



## THE LUTHERAN **AMBASSADOR**

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#### The Lutheran Ambassador

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### AN ENCOURAGING WORD

## The essence of prayer

"Hearken to the sound of my cry, my King and my God, for to Thee do I pray" (Psalm 5:2, RSV)

he altar painting of historic Trinity Lutheran Church near Augsburg College and Seminary in Minneapolis, the church long since a victim of freeway construction, showed Jesus standing in prayer as dawn was to break. In the many times I worshiped at Trinity as a student. I read over and over the Norvegian words beneath the picture, and they became seared in my mind; "Og aarle da det endnu var ganske mørkt, stod Han op, gikk ud til et øde sted og bad der" (Mark 1:35). These say that Jesus got up very early, went out to a lonely place and prayed.

Jesus was the Son of God. with all power, but in His humiliation and assuming servanthood for us, he felt the need for the communication with the Father, and this we call prayer. If He felt this need, surely we ought to also if we love God and Jesus.

It is so easy for us mortals to see requests for physical and material needs as prayer. Never before have there been as many such needs made known in prayer lists and prayer chains. And surely we can approach the Lord about these things.

Not as easily are the matters of the spirit made subjects of prayer. In early childhood Mother and Father taught me a little prayer in Norwegian. Certainly they must have explained to me what it meant, but I am afraid it got to be only a repetition of poorly pronounced words. But later on now, I have come to appreciate what my parents were wanting me to pray. It goes like this: "God bend my young heart to true fear of God and obedience." The fear of God is a childlike fear, not a slavish one.

That was a fine prayer to pray, not only for a child, but for anyone who desires to follow the Lord. The bending of the will toward God, the making it pliable and malleable, is a constant challenge in the Christian walk. Prayer in its essence is seeking the will of God, coupled with the desire to follow that will when it has become clear. Jesus is the great example of this in His Gethsemane prayers. He was ready to bow, to bend to what the Father wanted, and He did.

The psalmist, David, called upon the Lord in the morning, even as Jesus did. He felt it a good time to set the day's course so that it might follow the path laid out by the Lord. A day's prayers must not be confined to morning hours, but they must begin there no matter how busy we are.



- Pastor Raynard Huglen Newfolden, Minnesota

When some-

one asked Charles Spurgeon the secret of his success, he replied, "My people pray for me."

- Everett Hind



Everything in God's store is on the bottom shelf - you have to get on your knees to get it. - Robert Collier

We too often approach prayer the same way we approach a fast-food drivethrough window. Simply place your order, wait a few minutes, and then retrieve your answer. However, that's not the way prayer works. - Terrance Klein

Prayer is a powerful thing, for God has bound and tied himself thereto. None can believe how powerful prayer is, and what it is able to effect, but those who have learned it by experience. - Martin Luther

People who do not pray never rise to any eminence of piety. People of piety are always people of prayer. People are never noted for the simplicity and strength of their faith unless they are preeminently people of prayer. Piety flourishes nowhere so rapidly and so profusely as in the prayer closet. The prayer closet is the garden of faith.

- E. M. Bounds



## The man who kneels to God can stand up to anything.

- Louis H. Evans, Jr.

# Resolving to be

Pastor Oliver Olson
Community Lutheran
Oceanside, California

# people of prayer

"And I searched for a man among them who should build up the wall (hedge), and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found no one" (Ezekiel 22:30).

zekiel was describing a desperate time in Israel's history, when "her priests had done violence to God's Law and profaned God's holy things;" and "her princes within her were like wolves tearing the prey;" when "her prophets had smeared whitewash, saw false visions and divined lies;" and "the people of the land had practiced oppression and committed robbery, wronged the poor and needy and oppressed without justice." It was at this time that God looked for a "man" who would make a difference (presumably through prayer), by "standing in the gap."

If this is an indication of the power and meaning of prayer and the difference it can make, it ought to behoove us to resolve to be people of prayer.

If God means for us to make a difference because of our prayers, then there is no greater meaning that prayer can have.

If we languish and mourn over the sins and depravity of our society, then it would seem that God would also give us opportunity to make a difference.

In the Beatitudes our Lord Jesus taught, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." Surely there is little benefit in simply "mourning," or feeling sorry for something. But there is great value, meaning and benefit in identifying with God as He observes the sins that break



His heart. We surely know as well that it is not always the outward, coarse, vulgar, crude actions that break His heart, but rather the inward things that lie deep within the heart of man and affect his conduct.

So then, we would all agree that prayer is important. But, we would also acknowledge that it requires discipline. In our society's "get it now" mentality, waiting upon God in prayer tends to be foreign to our thinking. Moses was on the mountain for 40 days. The disciples were in the upper room for 10.

For prayer to be meaningful, it is important to be "soaked" in Scripture, understanding the great truths of the Word of God, and allowing the Holy Spirit, who is the authority of Scripture, to teach us His ways and His mind.

All of the great people in biblical and sacred history were surely people of the Word of God, whatever was available to them, as well as people of prayer. But their prayers were based on their understanding of God and His character and His ways and purposes.

Truth is meant to encourage us and not to frustrate us, so when we read about the great characters of the Bible and sacred history, we ought to be encouraged and inspired to follow in their paths. The greatest example we have, of course, is the Lord Jesus Himself, a man of the Word and prayer. We associate with great company here.

In prayer we have opportunity to come into the very presence of God with a reverent, awesome, holy boldness, because God has asked us to do that. Hebrews 4:16 says. "Let us therefore draw near with confidence (boldness) to the throne of grace, that we might receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need."

If prayer indeed has this kind of meaning, we can pray in obedience and faith, speaking what God brings to our minds. If we ask God for direction (James 1:5), and expect Him to give it, we can be confident that He will be faithful to do just that.

God is seeking those today who understand the meaning and potential of prayer. He is looking for men and women who will commit themselves to present their yielded hearts and lives to the Holy Spirit and take up the discipline and responsibility to pray as God directs them. In return, God will reveal more and more of Himself to these faithful ones. revealing His secrets to them and allowing them the privilege of cooperating with Him in the affairs of men through prayer. 36



(The author grew up on a Minnesota dairy farm and attended Lutheran Bible Institute in 1952-53. After serving as a chaplain's assistant in the army, he worked in youth ministry in Duluth and Minneapolis, Minnesota. He was ordained after finishing Northwestern Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota in 1969. In 1971, he moved to California where he was a youth pastor in Hawthorne, and later a faculty member at the California Lutheran Bible School. From 1976-95, he served as founder/director of Omaha Lutheran Bible School in Omaha, Nebraska. Today he and his wife Patricia live in Murrieta, California, where he is the director of Living Word Ministries, a teaching and publication ministry. He recently was accepted on the AFLC's regular clergy roster.)

## A church council had a vision for a praying congregation

Last year the church council of Living Word Lutheran in Vernon, British Columbia, seriously acted upon the verse which says that a people without a vision will perish. They shared with the congregation that "we believe the Lord wants us to become a praying church." They had no idea what the Lord would do in response to their prayers. Last March the youth asked to go to a prayer retreat in Saskatchewan. They did and, upon their return, began meeting with their pastor on Tuesdays for prayer.

Last fall the congregation hosted the Canadian Fall Retreat where the Miracle Mile Ministry was presented by AFLC Home Missions and Evangelism departments. Afterwards, the council chose to do nothing but pray for direction. They did so for about forty days. At a special congregational meeting, it was decided to continue praying and focus on the people living in the one-mile radius of the church with special focus on the youth.

#### As the new year begins:

- Living Word hosts a weekly youth night with about 30 in attendance (previously there was nothing);
- Needs are being shared and responded to;
- People are coming from the neighborhood who previously showed no interest in a church;
- For Christmas Eve 1998, the congregation sent out letters of invitation to the neighborhood with minimal response but this year, the congregation prayed and the church was filled on Christmas Eve;
- And about thirty weekly prayer letters are sent out within the congregation to insure they are all praying for the same thing. 36



## The importance of getting together to pray



— Pastor Dale Finstrom Maranatha Lutheran Glyndon, Minnesota

hat an incredible impact a church can make when its people pray! What would happen if God's people seriously began to pray? What would be the outcome on our communities, the nation and the world? The potential of a praying church is transformed lives and homes as lost people come to Christ. The effect on our communities both morally and socially is incomprehensible.

Paul said, "I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing" (I Timothy 2:8). He gives clear advice, "pray continually" in I Thessalonians 5:17. Jesus counseled His disciples to, "Watch and pray so that you will not enter into temptation" (Mark 14:38). Philippians 4:6 daily admonishes, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." God's Word clearly teaches the need to pray.

The Holy Spirit wants to help us pray. "We do not know what we should pray for as we ought but the Sprit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26). The believer has the Holy Spirit indwelling him. The Spirit knows the needs of the church. He knows the mind and will of God, and He knows how to express prayer through the lips of the believer.

As we consider the church, we think of group prayer and united prayer. God calls His people to pray constantly, in one accord, in His Spirit, in order that Christ might be exalted and that God's kingdom would increase. Matthew 18:19-20 says, "Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by My Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in My name, there am I with them."

When my wife Cris and I were in the Czech Republic in 1995, we attended a Monday evening prayer meeting with some of the leaders of the church. Pastor Pictak

made some introductions and said after opening prayer, "our brother, Pastor Dale, will lead us in a 30-minute Bible study."

I was shocked as I had no clue that I was to have a Bible study ready for this session. Cris was equally surprised and wondering what would happen. I opened my Bible, and as so often the Holy Spirit works, I happened to have a study on the "Hindrances of Prayer." I spent the next minutes sharing some of the hindrances such as unconfessed sin, an unforgiving spirit, holding a grudge, treating your wife with disrespect, and having an unbelieving heart. When I finished, each one of us in the room knelt down and prayed.

Cris and I listened as our Czech brothers and sisters prayed in their language. After we finished, one of the men came to me and said that was exactly what was needed. One of the men had prayed and confessed an unforgiving spirit toward his wife and their relationship at home.

It is not enough to talk about prayer, preach about prayer, give Bible studies on prayer or even write articles about prayer. We must get to the task of praying. Dr. Wilbur Chapman wrote, "Church members have much more to do than go to church as curious, idle spectators to be amused and entertained. It is their business to pray mightily that the Holy Spirit will clothe the preacher with power and make his words like dynamite." When God's people determine to pray, lives will be transformed, the lost will be saved and the community will witness the presence of God impacting the nation and world for the kingdom of God.

Become involved in "Lighthouses of Prayer," men's and women's prayer groups, local pastors praying together for their communities. Pray through your church membership and visitors' list. Whenever the church gathers together, prayer should be a high priority. Jesus commands us to pray and He desires His house to be a "house of prayer."



## The joy of prayer

- Verona Jacobson Immanuel Lutheran Church Springfield, Missouri

"Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25).

rayer is a God-given privilege to be used often and wisely. As I was growing up we heard a hymn on the radio each morning, "Ere You Left Your Room This Morning Did You Think To Pray?" In those days we were "silent Lutherans." Our prayers were in our "prayer closets." There was never an open prayer time in our family, but I know there were prayers.

Whether our prayers are silent or public, lengthy or brief, our heavenly Father hears them. David's psalms provide useful prayers. One of my friends in our congregation stated one evening, she loved and missed the prayers of a departed friend who reflected her thoughts in the language of the King James Version Bible.

One of the special joys I have been privileged to experience in recent years, is belonging to a church body where prayer is empha-

In the past, when I have attended district and national conventions of other church groups, I do not recall freedom of prayer. I cannot begin to tell you the joy in attending the annual conferences of the AFLC and participating in wonderful times of prayer. If a problem arose concerning a proposal, the discussion was halted and many were on their knees calling for knowledge from our heavenly Father on how the problem should be handled. We have experienced beautiful concerts of prayer as well as the daily devotions before the noon recess.

One year I suffered a mishap during the conference. Two pastors immediately responded and Pastor Paul Nash was on his knees praying close to my ear. Later that day, I was told the pastors remembered me in prayer during their banquet time and at the laymen's meeting that evening. Without those prayers I don't think I could have walked into the auditorium the next morning with a smile on my face and pain-free. One of the nurses had washed the blood out of my clothes and shampooed my hair and arranged it to cover the sutures.

There will be times I will not be at the conferences because of age or other problems, but I can tell you my mind will focus on what is going on at the conference. As people ask the Lord for His guidance and strength, God works.

I rejoice that I have a ministry of prayer to my family, congregation, and church family. There are times, through prayer, I find myself in Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska, or Arizona and even helping put a roof on a church in Brazil. I thank God for the opportunity He gives me each day to be a part of His kingdom's work through the power of prayer.

To pray is nothing more involved than to open the door, giving Jesus access to our needs and permitting Him to exercise His own power in dealing with them.

> - Ole Hallesby in Prayer



None can believe how powerful prayer is, and what it is able to effect, but those who have learned it by experience.

Martin Luther
in The Table Talk
of Martin Luther



Pastor Warren Swanson
St. Petrie and Freedom Lutheran
Ottawa, Illinois

Beware in your prayer, above everything, of limiting God, not only by unbelief, but by fancying that you know what he can do.

Andrew Murray (1828 - 1917)

have noticed a strange phenomenon among Christians. With our lips we come before the Lord in prayer and ask that He would work in specific circumstances, and then we walk around in complete amazement when He answers! I too, have been guilty of this.

In 1990, at age 32, I started having spells where my heart raced for hours. Sweat would literally pour off my face and drip off the end of my nose. As quickly as the heart shifted into high gear it shifted into ultra low and beat a pattern of eight to ten beats a minute. It was as though I suffered from the stomach flu each time this occurred. I resisted going to the doctor until the spring of 1993. My sister Marlys had died from complications from open-heart surgery in 1990 and I did not want to think about having heart problems. When I finally went to the doctor they sent me to a cardiologist who did tests and told me I was suffering from sick sinus syndrome. The electrical signal being sent from the brain to the sinus node of the heart was getting scrambled and the heart did not know what to do. Their conclusion was that at some point I would need a pacemaker to guarantee that the heart would not quit. I returned to work

# God answers prayer

on our farm with the prayer that this would somehow go away.

The intensity of the spells increased over the next six months. After a loss of consciousness one December day, I finally went to the emergency room and they were not pleased that this major attack had been going on for six to eight hours. They thought I was on the brink of a heart attack and treated it as such. They were able to bring the heart back down to normal rhythm when it reversed gears and started beating six to eight beats a minute with eight to 10 second

pauses at points. I was transferred to



a major heart center and a pacemaker was put in the next morning. In addition, I was given drugs to prevent the heart arrhythmia.

To be honest, I was

not very happy with God. I was a young family man with big plans for the future. Then, in the spring of 1994, I was told my job would end in November. My wife Marlys and I had been praying for some time about my going to seminary or into some ministry. Now I thought all of these circumstances would remove this possibility.

That fall, I called AFLC President Robert Lee and explained our situation. He suggested I meet with the coordinating committee and think about become a lay pastor. I met with them, was accepted, and within several weeks accepted the call from Freedom and St. Petrie Lutheran in Ottawa, Illinois. We began our ministry the first part of December 1994. God had answered prayer and we were amazed yet thrilled.

Everything went well with my health for the next three years until I started having heart spells again. I went to a cardiologist

where I was diagnosed with "pacemaker syndrome." The pacemaker that I had been given was a single chamber pacemaker. The tests concluded that my heart condition had deteriorated and I needed a dual chamber pacemaker. The new one worked great and I felt fine again.

Complications developed about a week later as the surface around the incision grew red and pressure in the area increased. Back in the hospital, they tried to arrest the infection. After several weeks of different drugs and procedures, the doctor decided to reinstall a new pacemaker in the right side of my chest. I went into the hospital this final time on our 14th wedding anniversary. During the surgery my heart stopped and it had to be shocked.

I awakened to the pain of the anesthesiologist removing a central line from my neck. The first thing I did was to feel my right shoulder for bandages. There were none. My first reaction was one of anger as now I would have to go through all of this again. But then I realized I must wait and see what He had in mind.

I was brought to my room and did not see the doctor until the next morning. His first words were, "Since we took the pacemaker out, I have not seen one abnormal rhythm from your heart. I don't think I am going to put in another pacemaker. I don't think you need one." Then he added, "Maybe all of the trouble you have had in the last 60 days is God's way of telling us that you don't need the pacemaker anymore." I asked him if I had ever needed it. He said the tests had showed that I did, but now I did not! With that he walked out and I was discharged a day or so later. During my checkups, he still makes comments of disbelief on how God answered my prayers and the prayers of others.

Since then I have felt fine. I take a number of heart drugs, but I do not mind. The fact they are available is a miracle.

An additional answer to prayer was received in the last several months. The \$180-a-month drug bill had been coming directly out of our pockets since 1994. A member in the congregation had heard that some drug companies would give a discount on drugs in certain instances, if the need warranted. I inquired with my cardiologist at one of my last appointments and he arranged it, and not just for a reduced cost. Now I receive the drugs at no cost.

God is faithful and He answers prayer way beyond what we can imagine! 56

"Youth ministry is vital to the life of the church. I think that congregations, who haven't had the team, don't realize what they are missing!"

- Pastor Dale Finstrom, Glyndon, MN "I can't believe it, even a self-proclaimed atheist from school attended our outreach event!" - Jen Tollefson, Ortonville, MN

"The team has given us the tools, direction and structure we needed to get our youth group off the ground."

- Pastor Mike Zehnder, Parker, CO

xciting? Yes. Challenging? Even more so. Worth it? Most definitelv. Jason Norlien, Brenda Stilley, and I have been on the road since October, and the ministry that we are in has been anything but routine. We have learned nothing that we could compare with the knowledge of the back of one's hand, and no ruts have been created that we could have become stuck in. It has been an incredible ride. The Lord seems to be transforming the attitudes of the leaders and the youth in every church that we visit. They are refocusing on Christ as the source of all strength and direction. There is a renewed hunger for the Word, and adults and youth alike are gaining confidence

## Register soon for the Leadership Training Conference

July 17-22, 2000, at the ARC, Osceola, Wisconsin

Students: \$175 Counselors: \$100 Adults not counseling: \$140 Please pre-register (\$50) by April 1, 2000.

To register or for more information contact: Leadership Training Conference 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd. Minneapolis, MN 55441

## Youth ministry team makes a difference

- Eddie Britz, team member

in God's ability to use them.

In visiting with the Living Water congregation in Parker, Colorado, we were presented with more volunteer workers than there were youth. That's a wonderful problem to have. They were in need of the tools with which they could take off and make a difference in the youth of the community. Two youth rededicated their lives to Christ and one came to know Christ as Savior at their outreach event. Recent followup conversations have told us that their ministry is growing.

First Lutheran in Oklahoma City, had five core youth that were at every meeting, ready to drink in the practical things to get their youth group going. The volunteers were discouraged after many ups and downs in their youth ministry, but the Sonlife Training seemed to give them an organized and intentional plan of attack that raised their spirits.

Abiding Faith in Ortonville, Minnesota was excited to see the success of an outreach activity that the team participated in. A member of the youth group proclaimed the statistics: "We only expected maybe 10 people to show up, and God brought 28!"

The list goes on. By the end of each week many unenthusiastic or uncertain leaders were excited and eager to do ministry. They anticipated God doing big things in their youth ministry and using them to do it! And not one of these churches had a full-time youth worker. The desire of the Youth Ministry Training Team is to get the church involved with the youth program, whether or not there is a "full timer." It is possible, when we move the excuses aside, and allow God to do His work through us.

Working for the Lord in this way has been very exciting, for there is nothing boring about being on the front lines, about being in the center

of the Lord's will. It has been challenging, because every church presents a different set of strengths and weaknesses, a different bundle of blessings and hurts. Their communities vary even more so, from sprawling suburbs to small farming communities. It has been worth it. The payoffs have already been huge. Blessings have no boundaries, for when you are being a blessing, you are blessed.

Helen Keller has said, "The saddest thing in the world is people who can see but have no vision." A church without a healthy youth ministry program is one generation away from dying. Today's church, not just the youth worker or pastor, needs to have a vision for youth ministry. Our leaders should not be hired to ease our conscience about not doing what we know is our job. As members of the body of Christ, we all need to see the need and we all need to take ownership in making it happen.

God is drawing young people to Himself. He desires that none would perish. He is reaching out to communities and He is using our churches and youth to do it. Churches that had little or no youth ministry are now impacting their towns for Jesus Christ. God is eager and willing to accomplish His work through you. He is eager and willing to work in your youth ministry. He wants to revive you and give you His vision. Will you let Him?



"I can't wait to start a prayer group at my school. Now I realize that I can do it with Christ." - Amy Hecker, Dickinson, ND

"Let your love for Jesus shine so

that others will-See it. Want it. and Live it!"

- Purpose statement for youth ministry at Abiding Faith Lutheran, Ortonville, MN



Pictured is the January mission class on "cults and isms" and Keith Winter of Minneapolis, who was a quest lecturer on Jehovah Witnesses. Pastor Tonnes Pollestad taught the required course to AFLBS seniors.



Ten AFLBS students left January 7 for two weeks of work near Obregon, Sonora, Mexico, They traveled with the Partners in Mission Outreach bus where they helped Pastor Gabriel and his wife Virginia in their congregation at Agraristas and other neighboring villages. The Bible school students who took this trip for their January Missions term credit are: Paul Blom, Alexandria, Minnesota; Krista Carter, Kandiyohi, Minnesota; Tomasz Chmeil, Czech Republic; MayBritt Garvik, Norway; Danielle Handsaker, Radcliffe, Iowa; Kim Matt, Ferndale, Washington; Debbie Mozach, Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Carmen Oelkers, Culbertson, Montana; Kim Pedersen, Fargo, North Dakota; and Paul Quam, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

On January 11, five Bible school students left for India along with AFLC Schools' professor, Pastor Phil Haugen and world missions committee member, Pastor Tom Tuura of St. James, Minnesota. Pastor Eugene Enderlein, world missions director also joined them for

their two-week mission trip to the southern part of India where the AFLC has a sister church group. Pastor Haugen taught Bible courses to the Indian pastors and lay workers. The students on this trip were: Joshua Holwell, Roseau, Minnesota; Chad Jankord, Sioux Falls, South Dakota: Gabriel Moteberg, Beltrami, Minnesota; Amber Nelson, Glyndon, Minnesota; and Kristen Antal, Park River, North Dakota.

Bible school students who did not travel on a ministry team participated in the January 3-21, mission term. Dr. Norvald Yri of Norway taught the Introduction to Missions course. January 9-12 featured the annual missions conference highlighted by the evening messages by Pastor Todd Schierkolk, on furlough from Aguascalientes, Mexico.

Mission teams currently being developed for next summer include: Russia with Pastor Don Richman; Alaska with Mark Johnson; Brazil with Pastor Kevin Olson; and Mexico with Al Brazier. For more information contact the AFLC Youth Ministries Office at 612-545-5631.



AFLBS senior Eva Fronkova from Slovakia.

### Seminary to hold retreat in Illinois district

The Free Lutheran Seminary is planning their spring retreat at the Cup of Cold Water retreat center for March 31-April 2. The weekend will include a tour of the Billy Graham School of Evangelism in nearby Wheaton. The faculty and students will visit various AFLC congregations in the area on Sunday morning to share a testimony.

#### AFLC Schools receive funds

Free Lutheran Seminary in Minneapolis recently received \$2,850 from Lutheran Brotherhood through the Member Matching Gift program. The latest payment matches 30 gifts from Lutheran Brotherhood members made during the fourth quarter of 1999. The IMPACT program matches members' gifts of \$25 to \$100 per year to Lutheran seminaries nationwide.

The Association Free Lutheran Bible School recently received \$300 from Aid Association for Lutherans through their Gift-Matching Program. The gift reflects AAL's matched portion of contributions received from members during the third quarter of 1999.

## Missions

Celaya, Mexico - Gethsemane Lutheran Church is building their new church. They hope to have the roof on and restrooms available for the annual conference of the AFLC-Mexico congregations in July. The congregation is served by Pastor Milton Flores. The congregation is praying for God's provision of housing for Pastor Raul and his family in Irapuato so that he may better minister to that community.

#### Aguascalientes, Mexico -The mission in Mexico has a web

page. The address is: http://members. truepath.com/aflcmexico.

Women's Missionary Federations, Sunday schools, pastors, and individuals are encouraged to check in and peruse it periodically. It is updated regularly. Most people's questions about the work can be answered on one of the website pages and there are photographs and much information that can be downloaded and used.



Pictured is Esperanza Lozano of Aguascalientes. She is the "featured testimony" on the recently created Web page of the AFLC mission in Mexico.

There is also a Spanish website at http://ags.acnet.net/vida.

The last day for the missionary Dan and Debbie Giles family in Aguascalientes will be Sunday, May 14. They plan to leave the next morning, Monday, May 15, to bring their son, Danny to the States for some scholastic tests. When they return to Mexico it will be to a new location. This is a major change for them and for their church and they request everyone's prayers. They plan to move to Jarez, a town about



Pictured are the couple from one of the congregations in India who now serve as houseparents to the orphanage in India. The program was initiated by workers in India. They recently sent a proposal for the project to the AFLC World Missions Committee to act on.

a two and a half hour drive north of Aguascalientes. Jarez is a community of 50,000 and is located in the state of Zacatecas.

The Giles report, "The good news is that there is a Mexican Lutheran pastor, Ricardo Varela, ready to be ordained and take over the work! Although change is difficult we praise God that we have been able to accomplish what we came here to do - bring people to Jesus and leave a viable, free and living Lutheran congregation with its own Mexican pastor behind us."

Ricardo, as well as another young man from the church, Fernando Herrera, who is planning to be a missionary, will probably be ordained in August. A specific date has not yet been set. "We would love to have some visitors from the USA churches in attendance at this momentous occasion," says Dan Giles

Camarillo, California - Good Shepherd Lutheran Church has been accepted as a Home Mission congregation and is in the process of calling their first pastor.

Mesa, Arizona — Calvary Free Lutheran dedicated their newly rented facility on January 9, 2000.

AFLC President Robert Lee conducted the service. Calvary Lutheran welcomes snowbirds living and visiting the greater Phoenix area. The church meets at the Velda Rose Center, 5646 East Main, in Mesa. For more information call 480-854-0617 or 480-855-3612.

Naknek, Alaska - The mission congregation in Naknek is hosting special meetings during March 5-9 with Pastor Mike Crowell of Lake Stevens, Washington speaking. Pastor Crowell will also be giving flight training to Pastor Tom Olson and others while in Naknek.

Vancouver, B.C — The AFLC-Canada and AFLC Home Missions sponsored a booth at the Vancouver Convention Expo Center during January 28-30 at the Mission Fest, the largest one in North America.

The Association Retreat Center, Osceola, Wisconsin hosted the annual home missions clinic during January 17-18. The theme was "Spiritually Healthy" and the speakers were Pastors Everald Strom, Norvald Yri, Al Monson, and Mike Brandt. The annual pastors' conference followed, with their sessions concluding Thursday evening, January 20, with a communion service.

Buckley, Washington -Grace Lutheran has started a new youth ministry, primarily through the followup on last summer's vacation Bible school program. Some of the youth are now attending worship services and bringing their families along.

Montgomery, Illinois - St. Olaf Lutheran held their annual "Souper Bown Sunday" on January 30. The youth have large bowls at the church where they gather canned food and cash and then deliver it to the homeless food pantry.

Pastor Dan Klug, East Grand Forks, Minnesota has resigned as pastor of Christ the King Lutheran where he has served since 1994. His future plan is a church planting ministry in Grand Forks, North Dakota.

## PEOPLE & PLACES



Silverhill, Alabama — Zion Lutheran received a special blessing on the first Sunday after Christmas. Pictured are seven of the eight new members who joined the church. Pastor Paul Jecklin is pictured in the middle, back row. Zion Lutheran welcomes winter snowbirds visiting the Florida-Alabama panhandle region. For more information call Pastor Jecklin at 334-990-9851.

## Onalaska, Wisconsin, Bible study group temporarily prohibited from meeting at the pastor's home

Last November, Pastor Richard and Audrey Gilmore of Christ is Lord Lutheran Church, received a letter from the Onalaska City Planner advising they "discontinue the meetings until a proper permit is obtained or move the meetings to a location where a permit is not required." A "conditional use permit" for \$150 was recommended. The meetings referred to were Audrey's Monday evening Bible studies at the parsonage with four to five college-aged students.

To not show disrespect, they stopped meeting at the house. However, after praying about it with their congregation, the Gilmores chose to not just let it go. They interviewed their neighbors who indicated they were not upset by the Monday meetings. They then wrote a respectful and positive letter to the city and asked them to reconsider their request as it seemed to be a misunderstanding. The city would not tell who allegedly complained originally about the meetings.

One of Onalaska's aldermen happens to be a member of Christ is Lord Lutheran and he made copies

of the letter to pass around. The media received a copy and by the middle of December. Audrey was busy answering calls from around the nation after the Associated Press picked up the story. According to the "LaCrosse Tribune," Audrey "hoped she could solve her disagreement with the city of Onalaska about having group meetings in her home without media attention." But she decided to give interviews and respond after she realized city officials had no intention of changing their minds.

"I realized this was not a single issue which concerns just us, but it concerns the whole city of Onalaska. It also concerns our freedom as citizens of this country and this city to invite people to our home for meetings if we choose to do so," Audrey said.

After a week of intense public pressure, the city told the Gilmores they could resume the meetings. The City Planning Commission is proposing amending the ordinance.

When she would have preferred preparing her home for her family returning for Christmas, Audrey

Newark, Illinois — Helmar Lutheran is hosting the district Bible conference on February 27, from 4-7 p.m. The congregation is also planning the district-wide youth retreat scheduled for April 15.

Mrs. Sylvia Franz, wife of Pastor Herb Franz, Dollar Bay, Michigan, recently passed away. (Her obituary will be in the next Ambassador). Pastor Franz was hospitalized in recent weeks in Hancock, Michigan. Pray for him as he faces continued health concerns. He served congregations in Eben Junction, Michigan, and Cloquet, Minnesota, and was a popular evangelism and Bible conference speaker. In his retirement he is serving the congregations in Ontonagon and Pelkie, Michigan.

Fergus Falls, Minnesota — Calvary Lutheran hosted an areawide youth lock-in on December 30. The activities were held at the local YMCA with seminarian Wade Mobley as the guest speaker.

**Pastor Gerald and Margaret** Mundfrom, Osceola, Wisconsin celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on December 17, 1999. Pastor Mundfrom is the director of Mercy and Truth Publishers.

Also celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary in 1999 were Pastor Lloyd and Eleanor Bjornlie of Fergus Falls, Minnesota.

Rev. Elnar Gundale, 96, Chetek, Wisconsin passed away on December 9, 1999. He was ordained into the ministry of the Lutheran Free Church in 1937 and went on to serve five parishes, including Greenbush, Minnesota and Sand Creek, Wisconsin. At the time of his death, he was the oldest living pastor in the former Lutheran Free Church.

answered about fifty calls from around the nation. She said, "Actually it gave me heart to hear such encouraging support from all over the United States as well as the strong local support we received."



### **AFLC Memorial Gifts**

December 1999

Department given to...

In memory of...

**World Missions** 

Lloyd Lee John Horn Valarius Krenz Clarence Quanbeck Alma Hegseth Ed Haseth Doran Lindsoe

**Home Missions** 

Dwight Larson

Clarence Quanbeck Dagne Faust Doran Lindsoe Reggie Grange Orin Bystol Niklaus Heer Lloyd Lee

Valarius Krenz

Parish Education

Lloyd Lee Marvin Olson Rev. John Strand Rev. Ragene Hodnefield All Funds

Emil & Minnie Keller Rev. Alvin House Norman Keller Kathryn Kahovec Erling Skarderud

**AFLBS** 

Sylvia Swartz John Nelson Esther Swanson Clifford Grahn Ellen Johnson Orrin Nyhus Frank Oien Clarence Quanbeck Lloyd Lee Marvin Olson Doran Lindscoe Mildred Myrvik James Carlson Ida Manderud Grace Thompson

**AFLTS** 

Mavis Johnson John Horn Frank Oien Clarence Quanbeck Lloyd Lee

Vision 2004

Lloyd Lee Everett Jones Danny Bergeron Sylvia Swartz Patsy Janssen

Evangelism Clarence Quanbeck Lloyd Lee

Dagne Faust

General Fund Clarence Quanbeck Lloyd Lee



Pastor Jerry Holmaas, Professor of Old Testament at the AFLC Schools, taught the Seminar in Archeology during January 10-14 as part of the seminary's Inter-Term 2000. The first session was a course on "AFLC Missions," taught by World Missions Director Eugene Enderlein with veteran missionary John Abel.

Pastor Ragene Hodnefield of

Redmond, Oregon passed away on December 22, 1999. He was born August 10, 1949 to Francis and Alma (Wierson) Hodnefield in Radcliffe, Iowa. He graduated from the Free Lutheran Theological Seminary in 1975 and served AFLC congregations in Vancouver, Washington; Dalton, Minnesota; and Hampden, North Dakota. At the time of his passing he was serving a Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod congregation in Redmond. He is survived by his wife, Virginia, and two sons.

I heard that a person could receive a very good return with a gift annuity. After contacting the AFLC Foundation, I sent \$10,000 for an 8.5 percent annuity. In addition to these fixed payments for life and providing for the Lord's work, I benefited from a large tax savings this year. And also, part of each payment is tax-free.

If you would like further information, please contact Mark D. Johnson, CFP, AFLC Foundation at 1-800-950-2109.

#### Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences (12 months) - January 1 - December 31, 1999

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN DECEMBER	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$234,385.00	\$25,837.56	253,374.48	1.08
Seminary	110,296.00	14,154.68	127,949.65	1.16
Bible School	147,674.00	38,820.75	154,111.12	1.04
Home Missions	238,152.00	39,678.96	229,777.24	96
World Missions	190,909.00	51,868.73	196,072.50	1.03
Capital Investment	14,065.00	1,871.86	8,997.44	64
Parish Education	56,854.00	11,417.89	74,238.87	1.31
Church Extension	21,051.00	2,506.50	19,764.37	94
TOTALS	\$1,013,386.00	186,156.93	1,064,285.67	1.05
TOTALS 1998	. 1,278,758.00	230,807.21	1,290,580.43	1.01
Goal 100%				

The Evangelism department received \$7,512.48 in December.

## Enter the school of prayer

was privileged as a child to have a mother who prayed with me every night before I went to bed, and taught me to pray. But even though the training began early. I still have much to learn. I am still a student in the school of

The Bible tells us that one of Jesus' disciples came to Him and asked, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1, NIV). It is a request each of us should make. It is a need each of us should admit and express.

In making the request the disciple is admitting his prayer life is not what it should be and he wants that to change. That is the first step for a student in the school of prayer to take. Jesus said it is the hypocrites who "love to pray standing in the synagogues

and on the street corners to be seen by men" (Matthew 6:5, NIV). They are proud of how they pray and brag about it to others. Ones with that attitude are not true students in the school of prayer.

One who is progressing in prayer knows he needs to grow. He doesn't think he has already arrived. She doesn't feel she knows all there is to know about prayer and does it perfectly.

While in the school of prayer, we at times may get frustrated at not having the prayer life we wish we had. It is better to be in that condi-

tion than to be proud and unaware of our need. If you think your prayer life is all it should and can be than you are not far along at all in learning about prayer. We come to the Lord, the great Teacher, and confess our weakness and how slow we are to learn, and take comfort in His forgiveness.

We confess that where we are in our prayer life is not where we should be, and then we ask for help. Their request of Jesus, "teach us to pray," is an admission that they cannot learn to pray on their own. Prayer is something people frequently claim to do, even those who do not profess to believe in Jesus as Savior and Lord. Yet true prayer is not the common language of the person who is living apart from God. We read in the book of Genesis of how, after their sin, Adam and Eve did not turn to God and share what had happened. They ran and hid.

We do the same. We, by nature, run and hide from God. But He seeks after us. He comes to us and knocks, desiring to come in (cf. Revelation 3:20).

Prayer is our response to His knocking. As O. Hallesby writes in his book called "Prayer": "It is not our prayer which moves the Lord Jesus. It is Jesus who moves us to pray. He knocks. Thereby He makes known His desire to come in to us. Our prayers are always a result of Jesus' knocking at our hearts' doors."

We need to be taught if we are going to learn to pray. I would have been ignorant about prayer if my mother and others had not taught me. Likewise they had to be taught. Ultimately the reason any of us knows anything about prayer is because Jesus responds positively and gladly to the request, "teach us to pray."

The One who teaches us to pray is patient. We do not pick up the lessons quickly. We tire of the homework. We are too often content with just a pass-

> ing grade. We do not strive to be the best student we can be. And yet He is gracious and forgiving.

> The disciples were given a unique opportunity to demonstrate what they had learned in the school of prayer the night before Jesus went to the cross. Jesus was praying in the garden of Gethsemane. He asked the disciples to keep watch with Him and pray, but they kept falling asleep. The Lord was praying in great anguish and returned the third time to find His friends "still sleeping and resting" (Matthew 26:45, NIV).

They failed the test. Most teachers would have kicked them out of class. But we read in the Gospels and the book of Acts of how these same disciples were given more opportunities to learn, to pray and to grow.

We have failed to pray as we ought, but God forgives when we come to Him and confess and repent. He gives us more opportunities to learn. He gently and lovingly keeps on teaching.

Teachers often point out to students, "You've got to sweat if you're going to learn." Real learning takes work. That is true in the school of prayer. The lessons take time and effort to learn them. Energy will have to be expended, time will need to be given, sacrifices will need to be made if we are going to grow as people of prayer. But it's worth it, for while the school of prayer does not offer degrees that we graduate with, it does offer blessings beyond compare.

- Pastor Craig Johnson

"We at times may get frustrated at not having the prayer life we wish we had."

#### THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd. Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

### BUILDING THE BASE

mong all the religious and philosophical ideas that are espoused in our world, could it be that there is only one that is really true, and consequently the others are false?

That is not only considered unthinkable in today's culture, but is branded as supremely arrogant and intolerant. This idea was conveyed clearly on a recent program on television of "Larry King Live." Featured on the program on Christmas Eve were Gordon Hinckley, president of the Mormon Church; Robert Schuller, pastor of the Crystal Cathedral; and South Africa's Archbishop Desmond Tutu. The common theme throughout the program was the need to embrace one another, putting away the particulars of belief and faith.

Tutu commented that he believed breakdown comes "when we think we are the ones who have the truth." King followed by sarcastically commenting, "Yes, we, I am the way, and the light, and the truth, and you're not. We have to all get together." Schuller later alluded that it is not only unnecessary, but harmful to attempt to convert people of other faiths to Christianity.

What is being espoused in comments like these as well as the popular "tolerance ethic" is the concept of philosophical pluralism. This is different than simply cultural pluralism which can be equated to America as the melting pot. We are

## Only one way?

a land of diverse cultural and ethnic traditions and we extend freedom and liberty to all based upon the fact that we are all human beings.

What has happened in recent times is that we have gone from equality of people to equality of ideas. We've all heard it: "I have a right to my opinion and you have a right to yours, but you dare not declare mine false or wrong." The birth of the talk show phenomena gives evidence to this type of thinking. Philosophical pluralism is defined as the idea that any notion that a particular religious idea is superior to another is necessarily wrong. When Jesus makes a claim such as He does in John 14:6, "I am the way and the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father, but through Me," He is seen as either intensely arrogant or incredibly naive. This thinking is exalted and prepetuated by our media and educational system.

Clearly, and by its very definition, truth is exclusive. If it were not, we could have no meaningful communication. The reality is that 2+2=4 for everyone, no matter how offensive that may be. Jesus made a most reasonable statement when He said He was the only Way. The question is not, can one make an unqualified statement like that. The question is rather, is it true or not.

If Jesus is the only Way, than it is logical that any idea that contradicts Him is necessarily false. And if He is not, than perhaps, Bhudda,

Muhammad, or someone else is right. When Maya Angelou makes a statement on the Oprah Winfrey show that God has sent us Muhammed, God has sent us Bhudda, and God has sent us Jesus, and we have not listened, she is making a contradictory, nonsensical statement. All three claim contradictory ideas and if indeed they are all from God, than we would be correct in saying that God is very confused. For example, Muhammed claimed that Jesus did not die on a cross. If that is true, Christianity is false.

One network in its millennium celebration coverage, showed a scene of the Vatican, while dubbing in the song, "Imagine," by John Lennon. In it Lennon proclaims his religious views, "imagine there's no heaven, it's easy if you try, no hell below us, above us only sky." Clearly the Vatican and John Lennon espouse completely contradictory worldviews, yet are portrayed as coalescing views by the news network.

It is my desire in future articles to present Jesus Christ as the unique Son of God, who is the only way to God. If you are a Christian, my prayer is that your faith may grow. If you are not, I ask you to consider Jesus Christ who boldly proclaimed Himself to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Rick Tollefson
Helmar Lutheran
Newark, Illinois