

# THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

February 5, 2002 Volume 40, Number 2



The magazine of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, 3110 East Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55441. 763-545-5631

Editor: Rev. Craig Johnson
Assistant to the Editor:
Ruth Gunderson
Editorial Board: Rev. John Mundfrom,
Oryen Benrud, Rev. Jerry Moan, Rev.
James L. Johnson.

### **CONTENTS**

Creation evangelism page 6
Intelligent design page 6
Do origens matter? page 8
Train up your child page 10
Creation resources page 11

# The Lutheran Ambassador

(USPS 588-620 ISSN 0746-3413) is published every three weeks except monthly in June and July (16 issues per year) by the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations.

For editorial inquiries and information: The Lutheran Ambassador, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441; 763-545-5631; fax 763-545-0079; e-mail craigj@teleport.com ruthg@aflc.org

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

# **Subscriptions rates:**

\$15.00 a year, Group Rate, U. S. \$16.00 a year, Individual, U. S. \$18.00 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., Minneapolis, MN 55441

# AN ENCOURAGING WORD

# **Coming to our senses**

o God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God saw all that he had made, and it was very good" (Genesis 1:27&31a). What an awe-some creation we are. We become even more impressed as we reflect on the magnificent characteristics of our senses — starting with hearing.

The human ear, and how we hear, makes up one of the most elaborate and complicated systems in our bodies. Through God's amazing engineering, we are able to use sounds to help us interpret and communicate with the world around us. When an object moves, sound is created as waves of air molecules begin rippling out in all directions. The outer ear acts as a funnel as it catches and directs the sound to our eardrums. Then, in a process involving hydraulics, pistons and little hairs that excite nerve cells, three tiny bones (the hammer, the anvil and the stirrup) telegraph complex messages to the brain. The astonishing result is hearing frequencies between 16 and 20,000 cycles per second — a range of nearly 10 octaves.

Imagine a campfire with no crackle, or seeing a carriage roll over a cobblestone street without hearing the clackity-clack of the wheels. What would it be like if you couldn't hear the purr of your kitty, or the dripping of your faucet? Even people who are deaf report hearing a remarkable number of noises, some from within, others mere vibrations that pass through the body. Stop and listen to all the unbelievable sounds that surround you.

When man was created, he could hear (Genesis 3:8a). It is one thing to "hear," and yet quite another thing to "listen." Mark 9:7b says, "... and a voice came from the cloud: 'This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to Him.'" Most of us are poor listen-

ers. Adam and Eve were. God said to Adam, "Because you listened to your wife ..." (and not God) "... cursed is the ground because of you" (Genesis 3:17). God longs, even aches, for us to listen to Him. He doesn't want us to be "ever hearing, but never understanding."

Since our minds move so much faster than spoken word, we tend to spend more time preparing what we're going to say next when we should be listening. Do you remember what Charlie Brown's teacher sounds like? "Wuaa wuaa, wuaa wuaaaaa, wua wuaaaa." I can recall many times when people speaking to me sounded like that. I heard them, but I wasn't listening.

There is a discipline needed that requires one to quiet the mind and focus on the one speaking. Listening to God requires this same type of discipline. One must "be still and know that (He is) God," and focus on listening to His voice. One must also petition the Holy Spirit for understanding and wisdom as He speaks. Jesus said, "The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you" (John 14:26).

Helen Keller, both deaf and blind, lamented the loss of her hearing more than anything else: "The problems of deafness are deeper and more complex, if not more important, than those of blindness. Deafness is a much worse misfortune." In a spiritual sense, "listening" to the sound of God's voice is

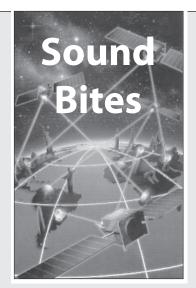
critical. We must exercise it or risk going deaf.



—Paul Kneeland Youth Pastor Faith & Stillwater Free Lutheran Kalispell, Mont. It is not difficult for me to have this faith, for it is incontrovertible that

where there is a plan there is intelligence — an orderly, unfolding universe testifies to the truth of the most majestic statement ever uttered — "In the beginning, God."

— Dr. Arthur H. Compton Nobel Laureate (Physics)



The Bible is supreme truth, and therefore it is the standard by which scientific theory should be evaluated, not vice versa.

— John MacArthur

I just cannot believe that everything developed by random mutations ... - Dr. Dennis Gabor Winner of 1971 Nobel Prize in Science

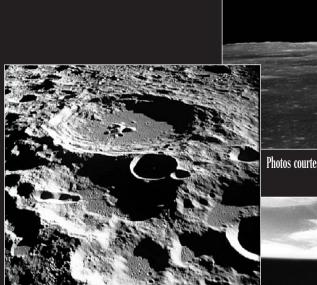
... as I became exposed to the law and order of the universe, I was literally humbled by its unerring perfection. I became convinced that there must be a divine intent behind it all ... My experiences with science led me to God. They challenge science to prove the existence of God. But must we really light a candle to see the sun?"

— Dr. Wernher von Braun

So many essential conditions are necessary for life to exist on our earth that it is mathematically impossible that all of them could exist in proper relationship by chance on any one earth at one time."

> — Dr. A. Cressy Morrison, past president of the New York Academy of Sciences

# Go preach





Photos courtesy of NASA



Bottom two photos by Alexander Bruschke

ut we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block and unto the Greeks foolishness" (1 Corinthians 1:23).

The Jews had a hard time seeing their need for salvation when they were looking for a king who would free them from Roman rule. But the Greeks, with a heritage of polytheism (many gods) and without Old Testament history, didn't understand original sin and the fear of standing before the judgment seat of an awesome God. Paul's evangelistic approach to these two groups is contrasted in Acts 17:1-4 and 17:18-34.

Atheists have controlled textbook content in the U.S. for the last few generations, and many people now think like the Greeks of Paul's day. They believe that humans are basically good, so who needs a god or a savior. Besides, "sin talk" is bad for their children's self esteem. And evolution is their creation story, which they pass off as science.

Paul's approach to the Greeks is the approach we must use to address this generation. Note his four elements:

First, (vs. 22-25) Paul began where the Greeks were. He knew their culture and thinking. They did not think in terms of a creator God. They did not have a true concept of their origin. Therefore, Paul began by complimenting them on their religious concerns, even to the point of their not wishing to offend a god that they didn't even know. Paul used this point to introduce them to the Creator.

Following Paul's example, we must begin by understanding the non-Christian culture around us. Most non-Christians in our materialistic society believe that evolution is a fact that has been proven by science, and something every thinking person accepts. This concept eliminates the need for a creator. Subconsciously, they believe that people are inherently good and all they need is a good public school education to bring it out. At death all is over, so enjoy the good life. And for those who might consider the fact that God does exist, everything will be OK; God will accept them for their good life lived.

Christians also need to equip themselves by studying the material available on the creation/evolution issue in order to be able to discuss it intelligently with non-Christians. A good starter book on the subject is "The Answers Book" edited by Don Batten and published by Master Books. Since I have conducted scientific research for almost 40 years and have studied the philosophy and history of science, I assure you that there is nothing to fear from science. The roots of science are deep in Christianity. And if God is Creator, then all creation will honor and point to Him (Romans 1:20). Strictly speaking, evolution does not qualify as science, but comes under a branch of philosophy called metaphysics (Colossians 2:10).

Basically, our society encourages the concept of "do your own thing." We should practice "tolerance." Whatever is good for you is OK. The ultimate result of this attitude is anarchy and the eventual need for a king or dictator in society. Israel got a king when "everyone did what was right in their own eyes" (Judges 21:25). The French got Napoleon after their revolution for having the same attitude. For the individual, the end is hell. And Jesus spoke more of hell than He did of heaven. It is real and fearful. We should not desire anyone to end there thus our concern for our neighbors.

Having equipped ourselves we must be open to opportunities to speak to our neighbors on the vital issues of life with respect and love.

Second, (vs. 26-28) Paul explained that we are all related back to Adam and Eve, even quoting the Grecian poets to support his point. And as such we have all sinned and will therefore die (Romans 5:12).

If we have gained the respect of our neighbors, then we need to introduce them to the idea that we are all sinful and in rebellion against God. If God did create, then by definition, He has the right to set the rules and demand obedience. Yes, He is a just God who must punish sin.

Third, (vs. 29-30) Paul explained the problem with the Greek religions and their need for repentance before they stand before the eternal Judge.

We need to appeal to people's inner consciences, however dulled they may be. Realizing their rebellion against God, there is now a need for repentance and seeking His forgiveness.

And finally, (vs. 31) Paul gave them the hope of eternal life.

We need to assure unbelievers that He is also a loving God who has paid the price for all who would repent and seek His grace. He offers the hope of an eternity with Him.

It may be a long journey to bring a friend from a life of denying God and accepting Satan's lie of evolution to bowing before Christ in repentance and accepting His forgiveness. We must rely on prayer and the Holy Spirit to accomplish the task. And let us remember to be ready always to give an answer to everyone that asks us a reason for the hope that is in us — but with meekness and fear (I Peter 3:15).

Not everyone will accept Christ, but some will. The street opposite the Aeropagus in Athens is named "Dionysius the Aeropagite" for a man who became a Christian that day when Paul spoke (Acts 17:34).

> — Dr. Robert Kohl Calvary Free Lutheran Arlington, S.D.





y daughter, Alicia, came home the other day with a striking definition of the word "design" from her seventh-grade biology textbook. What was striking about it was the way it managed to define the "design" of living things in terms of their complex working order while carefully avoiding the obvious implications of the English word: In order to have a design, something must be designed. And in order to be designed, it must have a designer. The textbook was careful to avoid that implication, of course.

That the universe, the Earth, and all living things are created — in fact designed — by God is an absolutely fundamental teaching of the Christian faith. It is foundational to our understanding of ourselves and our relationship to God. Yet, it is commonly thought today that modern science has produced powerful evidence against that belief. In physics, the dominant theory regarding the origins of the universe is the big-bang theory: the universe arose out of an enormous explosion. Biology, on the

other hand, is utterly dominated by the theory of evolution: all living things on Earth evolved by purely natural means — "by chance and natural selection" — from one or very few simple organisms. As typically expressed, neither theory mentions God.

It is extremely controversial, of course, exactly how powerful the evidence is for these theories. But at the very least, many scientists believe that the evidence is powerful. Is there strong scientific evidence, then, that the universe, the Earth and all the living were not created by God? Despite rhetoric to the contrary from atheistic-leaning scientists, it seems to me that the answer is actually no. In fact, as physicists and biologists have both progressed in their understanding of the universe and life, the shoe seems to be ever more on the other foot.

As physicists have learned more and more about the inner workings of the universe, many have been struck by how many factors have to be "just right" in order for the universe to be anything like the way it is — and in order for it to support life. The

strength of the force of gravity, the strength of the forces holding atoms together — and apart — the strength of electromagnetism, the speed of light, the masses of basic particles, all have to be nearly exactly as they are for the universe to be anything like it is and for it to be capable of supporting life. In fact, if the universe did begin with a big bang, the bang (its rate of expansion and how much was flying in each direction) would have had to have been "just right" to get a universe like this.

All these factors seem as if they could have been different; and yet they're all exactly as they need(ed) to be in order for us to be here. It looks for all the world as if someone was "tweaking the dials,"

"fine tuning" the universe for us. This is not what we would expect if it all happened just by chance. If it did, we got unspeakably lucky, luckier than any lottery winner has ever been. On the other hand, if the God we believe in exists, this evidence is more or less what we would expect. This constitutes powerful evidence for, not against, our belief that we're all created by God.

For the last several years, moreover, a number of scientists and philosophers of science have been making similar observations about living things. Living things exhibit complex working structures, for example, that couldn't function without all their parts working together properly. It's hard to imagine how

such things could have arisen by mere chance and natural selection. Such structures couldn't plausibly have arisen all at once, just by chance. But it's also hard to see how they could have arisen piecemeal. Any part of the whole structure would have been "dead weight" for the organism, and would have been selected against, not for, by natural selection. Moreover, even the simplest life is so complex that (textbook mythology not withstanding) nobody even has a plausible theory about how it even could have arisen in the first place without an intelligent designer. Contrary to earlier expectations, the (sub) microscopic workings of living things are more, not less, complex than their visible structures. So explaining life's complexity by naturalistic evolution from simple components is becoming less and less plausible.

The so-called "fossil record" also does not reveal what you would expect to find if life arose and developed as purely naturalistic, classical evolutionary theory posits. One would expect to find fossils of many transitional forms, as one kind of organism slowly evolves into another, and another, etc. What we actually find consists almost entirely of the sudden appearance of, and then variations on, basic themes. In fact, most of the basic body designs of the living things around us appear to have arisen all at once in the Cambrian Explosion. This is not what one would expect to find if life arose and developed by mere chance and natural selection; it is not surprising at all, however, if it was created by God. In fact, given the incredible complexity of living things, many have thought that if life did evolve to this point by chance from simpler beginnings, the

whole game must have been rigged in the first place. Someone extremely intelligent and powerful must have set it up. Our biological knowledge clearly supports, rather than contradicts, our belief in a creator God.

Contrary to popular opinion, even if these scientific theories are or were true, it doesn't follow that God didn't create everything. To infer otherwise is like concluding that God didn't create you because your parents played some role, or that a painting was not produced by a painter, because a brush was involved. God often uses one thing to create another; He used your parents to create you, and He used dirt to create Adam.

Certain scientific theories have seemed to explain the origins and complexity of our world without reference to an intelligent Designer. On closer inspection, however, and with the help of the scientists pursuing these very theories, it is becoming increasingly clear that the most plausible ultimate explanation of these things is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

— Dr. Jonathan Strand Associate professor of philosophy Concordia College of Alberta Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

For more information, see "Signs of Intelligence: Understanding Intelligent Design," edited by William Dembski and James Kushiner, Brazos Press, 2001.

intelligent and powerful must have set it up. Our biological knowledge clearly supports, rather than contradicts, our belief in a creator God.



# Doorigins matter?

here did I come from? Why am I here? Where am I going? These are the three great cosmic questions that have bewildered mankind for centuries.

At the core, the answers to these questions can have just two foundations: natural or supernatural. Either we came from nothing as a result of chance and time or we were designed and created. Either we are here for no reason or we have a purpose. And either we are hopelessly going nowhere or we have an eternal existence. How we handle the second and third questions depends on our worldview on the first one.

The Columbine High School killings a few years ago are one chilling example of how our worldview on origins determines how we live our lives. While the media and "powers-that-be" were wondering why a middle-class, white, churchgoing family could have fostered such a monster, the obvious was overlooked. The autopsy report contained this long-ignored entry, "External Examination: The body [of Eric Harris] is clothed in a bloodstained, white t-shirt with the inscription 'Natural Selection' on the front ..." And on Harris' Web page, Darwin's theory of evolution, specifically his suggestion of natural selection, stood out. He wrote, "YOU KNOW WHAT I LOVE??? Natural SELECTION! It's the best thing that ever happened to the Earth. Getting rid of all the stupid and weak organisms ... but it's all natural! YES!"

As horrible as the Columbine tragedy was, we should not be surprised. Nearly our entire culture — our government, our schools, our media, our universities, our businesses and, sadly enough, many of our religious institutions — espouse an unquestionable belief in Evolution. And I use a capital "E" instead of lowercase because it is a belief, a religion. It's unbelievable what you have to believe to remain an unbeliever. Evolution requires that everything came from nothing, was condensed to a single particle smaller than the period at the end of this sentence, exploded into the universe and created order. It requires that life arose from non-life, and by some mechanism, continues to become more complex with time — all of this in the name of science. And whenever we find difficulties in the theory, the solution comes with the addition of longer periods of time. Therefore, chance plus time is the answer for everything.

The Scientific Method requires that something be observable, testable, and repeatable none of which apply to Evolution. It is, therefore, only a theory — and a poor one at that. While our culture will not allow the questioning of the theory, it cannot decide how to teach it.

Scientists vehemently disagree about the theory, but when questioned by someone suggesting that God created the universe, they "circle the wagons" of evolutionary bias and it's the end of the discussion.

If indeed our worldview is one of materialistic naturalism through time and chance, then we are just an accident. If we're just an accident, then we're here for no reason, so it doesn't matter what we do. There is no right or wrong, only situational ethics (at the time, Eric Harris believed it was the right thing to "express" his anger). And if we came accidentally from nowhere, and if we are here for no reason, then obviously, we are going nowhere. We will simply

be completing the evolutionary "circle of life" and become part of the environment. It's no wonder after our children get out of science class we have to send them to "self-esteem" class the next hour.

Of course, Christians can be confident that the Word of God provides the answers to the great cosmic questions. God created the world in six days (Exodus 20:11), including mankind, not so very long ago. He created us for fellowship and to choose Him (Acts 17:27). We are

If we're just an accident, then we're here for no reason, so it doesn't matter what we do. There is no right or wrong, only situational ethics.

here for a purpose to "make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19), and we have the hope of eternal life with Him (John 3:16).

> — Merlin Satrom Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran Lakeville, Minn.



Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran in Lakeville, Minn., will host a presentation on creation and evolution from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Feb. 17 and 24. This presentation will include the "icons" of evolution, the problems and necessary assumptions of evolution, a look at the evidence for creation, and the biblical truth of origins. Minnesota Valley is located at Dakota County 46 (160th Street) and Hawthorne Path in Lakeville. Call (952) 432-7197 or visit www.mvflc.org for more information.

# Train Up A Child

he "fact" of evolution.
That's what I heard my
teacher say one day in my
high school biology class.
I thought quickly. The
last I checked, evolution was still a
"theory." Right, teacher?

As it turns out, I would have to raise that question many times in both high school and college. The teacher, smiling demurely, would let the question hang for a minute, then move on to the next lesson. There was, after all, a curriculum to follow. So, lesson after lesson, study guide after study guide, would be built on a "theory." All the while, I struggled to separate my belief in creation from my goal to maintain straight 'A's. It meant memorizing phrases like "survival of the fittest" and "gene mutation." But it didn't mean I took it as fact.

I believed something else. I was a critical thinker. Why? I was taught, long before those science classes, about God, Adam and Eve by my parents and Sunday school teachers. I went on, before college, to learn more at AFLBS.

Becoming a critical thinker takes involvement by parents. In a fast-paced world where many times both Mom and Dad work full-time jobs, and kids are told to fit in or else, the status quo at school can become an acceptable alternative. Beware: it only takes one generation for a culture to lose knowledge of their Creator. According to a Bible study by Ken Ham, a Christian author and founder of Answers in Genesis International Ministries. the Israelites of Joshua's time are a good example of this. While one generation chose to serve God, their children forgot and did evil in His sight (Judges 2:7,10-11).

Proverbs 22:6 says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

It's an easy concept, promising lasting results. But how should you teach your child about creation?

First, glorify God. Go through the first two chapters of Genesis, where the

story of creation begins. While evolutionists have their "Origin of the Species," Christians have the Bible, which is the foundation for Christian thought. Darwin's epic, fraught with human theory, lacks the divine inspiration of the highest order contained in the Bible. So when you talk to your children, reflect that. Let them know this story is indisputable. Teach them the reality of Adam and Eve and their Creator God.

In a curriculum written by Stacia Byers, Answers in Genesis suggests going through the events of each day of creation. Be sure to emphasize that the days of creation were normal, not years, decades or eons of time. Note that what God created was "very good" (Genesis 1:31), and man was made "in His own image" (Genesis 1:27).

Second, study up. Once you take on the role of teacher, your child is bound to have questions. Questions he won't dare ask the teacher in front of a class full of students. But your child will trust you for the answers. So be ready. Read your Bible. Find Christian resources in the local library, church library, through your pastor or on the World Wide Web. Treat your task as a chance to bone up on biblical creation, evolutionary theory, Epicureanism, design theory, natural selection and much more. You'll find yourself learning far more than you ever thought and ready for anyone who asks you to defend your

Third, use examples. Dinosaurs, created on the sixth day, were part of God's design and have a

belief.

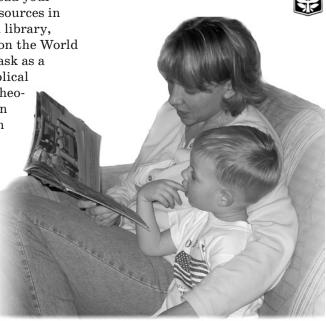
purpose in this world. Or astronomy, first mentioned in Genesis 1, is also part of God's design and can lead to interesting discussions on a creation worldview. Biology can lead to a discussion on the wonderful design of a mighty Creator.

Fourth, make it fun. Answers in Genesis, which has created several series of books and videos for children, suggests using dinosaurs a teaching device in your lessons at home. You can also go on field trips to a local museum, planetarium or even your backyard, where you can find many examples of nature designed by God, either on the ground or in the sky. Use crafts or games to reinforce your lessons.

Whether it be through structured lessons, daily family devotions or casual conversations, your children are looking to you to answer questions they have as they head into the world. Don't let them forget what you've been taught. Pass it on.

"Our children will live forever — in either heaven or hell. It's the parents' responsibility to provide their children with the proper worldview by building their thinking on the Word of God. Parents must teach their children the true history of the universe and that eternal life comes by trusting in Jesus alone" ("Answers with Ken Ham").

— Ruth Gunderson Assistant Editor





"All Things Bright and Beautiful" Colorful pictures and textured objects to touch and feel help teach young children the lyrics of this hymn. Child-safe mirror shows that baby is part of God's wonderful creation. Soft edges and cover for ages 1-3. \$7.50

"This is the World that God Made" Martha Streufert Jander The six days of Creation beautifully illustrated for young children with 16 pages of full-color artwork. \$2.75

Larger 15"x18" book also available for classroom use. \$16.95



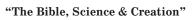


# "The Amazing Story of Creation from Science and the Bible"

Duane T. Gish Illustrated account of the creation of the world and of man written especially for teaching young people the truth about the origin of life. Integrates facts of science with Scripture. Hardback. Ages 10

#### "Who Made the World" Andy Robb WHO MADE THE

Was it a bang? A boom? Did something or someone create the world? This book tackles the scientific theories to teach young children that God made the world. Ages 3-7. \$6.25

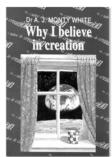


Henry M. Morris Easily understood, carefully documented pamphlet summarizing scientific, biblical and practical evidences for creation as the true explanation of life and all things. Morris explains why creation is the foundation of a saving, living faith in Christ. \$.95 each; 100 or more \$.75 each

# "Why I Believe in Creation"

WORLD

A. J. Monty White Who or what is responsible for all the things we see around us? When did it all begin? Is everything the result of a definite act of creation by an almighty God, or a product of chance natural processes? Study some of the scientific facts that support creation and reveal flaws in evolution relating to the origin of the universe, species, and human-



kind, the fossil record, and the age of the Earth. This booklet emphasizes that creation is a foundational doctrine of Christianity. Junior high-adult. \$3.50

# "The Genesis Solution"

Ken Ham

This 45-minute video helps Christians understand the relevance of the creation/evolution issue, including several vital points about the importance of Genesis. Ages 10-adult. \$17.95

"The Caring Creator"

Walk through the Bible from the

days of Creation to the coming of

the King. Clearly presents God's

plan for mankind and the wonder-

ful message of the gospel. Ages 5

Carine MacKenzie

and up. \$6.25

and up. \$17.00

# "The Wonders of God's Creation"

Discover the awesome miracles that surround us and learn more about the Master Creator. Junior high-adult. \$39.95/set or \$14.95 each video

Planet Earth — observe the hidden miracles of life on this planet we call home.

Animal Kingdom — marvel at the evidence of design and variety within the world of animals. *Human Life* — explore the wonder of humanity, from the

mechanics of bones to the miracles of emotion.

Available from AFLC Parish Education. Phone: (763) 545-5631 Fax: (763) 545-0079

"The Creation" Edited by Ken Ham & John D. Morris

reator

The universe, planet Earth, living beings - how did they come to exist in all their beauty and mystery? Why does evil exist in our world? This book teaches about Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, the Flood, the Tower of Babel and how the ancient

The reation

Henry M. Morris Ph I

writings of the Bible give us a better understanding of our modern world. Ages 7 and up. \$7.25

# E-mail: parished@aflc.org Other resources:

Institute for Creation Research, 1-800-628-7640, www.icr.org Answers in Genesis, 1-800-778-3390, www.answersingenesis.org



# Planning continues for 2002 Annual Conference



# Housing information now available



The El Campo Civic Center, above, is the site of the 2002 AFLC Annual Conference. Faith Lutheran Church, left, will host the conference, set for June 12-16 in El Campo, Texas.

Planning for the 2002 Annual Conference is now under way. Hosted by Faith Lutheran Church, El Campo, Texas, the event will be June 12-16 at the El Campo Civic Center. The theme is "Exalted Among the Nations" with Psalm 46:10 the theme verse.

Lodging information can be found below. Rooms will not be blocked this year, so reservations need to be made early.

For more information, contact the AFLC at (763) 545-5631, or Faith Lutheran at (409) 543-1842. Registration forms will be included in an upcoming issue of The Ambassador. They will also be found online, with additional information on the conference, at www.aflc.org.

Housing information: Moonlight Bed & Breakfast, Palacios, Texas, 1-877-461-7070.

White Lodge Inn, El Campo,

Texas, (979) 543-3358.

Shoney's Inn & Suites, El Campo, 1-800-222-2222.

El Campo Inn, El Campo, 1-888-593-7660.

Best Western Executive Inn, El Campo, (979) 543-7033.

Bay Prairie Lodge, Midfield, Texas, (512) 588-6565.

**RV Park:** 

United Enterprises, El Campo, (979) 543-1941.

# Vision 2004 campaign update — January

The AFLC Schools Board of Trustees has set March 31 as the ingathering date for Phase II (the new student center) at the AFLBS campus. The estimated cost is \$3 million.

If 20 people in each church (of 250 AFLC churches) were to give a gift of \$100 each year for three years, and matched that gift each year to AAL or Lutheran Brotherhood, it would equal \$3 million.

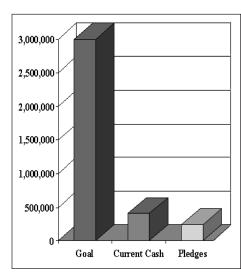
Last September, board members implemented a plan to recruit and train about 70 volunteers who are

committed to Christ and the AFLC schools in presenting the needs of the schools through Vision 2004.

One couple sent a gift of \$3,000 to Vision 2004 saying, "If we had not been asked or told about the needs at our schools, we wouldn't have given this gift."

The time is critical for individuals and churches to get involved, either to give a gift or to ask others to give. Like the couple mentioned, there are people waiting to be asked.

- Vision 2004





The Mark Ensrud family was taken in as new members on Dec. 2, 1001, at Ny Stavanger Lutheran, Buxton, N.D. Pictured are (from left) Pastor Bruce Peterson, Elaine, Kara, Mark and Brian Ensrud.



Pastor Gerald Gettis was installed at Calvary Free Lutheran, Mesa, Ariz., on Dec. 9, 2001. Pictured are (front, left to right) Corrine Kjeluik, Eldwyn Van Bruggen, Harvey Loftsgaard, Gettis and Pastor Tony Stockman; (back row) Vint Bruflat, Pastor Steve Mundfrom, Pastor Al Monson, Todd Beasley and Pastor Paul Nash.

# Free Lutheran Seminary, AFLBS benefit from AAL gift-matching

Aid Association for Lutherans presented a grant of \$6,945 to the FLS and \$6,230 to AFLBS through the AAL Member Gift-Matching Program. The totals reflect AAL's matched portion of contributions received from members during the third quarter of 2001.

Annual gifts of \$25 to \$100 made by AAL members to participating Lutheran elementary or secondary schools, colleges or seminaries are matched dollar-for-dollar by AAL.



More than 60 youth workers and Free Lutheran Youth officers attended a Youth Workers Retreat in January at the ARC.

# Youth workers meet, hold first Federation Council in 20 years

Youth workers from throughout the AFLC met Jan. 11-13 at the sixth annual Youth Workers Retreat at the ARC in Osceola, Wis. Part of the retreat included a training session using Sonlife Strategies.

For the first time in 20 years, youth workers met for a Free Lutheran Youth Federation Council meeting, where youth ministry representatives gave input into the planning of the national youth convention. Fifteen of the 16 districts were represented. Pastor Jason Holt of Fergus Falls, Minn., the new president of the Free Lutheran Youth Committee, presided over the meeting. Discussion ranged from the coordination of transportation to music and worship style. The discussion was open and friendly and recognized that evangelism is the primary purpose of the convention.

Pastor Dennis Gray is now serving at Christ Free Lutheran, Devils Lake, N.D., and Trinity Free Lutheran, Minnewaukan, N.D.

Mercy and Truth Publishing has a new Web site located at www.wiktel.net/mtp. The site offers a listing of publications, books sermons and Bible studies. It also offers a mail discipleship correspondence course.

Members of the Coordinating Committee voted Jan. 14 to accept Lutheran Church of the Cross, Laguna Woods, Calif., as members of the AFLC.

Members of the Coordinating Committee placed Pastor John Chandler, Amarillo, Texas, onto the AFLC clergy roster from the fellowship roster.

Pastor Robert Lee installed Pastor Walter Beaman at Hosanna Free Lutheran, St. James, Minn. The event marked the first Sunday Beaman's wife, Ellen, was able to attend church since an accident last fall.



Members of First Lutheran Church, Oklahoma City, Okla., celebrated their centennial anniversary on Jan. 12-13 with a hymn festival and special service.

# **WMF Memorials**

# **November & December**

Fern Hume, Morris, Ill. Irene Oswood, Morris Lydia McCarlson, Bowdle, S.D. Estella Swanson, Pukwana, S.D. Clarice Dean, Spicer, Minn. Norma Larson, Mizpah, Minn. John Wagner, S.D., N.D. Al McHenry, S.D., N.D. Phyllis Waterland, S.D., N.D. Albin Johnson, Wallace, S.D. Dorothy Rehder, Lennox, S.D. Gladys Swanson, Lennox Melvin Christensen, Sioux Falls, S.D. Leonard Dahl, Sioux Falls Helen Swanson, Sioux Falls Eldon Nelson, Beresford, S.D. Gerald Wastell, Beresford Louise Johnson, Glenwood, Minn. Paul Bjornson, Valley City, N.D. Evelyn Miller, Waubay, S.D. Mildred Gregerson, Waubay Maxine Tofte, Bruce, S.D. Bernice Nelson, Bruce Virgil Haaseth, Brookings, S.D. Laverne Thramer, Birchdale, Minn.

Correction: Hans Nielsen Hauge's name was misspelled in the "Christmas Revival" article in the Dec. 18, 2001, issue of The Lutheran Ambassador.

#### 14 THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

# **AFLC Memorial Gifts: December**

Department given to  $\dots$ 

In memory of...

Vision 2004

Jack AberleEckhart HeidRon NelsonHoward SeversonDorothy JacobsonPhyllis StrandKenneth KnudsvigAllen RovangHarlan Mickelson

**Home Missions** 

Mrs. Alden Bevre Wallace Brown Leona Stockman

**AFLBS** 

Ben Winther Clinton Gjevre Rose Holland Erling Henning Christian Hoseth Allen Rovang Knut and Ingeborg Sabo

**AFLTS** 

Thelma Amundson Clinton Gjevre Adrian Hamann
Terry Rider Allen Rovang Arlene Iverson

**Evangelism** 

Ethelyn Bottolfson Cynthia Bottolfson

World Missions

Bernice Nelson Clarice Dean Lee Quanbeck Dorothy Jacobson Inger Ohnstad Harry Johnson Ella Alme Allen Rovang Wallace Ekman Rev. Elder Oscarson Adrian Hamann Albert Overby Edwin C. Mathison Leona Stockman Virgil Haaseth Clyde Conrad Arlene Iverson Arthur Ferguson

Knute and Gerde Knutson

General Fund

Ethelyn Bottolfson Cynthia Bottolfson Lester Davidson

**Youth Ministries** 

Christian Olson Hubert Mogen

Lutheran Ambassador

Ethelyn Bottolfson Cynthia Bottolfson

In honor of...

Vision 2004

Carlton Leikvold Rev. Mark Olson family

Tim Jones

World Missions

# **Association of Free Lutheran Congregations**

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

# AFLC Benevolences (12 months) - January 1 - December 31, 2001

-				
FUND	TOTAL	REC'D IN	TOTAL REC'D	%
	Subsidy	DECEMBER	TO DATE	TOTAL
General Fund	\$267,241.00	\$38,544.92	\$288,717.33	108
Seminary	126,462.00	19,051.33	168,567.75	133
Bible School	162,545.00	24,385.56	225,982.17	139
Home Missions	242,838.00	20,714.64	265,442.94	109
World Missions	206,762.00	45,296.25	233,026.28	113
Capital Investment	9,490.00	2,995.52	9,824.71	104
Parish Education	78,302.00	16,037.88	85,718.55	109
Church Extension	26,119.00	9,195.66	27,291.75	104
TOTALS	\$1,119,759.00	\$176,221.76	\$1,304,571.48	117
TOTALS 2000	.\$1,147,510.00	\$128,869.68	\$1,043,498.05	91
Goal 100%				
Evangelism	91,800.00	8,015.96	116,936.67*	127
Youth Ministries	48,375.00	3,379.50	31,007.01	64
	Includes grants received*			

# A matter of pride

n Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale, "The Emperor's New Clothes," the vain Emperor is fooled into parading through town wearing nothing at all. He has been told that he is wearing the finest of clothes, but they cannot be seen by anyone who is too stupid or ignorant to appreciate their quality. He certainly does not want to be placed in the category of a fool, so he claims to see the clothes. The people of the town do the same. Finally, a child speaks up. He points out that the Emperor is wearing nothing at all. Other people now feel free to agree with what they knew all along to be true. The Emperor, however, is unwilling to humble himself and admit he has been duped.

Many in our society have been duped. They have been force-fed the theory of evolution. They have been told it is supported by an overwhelming amount of scientific evidence. It is presented as a fact that is only disputed by those who are ignorant and incompetent. If you do not believe it and do not see the evidence, it is considered proof that you are a fool. But the reality is, the Emperor has no clothes.

"Evolutionism is a fairy tale for grown-ups. This theory has helped nothing in the progress of science. It is useless," says Professor Louis Bounoure, director of research at the French National Center of Scientific

Research. Journalist and philosopher Malcolm Muggeridge states, "I myself am convinced that the theory of evolution, especially the extent to which it's been applied, will be one of the great jokes in the history books of the future." Pastor and author John MacArthur writes: "There is no proof whatsoever that the universe evolved naturally. Evolution is a mere theory — and a questionable, constantly changing one at that. Ultimately, if accepted at all, the theory of evolution must be taken by sheer faith."

To think that something as complex as the human body along with the rest of creation came about by chance is an incredible leap of faith. It is a leap supposedly based on solid scientific evidence, but the evidence does not exist. Yet, many do not want to point out that the support for the theory is weak and the logic is lacking. Just as the Emperor and the townspeople did not want to appear stupid and incompetent, so many do not want to go against the supposed experts. They go along, assuming the support for the

theory must be there, even if it cannot be seen.

It was pride and vanity that motivated the Emperor and his subjects and it is pride that lies at the root of much of the interest in and support for the theory of evolution. It can be humbling to admit we are a creation, but God's Word states, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:27, NIV). We are not self-made. Someone greater than us brought us into being.

Evolution encourages pride by claiming we exist because we are victors of a survival of the fittest struggle. God's Word, however, says we are not here as the result of the hard work of our species, but as the result

> of God's work. We have value and significance, not because we are the fittest survivors, but because we are each one a unique creation of God, "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14, NIV). Since we are here as a result of His work, it means there is One in authority over us, to whom we must listen.

Admitting that reality involves admitting we do not have the rights and authority we sometimes claim. "By embracing evolution, modern society aims to do away with morality, responsibility, and guilt. Society has embraced evolution with such enthusiasm because people imagine that it eliminates the Judge and

leaves them free to do whatever they want without guilt and without consequences," asserts MacArthur. We do not have the right to damage our bodies with whatever we want to consume, to use our bodies in immoral acts, to look at another body within a womb as something that can be destroyed in abortion, or to think life can be ended early if we encounter pain and suffering. It is the Creator who gave life who alone has authority over how it is used and when it is ended.

The Creator in His authority would have been completely justified if He chose to destroy or abandon His creation. But in His mercy and grace, God the Creator chose to become part of creation. He endured the punishment that we His rebellious creatures deserved. Because of His work we can be in a relationship with our Creator, and we can look forward to when "the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God" (Romans 8:21, NIV).

- Pastor Craig Johnson

We are not self-made. Someone greater than us brought us into being.

### THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd. Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

# BUILDING THE BASE

# What is a miracle?

t has been called "the miracle on ice." It happened during the winter Olympics held in 1980 at Lake Placid, N.Y. The United States Olympic hockey

team skated away with the gold medal after a fantastic finish, coming from behind to defeat the heavily-favored, powerful Russian national team 4-3 in the semi-finals and then outskating the fast, talented Finnish squad in the gold-medal game.

Experts considered this a "miracle" for several reasons: the U.S. team was not included among the hockey "powers" as the games began that year; they were thought to be mediocre at best. The

players on the team were not a collection of superstars, but a group of young collegians, most of whom would never become professional hockey stars. And, finally, they had to defeat two of the favorites, both the swift Fins and the mighty Soviets, to capture the gold.

Perhaps you recall the images

from that "miraculous moment" with winning goalie Jim Craig skating around the arena, the American flag draped over his shoulders.
Certainly this was an unusual occur-

The spiritual

miracle that

God works in

people by faith

is far more

astounding to

me than any

magnificent

display of His

power.

rence. But should it be called a "miracle?"

What exactly constitutes a miracle? Webster defines it as "an extraordinary event manifesting a supernatural work of God." That would be more in line with our thinking. We would include the parting of the Red Sea for Moses, Jesus' feeding of the 5,000, along with Christ's resurrection from the dead as real miracles. Certainly the birth of a son, Isaac, to Abraham and Sarah at the

ages of 100 and 90, respectively, would qualify as a miracle.

But even more remarkable is what God says in regards to Abraham after the promise of that son was reiterated to him in Genesis 15:6. Scripture says, "Abraham believed the Lord, and He credited it to him as righteousness." The mira-

cle is that God's favor and His righteousness would be credited to Abraham simply on the basis of His faith. God did not require that he do something to earn it; God didn't ask for some great display of Abraham's obedience, nor that he perform many selfless acts of mercy or service to become worthy of being called righteous. Abraham simply took God at His word and trusted His promise. For that, he is remembered as the Father of Faith.

The spiritual miracle that God works in people by faith is far more astounding to me than any magnificent display of His power. When God welcomes and receives into His family sinful people who not only are indifferent, but actively rebellious toward His gestures of love, that is a miracle.

When God offers forgiveness to those who trust in Christ's blood as payment for their sins, rather than demanding retribution or punishment, that is a miracle.

When the Lord changes a person on the inside — when hearts that are cold and dead are made warm and alive — that is what constitutes

a miracle.

— Pastor John Mundfrom Spencer Creek Lutheran Eugene, Ore.

