing me to see Him work in the lives of these women.

Jacobi, from Calamus, Iowa, graduated in 2004 from AFLBS. This is her first year as women's resident head.



MENTOR

DORM MOTHER



BOOKS ON CAMPUS

Have you ever thought about digging into an in-depth study on Hebrews but just didn't know where to start? Do you ever wonder what resources teachers at the Association Free Lutheran Bible School and Seminary use in the classroom? Here for your use is a brief review of the books offered by Parish Education, which are used in both junior and senior AFLBS classes, as well as the seminary.

For more information on these resources, contact Parish Education at (763) 545-5631 or e-mail parished@aflc.org.



AFLBS JUNIORS

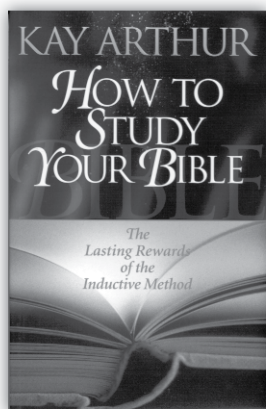
BIBLE ORIENTATION/JOHN

• Taught by Pastor Jerry Moan

How to Study Your Bible

(Arthur) \$9

Encourages personal Bible study and helps the reader establish basic step-by-step study skills in observation, interpretation, and application.



Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts

\$14.95

BIBLE DOCTRINE I

• Taught by Pastor Phil Haugen

I Know in Whom I Believe

(Wisløff) \$3.50

The Knowledge of the Holy

(Tozer) \$12.95

HEBREWS/JAMES

• Taught by Pastor Jerry Moan

People's Bible Commentary: Hebrews

(Lauersdorf) \$11.05

PRINCIPLES OF CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

• Taught by Pastor Tim Skramstad

Standing Fast in Freedom

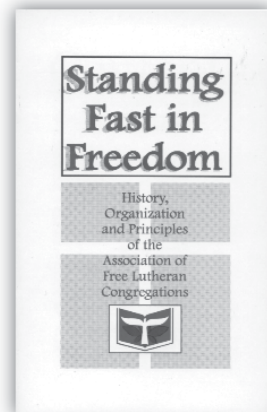
Summarizes the history, organization, and principles of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations in a 27-page booklet. \$1

Free and Living Congregations \$20

GENESIS

• Taught by Pastor Peter Franz

Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps and Charts \$14.95



AFLBS SENIORS

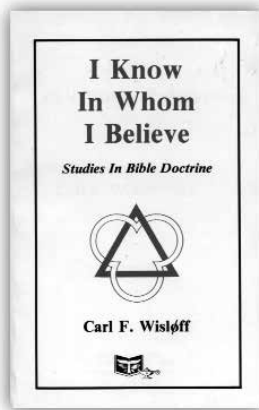
BIBLE DOCTRINE II

- Taught by Dr. Francis Monseth

I Know in Whom I Believe

(Wisløff) \$3.50

Teaches basic Bible doctrine through sections on “The Foundation of Faith” and “The Contents of Faith,” including what the Bible says concerning God, man, Jesus, salvation, the Means of Grace and the congregation, and last things.



The Believer Free from the Law

(Rosenius) \$5

Biblical Baptism

(Melby) \$2

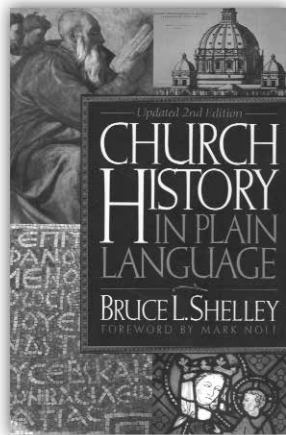
EARLY CHURCH HISTORY

- Taught by Pastor Robert Lee

Church History in Plain Language

(Shelley) \$19.95

Presents in one volume an overview of the history of Christianity in a clear and engaging narrative manner, focusing on key events and personalities that have shaped Christianity. Updated to include current chapters covering the 1980s and 1990s.



PASTORAL LETTERS

- Taught by Pastor Joel Rolf

People's Bible Commentary:

I & II Timothy, Titus

(Schuetze) \$11.90

People's Bible Commentary:

I & II Thessalonians

(Kuske) \$10.20

SEMINARY

POETICAL BOOKS

- Taught by Pastor Jerry Holmaas

Reading the Psalms with Luther \$13.50

An Introduction to the Old Testament Poetical Books \$33.95

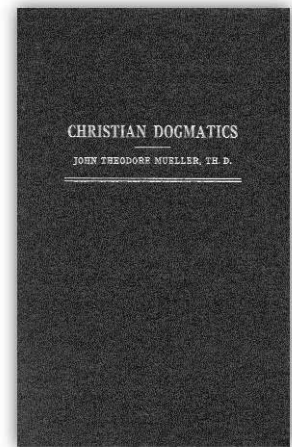
SOTERIOLOGY

- Taught by Dr. Francis Monseth

Christian Dogmatics

(Mueller) \$28

Presents doctrinal theology based on Francis Pieper's “Christliche Dogmatik” in a clear, concise, complete, and practical manner for theology students.



The Lord's Supper

(Chemnitz) \$29.75

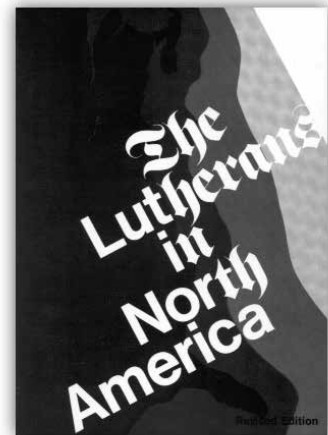
LUTHERANISM IN AMERICA

- Taught by Pastor Robert Lee

The Lutherans in North America

(Nelson) \$38

Gives a sense of heritage, identity, continuity, and understanding for today's Lutherans as readers identify with struggles, hopes, and frustrations of wave after wave of immigrants adapting to the strange new world of America and at the same time trying to preserve all they had known and loved and brought with them from the homeland.



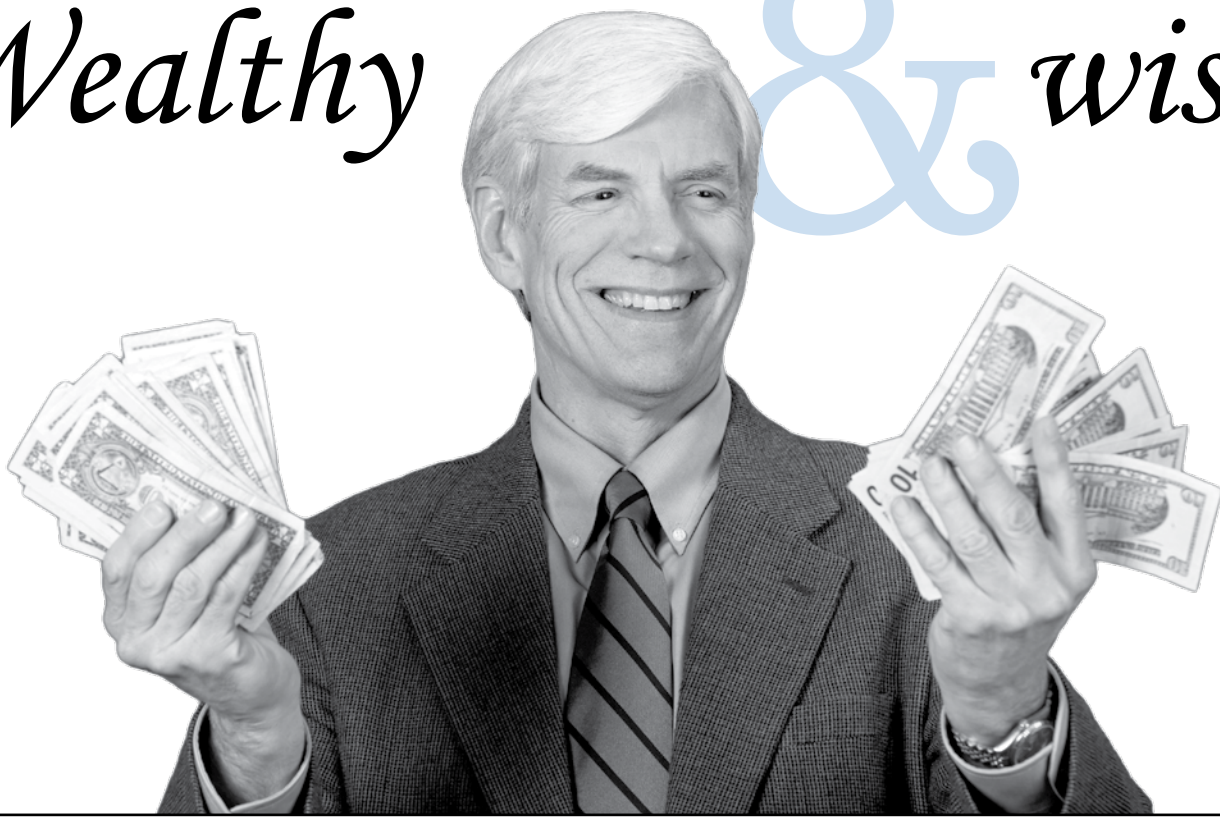
LUTHERAN SYMBOLICS

- Taught by Dr. Francis Monseth

Luther's Small Catechism and Explanation \$10

The Book of Concord (Tappert) \$27

Wealthy & wise



BY PASTOR ARLIN OLSON

We have had it good in North America for a long time. We have been able to enjoy a lifestyle that two thirds of the world's population can only dream about. While there is great potential for doing good things, which comes with the wealth we have, there are also some real dangers.

For the Christian Church and for Christian individuals, wealth presents a potential danger of skewing our understanding of Scripture and luring our hearts away from a wholehearted devotion to Christ. We may begin to think that lacking material prosperity is an indication of a lack of faith or faithfulness. Or we may have a work ethic that says, "If somebody isn't prospering, they obviously need to work harder," and be unsympathetic with those in real need. There are even those who would say God wants us to be wealthy, to have nice things, that having wealth to enjoy is part and parcel of being in the kingdom of God.

We have a Father who has promised to provide for our needs. He asks us to trust Him for that. Yes, He has entrusted some Christians with wealth — they are to do good, to be rich in good deeds, liberal and generous. It is likely, however, that these Christians were as much in the minority in the early Church as they are today.

In Revelation 2-3, Jesus had a reproach for all but two

of the seven churches. One was the church of Philadelphia. Jesus said of them, "You have but little power, yet you have kept my word" (3:8).

The other was the church of Smyrna. Christian author William Barclay writes that the city of Smyrna was one of the wealthiest at that time. Yet we find in Revelation that its Christians were poor to the point of destitution. To them Jesus said, "I know your affliction and your poverty — yet you are rich" (2:9).

Jesus had no reproach for this struggling group of Christians. He only encouraged them, even saying, "... yet you are rich"

How different from those who equate faith with wealth. Apparently Jesus does not think that the Father's reputation stands or falls on the presence of material wealth among His children. Rather, we are called to be faithful whatever our God-given lot. Then the Father is glorified. This is not really so surprising if we consider that we are disciples of the One who had "no place to lay His head" (Matthew 8:20), and yet, in Him God is glorified (John 13:31).

Olson is a pastor with the AFLC-Canada and is currently on loan to the World Mission Prayer League.

Work crew lays concrete floor in Mesa



AFLC's Builder's Fellowship organizes project to help outreach programs

Builder's Fellowship organized a work week at Calvary Free Lutheran, Mesa, Ariz., Nov. 5-10, 2007. The project focused on replacing a wood floor and foundation in the church's auxiliary building. In its place they poured a concrete floor.

"The outside sills were supported by 12" x 12" timbers rather than a concrete foundation," said Lavon Bohling, director of FLAPS. "These timbers were badly deteriorated and needed to be removed."

The concrete floor was poured in three sections with the help of a pumping unit donated by a local businessman. In addition to the floor, a concrete pad was poured outside the west doorway and the approach to the adjacent food pantry.

The auxiliary building is used by the congregation for several outreach ministries, including a food pantry and English as a Second Language classes for the community.

TOP LEFT: Calvary Free Lutheran members Pastor Al Monson, Bert Pierson and Vint Bruflat fill up a wheelbarrow with concrete to finish the final section of the new floor.

TOP RIGHT: Harold Lee wields a motorized trowel to smoothly finish the newly laid floor.

MIDDLE LEFT: Lavon Bohling, FLAPS director, and Home Missions Committee members Willis Kettelhut and Eldwyn Van Bruggen prepare the dirt floor by leveling it.

BOTTOM LEFT: Pastor Georg Marsteller (top right) teaches English as a Second Language class in the auxiliary area of the Mesa church where the floor was replaced.

AFLC schools host Christmas concert weekend



TOP LEFT: Members of the Seminary Chorus began the annual campus Christmas concerts on December 8-9. TOP RIGHT: The AFLBS Choir sings "Gloria" in Latin. ABOVE: The AFLBS Women's Chorale, with 24 members, is directed by Jerry Nelson.

AFLBS plans 40th anniversary program

Mark your calendars for March 15

Plans are being made for a special gathering of AFLBS alumni on March 15 to celebrate 40 years of graduates. Festivities will begin after the alumni basketball tournament, which has been scheduled to coincide with the event. The Bible school is celebrating 40 years since the first class graduated in 1968, and the hope is that all classes since then will want to reunite at this special occasion.

The evening will begin with punch and fellowship at 5 p.m. Dinner will be served at 5:30 in Heritage Hall cafeteria. Special entertainment will be provided at the dinner by some talented alumni and faculty. The evening service will begin at 6:30 p.m. and will feature members from the first class as well as two former Ambassador teams, the current AFLBS choir and instrumental ensemble, testimonies and warm fellowship. The program will conclude early enough so that individual classes will have time to gather.

Mark your calendar, contact your classmates and plan to be back at Medicine Lake in March. For more information, please call the AFLBS office at (763) 544-9501 or e-mail afbs@afic.org. Information will also be posted as it is available on the AFLBS Web site at www.fbs.org. We look forward to seeing you there!



AFLBS students returned to campus and began a shortened schedule of classes on Jan. 3. Besides the annual Missions Conference (Jan. 6-10), junior students are also required to take Evangelism and Discipleship, taught by Pastor Jim Rasmussen (right). Senior students took an elective class, Biblical Worldview (top, students share their thoughts on current philosophies), taught by Pastor Jason Holt.



Steve and Glenda Kvale and their children, Jason, Neliana, and Lenaya, share during the Missions Conference on Feb. 8.

Alumnus joins Wycliffe

Couple commissioned in Pipestone, MN, church

Steve and Glenda Kvale were commissioned as pre-field missionaries on Oct. 14, 2007, at Christ the King Free Lutheran, Pipestone, Minn. The Kvales have been accepted as a computer missionary team with Wycliffe Bible Translators. Pastor Richard Sliper officiated the service, while Pastor Phil Haugen, AFLC schools faculty member, brought the message.

The Kvales hope to be ready for mission work by October. Glenda, who is a 1987 graduate of AFLBS, grew up attending Faith Free Lutheran, Minneapolis.

The Kvales continue to share as a family with various churches. Those interested in having the Kvales share about their ministry, please e-mail Steven_Kvale@sil.org.

Our PART

BY JESSE LONG



God is at work in Tanzania, and it is a blessing to be a part of it. You, too, are an indispensable part of mission work here and around the world through your faithful prayers and support. Allow me to encourage you with a few examples of how God is at work and answering your prayers in East Africa.

II Timothy 2:2 expresses a key principle with regards to God's work in any culture — that of multiplication versus addition. It says, "And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men *who will be able to teach others also*" (emphasis mine). Without a doubt seeing this principle demonstrated each and every day has made teaching here at Waama Bible College so exciting for Ben Jore and me over the past year and a half.

We are also blessed to see the principle of multiplication at work as we have the privilege almost every weekend of participating in various village outreach events. Recently, during one such weekend, we visited an area where mission work is still quite new. As we commonly do, we had brought a number of Bibles for the local evangelists to distribute free of charge to new Christians or those who would otherwise not be able to acquire a Bible of their own. Little did we know that as we made that presentation a young man was present who had committed his life to Christ only four days prior.

Since the day of his conversion, this young man had been asking the evangelist how he could get a Bible of his own. What a blessing to be able to put a Bible in the hands of such a spiritually hungry new believer and see his faith strengthened as God used us to answer one of his very first prayers as a new Christian — the prayer for a Bible. Only eternity will fully reveal how God will use even that one



TOP: Jesse Long and Ben Jore exchange gifts with Christians in a village church.

BOTTOM: Jesse Long (left) and Ben Jore hike up Mount Guam just outside Mbulu, Tanzania.

man to multiply His work in this part of the world!

Please continue to pray not only for Ben and me, but for the many Tanzanian Christians who God is also using to spread the gospel here.

Long, a member of Atonement Free Lutheran, Arlington, Wash., is a short-term missionary with the AFLC serving in Tanzania.

DORM *Blessings*



BY LORILEE MUNDFROM

Forty years ago this September I arrived on the campus of AFLBS for the beginning of the school year. This was the school's third year of existence. The one dormitory (which is now the girls' dorm) was not quite finished, so the girls stayed in the basement of what is now the chapel on campus. We slept in what was later the choir room and is now a study room or storeroom.

It was definitely an adventure and a great way to get to know your neighbors.

About a month after school began, the girls made the trek up the hill with their belongings and moved into their newly completed dorm rooms.

Hundreds of young women have lived in that dorm since those first days. Sometimes it has been so full they could not have squeezed one more person in the dorm. Obviously all of those people have brought wear and tear to many things. Carpeting wears out, beds break, painting needs to be redone, doors need to be refinished, and security needs to be updated. All of this is normal maintenance in a school dormitory.

The blessings of attending Bible school are great. The blessings of a warm place to sleep, study, and fellowship together are wonderful. The blessings of friendships made are beautiful. God has blessed me with friends from Bible school who are life-long friends. And, of course, the blessing of meeting my husband at Bible school is best of all!

The Lord has blessed our schools with wonderful teachers, deans, dormitory heads, maintenance people,

and students.

We must be thankful for the Board of Trustees, whose responsibility it is to oversee the functioning of the schools. Most of all we must be thankful that the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity.

With the blessings of the buildings God has provided through the gifts of so many people comes responsibility for upkeep. The National WMF of the AFLC is happy to be helping out with the refurbishing of the girls' dormitory this year. Gifts designated to this project will go directly to those expenses.

When it is your turn to support this project, won't you dig deeply into your pockets to help with this? God has blessed many people through our Bible school. Let us help make it an attractive place for girls to come and be blessed as they study the Word of God.

Mundfrom, a member of Spencer Creek Lutheran, Eugene, Ore., is the president of the Women's Missionary Federation.



LEFT: The AFLBS women's dorm has been home to hundreds of students.

RIGHT: A ground breaking for the first dorm was held in March 1968.

► December memorials

FLAPS

Robert A. Olson

Marshall Likness

Cody Anderson

Home Missions

Myron Smedshammer

Lizzie Kjersten

Ralph Jort

Karen Tweed

Vardon Quanbeck

World Missions

Lloyd Haas

Ina Ness

Pastor Milo Gudim

Myron Smedshammer

Dianne Osmanski

Milton Heins

Lizzie Kjersten

Ed & Mildred

Mathison

Knute & Gerda

Knutson

Frances Kjelland

Miriam Infant Home

Thordis Thomassen

Parish Education

Pastor Ernest & Hazel

Langness

Vision

Pastor Ernest & Hazel

Langness

WMF

Agnes Haakenson

... in honor of

World Missions

Edith Gudim

Former missionaries to Brazil participate in WWII event

Abels return to Brazil for evangelism meetings

In November 2007, Pastor John and Ruby Abel traveled to Washington, D.C., as part of a World War II Veterans Honor Flight. The purpose of the trip was to honor World War II veterans and give them a chance to see the World War II Memorial and other sights in the Washington, D.C., area. During the trip Pastor Abel was asked to give the invocation at a banquet.

The Abels are returning to Brazil this winter for a visit, where they will hold tent evangelism meetings. The Abels served for many years as AFLC missionaries to Brazil.

PEOPLE AND PLACES

The theme for the **2008 Annual Conference**, scheduled for June 10-13 in Oklahoma City, Okla., is "From Him, Through Him, To Him," based on Romans 11:36.

The theme for the **2009 FLY Convention**, scheduled for July 6-11 in Estes Park, Colo., is "Firmly Planted," based on Psalm 1:1-3.

Mike Hussey, a 2004 graduate of AFLBS, has been hired as a part-time youth worker at Sunnyside Free Lutheran, Stacy Minn. He began his work on Jan. 9. Originally from Minot, N.D., Hussey recently graduated from Northwestern College, St. Paul, with a degree in youth ministry.

More ARC retreats planned for winter/spring

The Association Retreat Center, Osceola, Wis., will host several AFLC retreats this winter under the theme: "God's Plan of Salvation (Ephesians 2:4-5).

The **Couples Retreat** will be Feb. 15-16, with Pastor Lyndon and Linda Korhonen leading. The cost is \$125 per couple, with an option of staying Saturday night and breakfast on Sunday for an additional \$30.

The **Women's Retreat** will be March 28-30, with Vicki Tiede leading under the theme, "Grace Lessons." The cost is \$80.

The **Men's Retreat** will be April 18-19 with Pastor Jim Ritter leading under the theme, "Every Man Needs a Life." The cost is \$65 with the option of staying Sunday night and breakfast for an additional \$20.

For more information on the retreats listed above and other retreats, call (800) 294-2877 or visit the ARC's Web site at www.arc-aflc.org.

Legacy of Faith banquet benefits ministries

The fifth annual Pastors Brandt Legacy of Faith banquet will be held at 6:30 p.m. Feb. 8 at Abiding Savior Free Lutheran, 4100 S. Bahnson Ave., Sioux Falls, S.D. The featured guest is Pastor Steve Snipstead, Kalispell, Mont.

Pastor Snipstead serves Faith Free Lutheran Church, which has entered a partnership agreement with Shepherding the Shepherds, a new ministry started by Pastor Michael Brandt. Pastor Snipstead will share how this relationship is being used to impact the legacy of faith Christ is imprinting on the Flathead Valley.

Tickets for the banquet are available at Abiding Savior. Please call (605) 371-3800 for reservations.

The interest of moneys invested in the AFLC's Legacy Foundation is applied yearly to ongoing and new AFLC ministries to further the proclamation of the gospel of Christ. Contact Mark Sivertson at (605)-335-3511 for additional information regarding the Legacy Foundation.

AFLC BENEVOLENCES Jan. 1- Dec. 31, 2007

FUND	TOTAL (Subsidy)	REC'D IN DEC.	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$361,225	\$40,314	\$391,985	109
Youth Ministries	73,114	15,615	76,837	105
Evangelism	108,236	17,091	120,090	111
Parish Education	107,052	23,990	120,120	112
Seminary	216,097	27,940	222,739	103
Bible School	343,545	43,560	366,446	107
Home Missions	316,413	53,801	339,922	107
World Missions	287,808	59,184	301,596	105
Personal Support	407,198	49,820	492,671	121
TOTALS	\$2,220,688	\$285,755	\$2,432,406	110
TOTALS 2006	\$1,994,798	\$327,910	\$2,169,030	109

Goal 100%

These are the Annual Conference-approved budgets but do not reflect all the financial needs of the departments. Contact the individual departments for further information.

learning to relate

My parents liked to visit. Often on weekend afternoons we would go to friends' homes. It didn't have to be a special occasion. A specific reason didn't have to exist. My parents just wanted to visit their friends to see how they were doing.

My mom would occasionally visit some of the elderly from church and take me along. Those visits up 38th Street were good training for being a pastor.

We'd visit a lady who had become my adopted grandmother: Grandma Bertha. Often she'd have lefse or other treats. I learned that visiting can be pretty enjoyable. In later years her hearing got worse and my mom taught me that sometimes you need to speak up when visiting.



Pastor Craig Johnson

Ole and Petra lived next door. He'd give me a quarter when I'd come over and an apple from the tree in the fall. Some people are very appreciative of simple personal contact.

Suzanne lived on the other side of Grandma Bertha. Her house was full of a lot of delicate and fragile keepsakes. It wasn't what you'd call "little-boy friendly." My mom would have books and toys along for me to play with. She'd remind me not to touch anything and she promised we wouldn't be there long. Even if going there with a little boy along made her a bit nervous, my mom knew it was important to take time to say hi.

My mom treated these people as valuable and worthy of respect. She saw them as interesting. Their stories were worth listening to and it was good to spend time with them.

People don't visit much anymore. Our society is so busy it can be hard sometimes to make contact with others. Once on seminary internship I was going to visit some shut-ins. I called four of them and didn't find one of them at home.

If you do talk with somebody and say you want to visit, it's very possible they'll wonder why. They're liable to think something is going on, something is wrong or maybe you want something. That's sad. Seeing how your brother or sister in Christ is doing, listening and sharing and build-

ing each other up should be an ongoing part of life in the congregation.

Some time after their first missionary journey Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the brothers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing" (Acts 15:36, NIV). This led to their second missionary journey. It started out as nothing more complicated than visiting, and then God used it in spreading His Word and planting new congregations.

The work of our Association Free Lutheran Bible School and Seminary is to train those who will lead and

My mom treated people as valuable and worthy of respect. ... Their stories were worth listening to ...

serve our congregations in the future. Part of that training ought to be in relating to people. Those who have their heads full of knowledge of the Scripture but are terrible at relating to people are going to have limited effectiveness as servants of Christ.

I knew a pastor in another church body who had received good biblical education. He knew what the Word said. But soon after he began serving as a pastor somebody in his congregation died. He hadn't been around grieving people much and he felt like he didn't have a clue what to do. It would have been good if his education had included some training in how to relate to people, carry on a conversation and listen to others.

Internships are a valuable part of the seminary training experience. Some things are best learned on-the-job. The best teacher in this area, and all areas, is the Lord. The Gospels provide many examples of how Jesus is the Master at interacting with others. It is clear He enjoyed spending time with people and made it a major part of His ministry. When we have a relationship with Christ by faith, then we can find wisdom to help us as we relate to others.

building the base

BY PASTOR RICH CARR

Be on guard

If you heard on the news that a horrible new germ had been discovered that caused blindness, paralysis, brain damage, and eventually death, what would you do? You no doubt would take all the necessary steps to avoid this germ, and, if infected, you would immediately seek healing. What is sad is that there is such a problem in our culture today, and few are doing anything to combat it!

This problem once mostly attacked men and boys, but now the quickest-growing population group infected by this ailment is young girls. What is this infection you may ask? It's pornography.

Pornography leads to a blindness of reality, a paralysis of normal healthy relationships, actual chemical dependency from hormones released when viewing porn, and death of healthy relationships, as well as a literal death and separation from God in hell because of unrepentant sin.

Unfortunately, it seems that viewing porn has becoming a rite of passage for many boys. But those boys grow up and become men who have never really dealt with their sins and the effects of their sins. If left unchecked and not dealt with, men never fully overcome their exposure to porn and lead a weak, ineffectual life.

I believe one reason many men have not stepped up and become spiritual leaders at home and in the church is the result of sexual sins that started with the viewing of porn. It is possible to overcome these effects and be fully healed, yet for many men the stronghold established in their secret lives is too powerful to be overcome on their own.

For those men who are married, their partner should ask them about their purity. Wives should periodically ask their husbands if they have been pure in what they

have looked at and thought about. When sin is confessed, wives and husbands should not attack each other, but the sin. Come together as one flesh and wage war against sexual sins (as well as any other sins).

Single men, you need to have accountability partners to ask you the same questions.

Boys and girls living at home need parents who will lovingly and firmly ask questions and dig into their child's personal life to see if there are struggles that need to be dealt with.

Make sure that all Internet connections in your home are filtered to keep bad stuff away. Most of us will be weak at some point in our walk, and we need to put as many barriers between us and porn as possible. Also, families should decide what television shows are appropriate and block any shows that fail to meet moral standards. Don't allow yourself or your family to stumble at a time of weakness. We should strive to be proactive instead of just waiting for the next attack from the enemy concerning sexual sin. Fill your minds with Scripture and spiritual songs.

I recommend reading "Every Man's Battle," by Stephen Arterburn, Fred Stoeker and Mike Yorkey. "Healing the Wounds of Sexual Addiction," by Mark Laaser, is another good book. There are also different purity conferences that can help give you a jump start. Pornography's reach is only getting worse, and as Christians we are under attack more than just 10 years ago. The question that remains is, do you care enough about yourself, son, grandchild, or daughter to make a difference, or do you want the snake of pornography to wrap itself tighter around you or your loved ones?

Carr serves Christ Community Church, Hagerstown, Md.