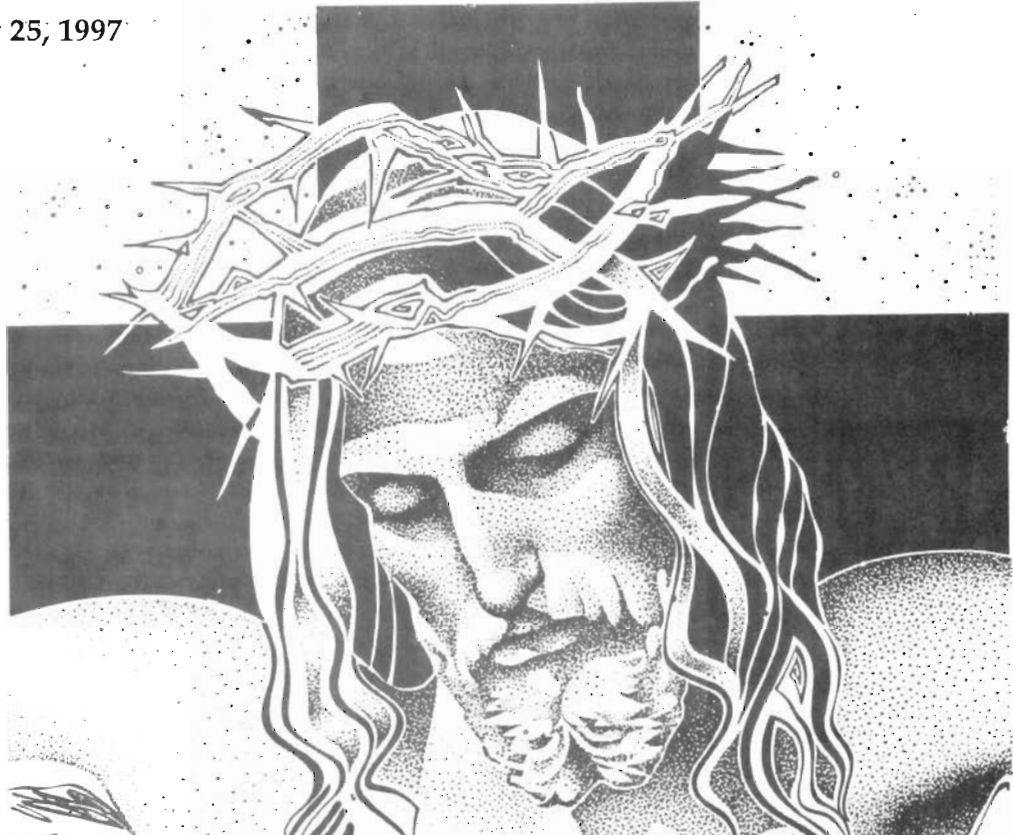


The Lutheran AMBASSADOR

February 25, 1997



Man of Sorrows!
what a name
For the Son of God,
who came
Ruined sinners to reclaim!
Hallelujah,
What a Savior!

— Philip Bliss

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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AN ENCOURAGING WORD

There stood an old rugged cross

Nearly two thousand years ago on the hill of Golgotha stood an old rugged cross on which the very Son of God hung, nailed to its unsightly pieces of timber. It appears so cruel that God would allow such an inhumane thing to happen to His own Son.

It may leave us asking, "How could He?" The answer is made clear in John 3:16 (NIV), "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." God chose to love us although each of us has the ugly inheritance of a sinful nature which brings the consequence of judgment, condemnation, and finally death in hell. Ponder the fact that this is what we actually deserve and God would be justified in having us pay this penalty. He chose instead to love us and have mercy on us. He paid the supreme price for our sins through the sacrifice of His Son. "For God demonstrates His own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

There were many crucifixions in Jesus' day. His was different, however, in that the pain from the nails piercing His hands and feet, the crown of thorns on His head, the sword cast into His side, the humiliation of hanging on a cross, was not the greatest pain He suffered. It was carrying upon Himself the sins of the whole world. It was our sin that caused Him to cry out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" It was at this moment in time that He was separated from His Father because of the burden of our sin. The weight of our

sin and separation from His Father caused Him far greater pain than the nails, thorns, sword and scorn. The cross becomes God's plus sign to us reminding us of the supreme cost of our redemption.

The message of the cross has been central to the Christian faith for centuries. Today, however, some of the contemporary church is creating a Christianity without a cross so as not to become offensive or foolish to the modern-day mind. Is the cross becoming a suspended memory as it fades from the minds of many in the church today? I encourage you to take your hymn book and meditate on the words of that great hymn, "The Old Rugged Cross." Has the hill which was so far away in the first place become even more distant? Has the old rugged cross been forgotten in a search for something more appealing?

May we cherish that old rugged cross till we take that final earthly breath and enter into the presence of Jesus Himself. Cling to that cross until we exchange it for that heavenly crown! "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (I Corinthians 1:18).



— Pastor
David Skordahl
Dalton,
Minnesota

sound bites

1 “Getting honest with ourselves does not make us unacceptable to God. It does not distance us from God, but draws us to him — as nothing else can — and opens us anew to the flow of grace. ... To be alive is to be broken; to be broken is to stand in need of grace. It is only through grace that any of us could dare to hope that we could become more like Christ.” — *Brennan Manning*

“The cross shows little regard for relevancy in any age. While each generation tries to manifest its own culture, the cross seems hardly to care. At any point in history, at any place on this planet, the death of Christ, like the lines of the cross itself,

4 runs perpendicular to the flow of culture. The cross is shocking, arresting, out of step, out of time ... and yet for all time.” — *John Fischer*

6

“The cross was the only moment in all eternity when Jesus was separated from the Father. They had always been One. But now, quite unimaginably, They were separated by our sin.”

— *Michael Card*

2 “However tragic the event appeared to be, the most practical, profitable, and successful event in the history of the world was the death of Christ.”

— *Robert D. Culver*

“It was this hidden cancer, this being in the wrong with God, that Jesus was most anxious to reverse. His whole life was devoted to exposing this disease and putting it to rights. The final medicine would be distilled only at the cross of Calvary.”

— *Michael Green*

“Though he is mocked by the powers and abandoned by his friends, yet the Gospels give the strong, ironic sense that he himself is overseeing the whole long process. He has resolutely set his face for Jerusalem, knowing the fate that awaits him. The cross has been his goal all along. Now, as death nears, he calls the shots.”

— *Philip Yancey*

5

THERE we SEE MERCY

This is the season of Lent. Once again we are on the road that leads to Calvary. As we come to Calvary, we walk the road with Jesus — the Jesus who was betrayed by a kiss, forsaken by His friends, bound before Caiaphas and Pontius Pilate, scourged, spat upon and crowned with thorns by the Roman soldiers, crucified, and endured a quivering agony of pain until His body hung limp in death.

We also come to that same cross which brings us the light of God's love, and our salvation! It is there we see God's mercy, that unlimited divine favor and compassion.



— Pastor Daniel Uzupan
Faith Lutheran
Fort Edward, New York

The cross teaches us that Jesus died, not only as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, but as the Lamb of God who takes away your sin and mine. As we hear the message and receive the garment of salvation, too often we are ready to dash off to the busy highways that lie outside of Calvary. We don't want to linger at that site of suffering and

pain. We say, "Let us flee with the disciples and others from Calvary."

The prophet Isaiah comes to us and says, "Wait, stay there. Do not rush off. Do not feel uncomfortable about tarrying awhile longer at the cross." Why should we remain at this site of death? It is because there God demonstrates His mercy! For just as He clothes us with the garment of salvation, He also "has arrayed (us) with the robe of righteousness" (Isaiah 61:10).

We have received the garment of salvation, but we still need that robe of righteousness to complete our wardrobe. Never have we worn such costly apparel. Our Lord in His mercy had to travel a humiliating route to tailor this robe. The very Son of God "made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness" (Philippians 2:7).

This robe cannot be purchased, for our fallen forms are covered with the sin of Adam and Eve. So in His mercy, Jesus the Christ descended into the pit of this earth and went to its darkest corner on the cross. Paul tells of this journey: "And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:8).

Only at the cross can our robe of righteousness be acquired! This garment comes to us without charge. It is free! Just as God, in His mercy, clothed Adam and Eve in the skins of animals after the Fall, so He covers us, but not merely with skins but with righteousness. Isaiah says it is a righteousness which from beginning to end is God's doing.

He had to wear the thorns, the nails, the cross and the full dress of our sin that He might put on us the robe of righteousness.

Thank God for His forbearing mercy, for it is by it that we live.



The author, a graduate of Gettysburg Lutheran Theological Seminary in 1958, retired from the pastorate in 1992. When Faith Lutheran Church was organized, he came out of retirement and left the ELCA to serve this recently formed congregation. He was accepted on the AFLC Clergy Roster in 1996. He and his wife Roselyn have three children: Mark and Tim live in Georgia and daughter Amy lives in the upstate New York area.

It seemed like such a simple request: "Write an article about the cross as a demonstration of God's love." Of course I could do this. I know God's plan of salvation. I had been taught of God and His love and my Savior since I was a child. I know that *God so loved the world that He gave His Son to die for me.*

Let's go to the beginning. It all began in Eden — this love affair between God and man. As the crowning piece of His creation, God made man. He made him in His own image, and gave him dominion over the earth and all its creatures. God loved man, and He gave him a free will by which to return His love and His blessings.

But at the first test, man failed! He chose to know evil and brought upon himself the condemnation of death.

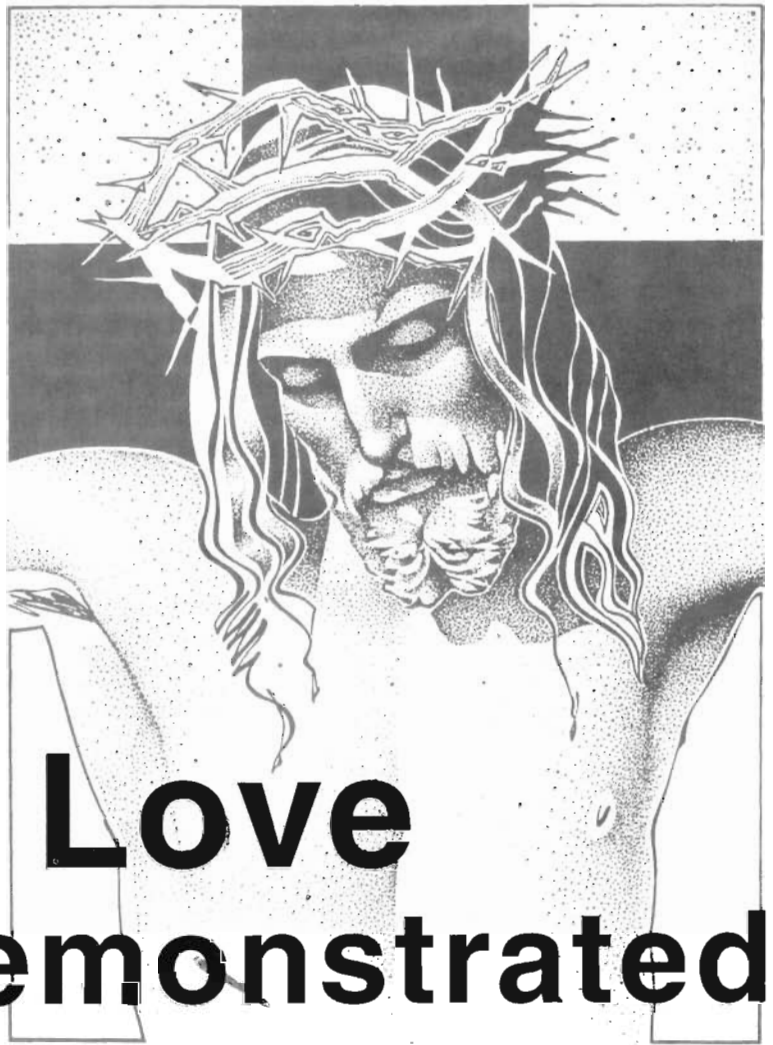
Wonder of wonders, even as we failed, God continued to love us! He provided for us, corrected us, and continued to give meaning to our lives. He taught men how to worship Him, to obey Him, how to live as His people. Through the centuries, man failed to live up to the mark which God had set.

Then *in the fullness of time*, God brought forth His Son to be the One who would bring salvation to mankind.

I like to think of Jesus, my Savior, as a young man, knowing the temptations of the evil one, and quoting God's Word in rebuttal. I like to think of Jesus as a young man gathering his friends around Him and teaching them of His Father. I see Him reaching out to the needy, the lame, the blind, and to those who sought goodness and truth. I like to think of Jesus as He gathered the children to Himself saying that we must have the simple trust of a child to enter the kingdom of God.

I like to think of Jesus as the charismatic young leader who drew the crowds with God's words of wisdom. I like to think of Jesus with His righteous anger at man's perversion of God's temple. I like to think of Jesus as He rode in triumph through Jerusalem and was hailed by a people needing a righteous ruler.

But then, in my humanity, I am dismayed — even distraught — at the events which follow. My heart cries out at His



prayer asking His Father to remove the cup of suffering from Him. I cry at the injustice and the evil of those who spat at Him, jeered Him and tortured Him. I weep for His friends who abandoned Him.

I am horrified at the manner of His death, the pain, the desolation, the sense of abandonment. But when I hear His words, "Father, forgive them," it all falls into place: for in giving of Himself, He saved me from all my sins, all my disobedience, all my willful self. In dying on the cross in the most horrible punishment man has ever devised, **God demonstrated His love for me.**

Seeing God's sacrifice, I realize how precious I am. I realize how much I am loved. For God so loved me that He gave His only Son that when I believe in Him, I need not suffer death, but may live with Him forever. On the Cross of Calvary, God made the ultimate sacrifice. God showed me the depth of His love.

— Wilma Wissner
Ruthfred Lutheran
Bethel Park,
Pennsylvania



Days of grace

The Scriptures make it simple and clear — we are chosen by *grace*. Romans 11:5, 6 declares, “So too at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace ... But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.” Ephesians 4:7 says, “But grace was given to each of us, according to the measure of Christ’s gift.” God’s grace is a free gift from God. God’s Word tells us, *You didn’t choose me, but I chose you!* (John 15:16).

How then do we respond in this life to

— Pastor Merle Fagerberg
Semi-retired
Elbow Lake, Minnesota

Justice at work

But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

— Romans 3:21-26

A passing glance at the cross does not immediately reveal the justice of God. A passing glance at this text from Romans does not immediately bring to mind the justice of God either. And yet, on closer examination one finds the jus-

— Jon Dryburgh
Trinity Lutheran
Grand Forks, North Dakota

the grace we have been given? “Our Daily Bread” devotional provides this illustration: A shopper underestimated the total cost of her groceries. When the cashier added up the items, the woman was \$4 short. Then something unusual happened. The man behind her in the check-out line saw her digging through her purse and mentioned to the clerk to put the amount on his bill. He modestly refused to give the woman his name.

Forgiven by grace

The stain of sin is deep. Scripture declares, “There is no one righteous, no, not one; no one seeks for God” (Romans 3:10,11) Scripture also states, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). God cleanses our hearts by grace. Every sin known and unknown was nailed to the cross. There Jesus hung. And as we believe and trust in God’s Son, Jesus Christ, we are cleansed — forgiven. It’s all by God’s grace freely given to each one!

tice of God woven through the text and the cross like a golden thread. If God’s justice were removed, our salvation would quickly unravel.

Set free from the bondage of sin and death

Why is God’s justice at the cross so important? The word justice refers to God’s kingly power engaged on behalf of men. We, by nature, are oppressed by sin and very needy in spirit. It is the justice of God that steps in apart from the law, and provides or manifests Christ to us for the forgiveness of our sins. Isaiah 61:1, 2 says, “To bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, and freedom to prisoners; To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.”

God’s justice was at work on the cross for the purpose of setting us free from our sin and death. Justice and mercy are, therefore, not in conflict with each other as is often thought, but rather justice is working with mercy to bring about the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

The idea of God’s justice being demonstrated at the cross becomes more evident

Saved by grace

Is this sufficient for you? What if God's only gift to you were His grace to save you from hell? Would you be content?

The people of Jesus' day enjoyed the privilege of listening to Jesus, the Son of God. He had preached in synagogues, and proclaimed the law and gospel as they had never heard before. Truly it must have been, yes it was, a **day of grace** to hear the Redeemer of men preach the Word. People did not flock to hear Him, repent of their sins and believe on Him as their Savior. They spurned their day of grace.

Today is our day of grace. God has visited us through Jesus and Calvary. His Word is preached in our churches to bring us to repentance and point us to our Savior who suffered and died for us at Calvary. Today and every day, Jesus of Nazareth is passing by with His gospel of grace, forgiveness and blessed hope of eternal life.

Every Sunday churches in our towns and throughout the country ring their

bells, inviting people to come and feast on God's Word and His grace. How are we using our *day of grace*?

Do we with joy stand beneath the cross of Jesus and believe in Him, who gave His life that we might be forgiven and live forever? Jesus may be passing for the last time.

His grace does more than deliver us from hell. Our Lord gives us much more. "And from His fullness have we all received grace upon grace" (John 1:16).

I used to make pastoral visits to a lady in a former parish who always walked with me to the door and said, "God has been so gracious to me." Her last words to me were, "I have had many days of grace!"

Someone wrote:

*When we understand His Grace,
Then we will have His Peace.*

How have we used the days of grace God has given us?

May we experience God's grace and peace in Jesus Christ during this Lenten Season.



when we see justice along with its synonym: righteousness. God's justice works to establish righteousness within us. This righteousness is accomplished when our sins are forgiven. This is more clearly seen in verse 26 of Romans 3: "For the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."

What was this demonstration of righteousness? Verse 25 tells us that the demonstration was the public display of Christ as a propitiation (mercy seat — the place where sin is dealt with) in His blood through faith. At the cross man's sin was dealt with by Christ shedding His blood, so that God's wrath toward sin was satisfied. Therefore, the justice of God is seen in the righteousness of Christ making satisfaction for our sins whereby we are forgiven.

Assurance that our salvation is secure

It is the justice of God that gives us confidence that our sins have been forgiv-

en and that He has accepted the work of Christ on the cross once for all. If God were not just and righteous, we would not be able to trust completely in what Christ did at the cross. If God were not just, we could not trust what He says about salvation or how we can possess it.

Our assurance would be on very shaky ground if God was not just. But Scripture clearly teaches that God is just and that Christ's death on the cross was sufficient for all our sins. Hebrews 9:26 says, "Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." Because of God's justice we have confidence to enter into the holy place on the basis and merits of what Christ has done for us. Our salvation is secure in the finished work of Christ!

God's justice is the golden thread in the Lenten Season that ties His grace, mercy and forgiveness together to accomplish salvation for us.



Meet the 1997 FLS graduate

Tom Schierkolk

Parents: LeRoy and Kathleen Schierkolk of Prairie Farm, Wisconsin.

Home church: Amery Free Lutheran of Amery, Wisconsin.

Family: wife, Linda, and children Lydia, 4, and Samuel, 9 months.

Internship: Zion and Grace Free Lutheran, Valley City, North Dakota.

Education: Association Free Lutheran Bible School, Northwestern College, Roseville, Minnesota, and expects to complete Graduate of Theology in May, 1997 at the Free Lutheran Seminary.

Testimony:

I am so thankful I was born into a Christian home. I was taught the truth from the very beginning and was raised to serve Jesus as my Savior and Lord. The one difficulty with being raised in a Christian home, though, is that you always wonder whether you are missing out on something. There is invariably something your parents won't allow that you



think you must experience for yourself. It is always too late before you realize you wasted your time and hurt your relationship with your best friend, Jesus. I did the same thing. When I was in junior high and high school I began to test the limits. I did not want to abandon my faith, but I wanted to experience what was not allowed. I convinced people I was a good kid, but on the inside I was beginning to harden my heart toward the Lord.

I went into the Marine Corps after high school and, compared to others, I thought I was a

Seminary students benefit from AAL grant

A unique grant program will provide \$18,354 in tuition assistance to students at FLS in Minneapolis. Congregations that support the seminary raised \$11,854, and Aid Association for Lutherans contributed \$6,500 under the "AAL Congregational Challenge for Future Lutheran Pastors" grant program. This was a special, one-time grant opportunity offered by AAL.

Seminaries challenged congregations to raise or contribute funds to help seminarians complete their training. AAL agreed to match up to \$500 per eligible student. Funds will be divided evenly among all full-time students enrolled in the Master of Divinity, ordination track program.

"goody two-shoes." But I continued to move farther away from what I knew in my heart was right. Thankfully, the Lord had plans for me that He was carrying out. I never abandoned the Word of God through all my experiences and the Holy Spirit used the Word to bring conviction to my heart. The truth of my situation could not be avoided any longer, I was running from my relationship with Christ. If I continued going that direction I was going to be separated from Christ. I recommitted my life to the Lord during my final year in the Marines. God was the one who was faithful and never gave up on me, even though I was trying to ignore Him.

I felt He was directing me to go to Bible school. During a visit with my brother, Todd, at Bible school, God spoke to me through a Sunday night devotion time and gave me my call into the ministry. The leader simply said we are commanded to be ministers and if we seek a call it should really be a call away from full-time ministry. It wasn't anything profound, but his words stuck with me until I finally decided to go to seminary. I was able to leave the Marines early to start Bible school at the beginning of the academic year in 1987.

That year, I met Linda, a Bible school senior and, after one year, we were married. God has been very gracious to us. He has provided for our material needs every step of the way. When I look at how God directs us in life it is easy to see along with Paul that, "Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass" (I Thessalonians 5:24). God has been faithful to me. My aim and my joy is to be faithful to Him.

Seminary experience:

My internship is taking place in my fourth year of seminary because of changes in the schedule of the curriculum at the seminary. In order for me to take the

Seminary gets matching funds

Free Lutheran Seminary received \$2,410 from Lutheran Brotherhood through the Member matching Gift program. The latest payment matches 26 gifts from Lutheran Brotherhood members made during the fourth quarter of 1996. LB's IMPACT Plus program matches members' gifts of \$25 to \$100 per year to Lutheran seminaries nationwide.

needed classes I had to take them during my third year, so I am finishing my seminary experience with internship. During my four years at the seminary there has been a great deal of change. Dr. Monseth was on sabbatical my first year and we took his courses by video, a new experience for me. During my second year some professors moved on from the school and teaching loads were increased and more part-time teachers were used. During my third year the seminary hired two new full-time professors, but then one more decided to leave. Times of change are always stressful and difficult, but the struggles of the seminary during these years has provided some important learning experiences for me as well.

I have learned how difficult it is to deal with conflict among friends and how important it is to put the best construction on things that are said and done because of the ease with which we can misconstrue a person's intentions. I learned the value of setting your mind on things above so that you don't get caught up in your circumstances. Above all, I have learned that when God calls you to a task He will always be there to help you complete what you set out to do for Him.

Seminary has been a wonderful time of growth for me. Each of my teachers has provided something that will strengthen me in whatever ministry God gives to me. My fellow students have provided encouragement and friendship that will last forever. While I look forward to what God has in store, I look back with great thankfulness for what God has already given throughout my seminary experience.

**AFLC Schools' Spring
Concert – May 16, 8 p.m.**

**Bible School and Seminary
Graduation – May 17, 1 p.m.**

OUR PRESIDENT WRITES

Isn't God good!

A recent issue to the *Metro Lutheran* quotes former missionary Roselyn Holte, whose pastor told about a young father trying to teach his little daughter about tithing. He put ten pennies on the table, and, explaining that *tithe* means a tenth, he removed one penny and said, "Now that's the tithe, and you give that to God." The amazed little girl explained, "You mean I can keep the other nine?" **Isn't God good!**

You will notice something about the last statement: even though the form calls for a question mark, it ends with an exclamation mark. In other words, we are not asking **if** God is good, we are rejoicing in His goodness. One little change at the close of a sentence can indicate the world of difference between corrosive doubt and triumphant faith.

The AFLC should certainly share the same refrain, rejoicing together in the goodness of God. The 1996 budget receipts report an average 97% support of our common endeavors, with World Missions leading at 116% — and this latter percentage total does not include the generous gifts that are designated for individual missionary support. God is good in His provision for the needs of His people.

In the explanation portion of our catechism (q. 273), there is a reminder to focus first of all in prayer on spiritual needs. God is good in His supply of all that we need for our souls. What a blessing to hear how His Spirit is moving in our midst, leading the lost to salvation, the doubting to full assurance, the new believers to maturity. What a marvel that He still uses people like you and me, saved sinners, to accomplish His kingdom work here on earth. This is the greatest provision of all.

The goodness of God is never an excuse to do less, but always an incentive to do more. He provides through His people, by blessing us with an abundance so we may be able to share with the needs that arise (II Corinthians 9:8ff). The tithe is a place to begin, a helpful standard for stewardship measurement. Yet I remember hearing a pastor say that if the tithe is what the Law requires, how much more should a Christian respond to the Gospel which requires nothing.

You mean that I can keep the other nine?

Isn't God Good?

Isn't God good!

— Pastor Robert L. Lee

Lutheran Brotherhood assists Home Missions

As it has for the previous 19 years, the Lutheran Brotherhood Foundation has made grants to the Home Missions Department of the AFLC during 1996. These grants are used by Home Missions to help pay the salaries of mission pastors.

Grant money received from Lutheran Brotherhood in 1996 totaled \$26,800. The funds were evenly divided between three mission congregations:

Maranatha Free Lutheran Church, Willmar, Minnesota
Trinity Lutheran Church, Janesville, Wisconsin
Lutheran Church of Hope, Loveland, Colorado

First annual Youth Workers' Retreat



Throughout this past year there have been many people asking for advice and encouragement in their youth ministry. Some of them are full-time youth workers, others are pastors and some are volunteers. During the weekend of January 17-19, about 40 men and women gathered at the Association Retreat Center for training and refreshment. This was the first time the AFLC youth workers have gathered together. The event was sponsored by the ARC, Free Lutheran Youth Board and Aid Association for Lutherans.

"It was an idea whose time had come," said Youth Board chairman, Pastor Lloyd Quanbeck. The quality of the information shared by these youth speakers was equal or better than the training I have received at local and national training courses. Let me share some of the highlights from each of their messages.

Pastor Lloyd Quanbeck began the weekend with the question, "What determines what is the highest call? The determining factor that makes a call high is the one that is issuing the call. If God has laid youth ministry on your heart, there is no higher call." He described the purpose of youth ministry as "pointing youth to Jesus and preparing them for eternity." With that he gave per-

sonal illustrations of two youth he had known that had died in car accidents. One had an uncertain relationship with Christ and the other a confidence in her personal Savior.

Glenn Olson, a youth worker in Hastings, Minnesota, openly shared: "I spent the first five years of my youth ministry trying to make a name for myself. I had been trying to do it on my own and had not found results. My second five years have been focused on Jesus and His ability to change lives. Lives have been changed. The town of Hastings has a united effort to reach the youth of their community for Christ. Is it possible for you to reach all of the teens in your area? I really believe it is not. However, it is possible for an army to have a major impact on an area. A sixth grader asked me a profound question that I think



Some youth workers enjoyed the ski hills near the Association Retreat Center, Osceola, Wisconsin.

applies, 'When Jesus looks down from heaven, who does He see as His church?' I believe He sees an army that needs a united focus on Jesus."

Paul Kneeland, from Kalispell, Montana, spoke on small town church ministry. What first appeared to be disadvantages ended up as benefits. Low numbers can mean a greater level of intimacy, and a great deal of spontaneity. Nowhere to meet can mean "come on over to my house for pizza, let's pile in my van and meet at the park." One youth worker added that her large youth group is limited in what they can do because of their size.

Audrey Gilmore from Onalaska, Wisconsin, had some great practical words of wisdom to share with us. Five principles that she puts into practice are: 1) the purpose of their youth group is not entertainment; 2) Christianity is caught more than taught; 3) young people need to experience God; 4) youth are looking for answers to life's problems and questions; and 5) youth thrive on challenges. Their youth meetings at Christ is Lord Lutheran are two hours long. They begin with singing, sharing testimonies, announcements, break, teaching, prayer time and then dismissal.

Pastor James L. Johnson, AFLBS Dean, focused on the typical problem of "too much to do, too little time, and too few people to help." With a look at Moses

from Exodus 18, he drew out these points: 1) recognize the problem of one-man ministry; 2) realize the sin of pride involved; 3) reorder your ministry after God's Plan.

AFLC President Robert Lee gave the final message titled, "Who I am makes a difference." He used the contrast between Joshua's life and Achan's life in the book of Joshua as the backdrop for the challenge, "God has called you to make a difference in the lives of youth."

We left the weekend challenged, encouraged and refreshed with the added benefit of great food, free recreation, and a 20' hot tub to help us relax and forget about the winter for a while.

— *Pastor Kevin Olson*
AFLC Youth Director

Tapes of Youth Workers' Retreat available

For only \$3 each, you can have a tape of the sessions. Contact Pastor Olson at the AFLC headquarters or call (612) 545-5631.

You can help a teen

Are you are willing to help sponsor a youth to attend the FLY Convention in Estes Park, Colorado, during August 4-9, 1997? Or perhaps the Lord would lead you to assist someone to go on the FLY Brazil team during June and July this summer? Contact Pastor Kevin Olson, AFLC Youth Director for information (612) 545-5631.

Upcoming events

Minneapolis District — "One Incredible Night," March 7-8.

Southwest Central Minnesota — Faith Haven Rally, April 11-13.

South Dakota District — Mitchell Holiday Inn, April 12-13.

AFLBS Campus Days — It's a free promotional weekend for high school students. Join us during April 18-20. Please call the AFLBS office to register (612) 544-9501.

PARISH EDUCATION UPDATE

On schedule for fall release

Kindergarten series
"Tell Me the Story of Jesus"

Work in progress —

First Grade series
"Teach Me God's Word"

Volunteers still needed —

Writers; Artists; Activities; Teachers' Manuals; and Bible background.

If you can help, contact Marian Christopherson at (612) 545-5632 or Pastor Phil Haugen at (406) 787-9930.

The Book Fund

The Book Fund is a separate fund set aside for the development and printing of new Sunday school materials. Needed — \$30,000 per grade.

Equipment available

The Parish Ed Department has two folding machines (Pitney Bowes model FM) to give away to any church or individual who is willing to pick them up. Also, a Gestetner 329 Offset Duplicator is for sale. Call Parish Ed at (612) 545-5631.

The AFLC has a Gestetner 473 stencil cutter and a Gestetner binder to give away. Please call headquarters at (612) 545-5631.

New resource materials available from Parish Education

For all grades — "The Student Bible Atlas" \$4.99 includes 30 full color maps.

Wall charts and maps \$9.95 per charts or maps.
*26" x 20"

*reproducible worksheets on the back of each chart

*includes guide on how to use your map or chart

Helpful for any classroom, but recommended for these grades:

Grade 5 — Old Testament Time Line

Grade 6 — New Testament Time Line

Grade 7 — Where Jesus Walked: Then and Now

Grade 8 — Paul's Journeys

Grade 9 — The Holy Land: Then and Now

Call the Parish Education Department to order: (612) 545-5631, fax (612) 545-0079.

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Byron, Nebraska — Pictured is Kevin Hoops, 32, a member of Abiding Word Lutheran in nearby Deshler. He is a living witness of God's unfailing love and care in spite of seeming tragedy. Having lost an arm to a corn auger, he has learned to use an inventive mind to accomplish tasks such as changing tires or other machinery repairs.

"Doing farm work now," he said, "requires a higher concentration level." He's had to learn patience while encountering new challenges every day.

"My right arm has become stronger since my accident," Hoops said. "I often use my knees to support things I'm working on."

Hoops said that God prepared him for this accident. As a teen, he worked for a farmer who had lost an arm also. He had a good outlook on life which rubbed off when Kevin experienced the same tragedy.

He says the accident has brought him closer to his Lord



and Savior. It has made him appreciate life more fully. "We are on this earth for such a short time," he said. "In just a split second, dreams can be gone." Kevin is not bitter and he knows God's help is there for him each day. Kevin and his wife, Paula, have two daughters.

— condensed from an article and photo submitted by Nancy Fintel.

Missionaries Paul and Becky

Abel's correct address is:

Caixa Postal 12125

**82401 - 970 Santa Felicidade, PR
Brazil, South America**

Pastor Harris Van Someren, Winger, Minnesota, has resigned as pastor of Dovre and Union Lake Lutheran Parish in conjunction with his announcement of his retirement. He has served at Winger since 1994. Pastor Van Someren is also a member of the AFLC Home Missions Committee.

Myrtle Hove, 93, Thief River Falls, Minnesota passed away on January 14, 1997. She was active in the Gideon's Auxiliary for 60 years and an active member at Our Saviour's Lutheran Church in Thief River Falls. She was preceded in death by her husband, Milton, in 1967. She is survived by her children, Samuel Hove, Minneapolis and Carolyn Dyrud, Campo Mourão, Brazil; seven grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Due to the passing of her mother, Missionaries Connely and Carolyn Dyrud are in the process of relocating to the Minneapolis area. Pray for them as they close up the home in Thief River Falls and begin their deputation ministry in congregations.



Pictured is Dona Elsa organizing children's clothing in the Dorcas Room in Curitiba, Brazil. Used clothing and supplies are always needed and are a blessing for the missionaries to receive and distribute. The extra special goodies sent to the missionaries themselves are appreciated. The Miriam Infant Home in Campo Mourão has been filled in recent months. Their needs include: school supplies, vitamins (chewable and liquid), baby powder and shampoo, bottles with nipples, baby aspirin, towels, crib and twin bed sheets, shoes (especially sizes 5, 6, and 7), and the constant need for diapers and plastic pants/training pants.

WMF in memoriam

Lynn Feist, Lemmon, SD
Corrine Schmidt, Howes, SD
Olena Skeie, Brooklyn, NY
Erling Skarderud, Tioga, ND
Maribeth Hagen, Wallace, SD
Edna Eighmy, Bruce, SD
Orlando Herm, Wahpeton, ND
Agnes Johnson, Valley City, ND
Vicki Olson, Valley City, ND
Ora C. Scott, Morris, IL
Roy Rasmussen, McHenry, ND
Mary Swanson, Spicer, MN
Margaret Nelson, Morris, IL
Pam Sundhagen, Tioga, ND
Geneva Wilkins, Bancroft, SD
Mildred Whitman, Tioga, ND

West Coast District WMF Rally and Bible Conference will be held March 14-16. Co-hosts of the conference are Calvary Lutheran in Everett and Monroe Free Lutheran of nearby Monroe, Washington. The theme is "Living Relationships" and the guest speakers are Pastor Paul Nash, AFLC Home Missions Director, and his wife Laurie. The WMF day begins on Friday at 9 a.m. with the Bible conference starting at 7:30 p.m., Friday evening, March 14.

New AFLC program receives AAL grant

Why are some congregations struggling to survive? Why are others growing and thriving? How can we effectively reach the lost for Christ in an unchurched society?

These questions and others are the focus of *The Congregational Listening Post*, a 1997 program created to identify factors that characterize healthy congregations committed to outreach, which received a grant of \$17,500 from Aid Association for Lutherans last month.

This grant will fund a guided self-study for approximately twenty AFLC congregations selected to send their pastors and lay representatives to workshops on February 22 or March 1 at St. Cloud, Minnesota.

A team consisting of directors, board chairmen, and others involved in leadership positions within the church body will serve as Mission and Ministry Facilitators (MMFs) during the two workshops, and it will also be their task to evaluate the results and interpret them for our congregations.

Dr. Alan Klaas, author of *The Search for the Unchurched*, serves as coordinator for the project. Currently an independent consultant, he was the director of AAL's "Church Membership Initiative" project in 1993.

AFLC Memorial Gifts

Name	Given By	Department
Elmer Rust	Morris/Audrey Moan	AFLBS
Connie Grothe	Iris Myron	World Missions
Elmer Seward and Erma Kilzer	Gerald/Karen Swanson	Home Missions
Erling Johnson	Palma Johnson	AFLTS
Jacob Kupser	Kathy Knutson	World Missions
	R. Naomi/Allen Dahl	
	Gerry/Karen Knudsvig	AFLBS
	Hilman Knudsvig	
	Friends	
M. Haugland	Thomas/Marion Stockeland	World Missions
Ruth Koilhaug	Hazel Willand	World Missions
Elenora Flaa and Jacob Fagervik	Kenneth/Mary Nash	Home Missions
Paul Sunde	Harold/Doris Michelson	Home Missions
	Dagne Faust	
Jacob Fagervik and Charles Green	Percy/Judith Strand	AFLBS
Mavis Linn	Darrel/Bette Ford	World Missions
Myrtle Langemo	Greg/Sandy Olson	AFLBS
Edna Eighmy	Kenneth/Luella Loomis	World Missions
Mabel Broten	Gordon/Gladys Rugland	AFLBS
Erling Skarderud	Edna Skarderud	Home Missions
Dean Brockhoff	Daniel/Elaine Mundfrom	Home Missions
Roy Rasmussen	Edith Gudim	Home Missions
	Eleanor Fjeld	AFLBS
	Timothy/Mary Jones	
	Charley/Eileen Chamberlain	
	Curtis/Pamela Twedt	
	Gilman/Eva Johnson	
	Carola Davidson	
	Carol Nelson	Evangelist
	Duane/Kristi Twedt	
	Amos/Ovidie Dyrud	
	Kent/Mabel Quanbeck	AFLTS
	Ernie/Darlene Miedema	
	Aini Myking	
	Vernon/Dorothy Russum	World Missions
	Thomas/Marion Stockeland	
	Lowell/Linda Thorson	
	Arnold/Lydia McCarlson	Home Missions
	Harvey/Grace Loftsgard	
	James/Jane Rasmussen	
John/Helen Skari	Calvary, Bismarck, ND	World Missions
Ida Hegseth and Boyd Nelson	Delbert/LuVern Jones	AFLBS
Hilda Forland	Raynard Huglen	World Missions
Dorothy Johnson	Robert/Phyllis Johnson	Home Missions
Dwight Jacobsen	Robert/Carol Dietsche	Home Missions
	Our Saviour's, Dickinson, ND	Evangelist
Alvina Hanson	Alton/Joanne Finstrom	Home Missions
	Edith Gudim	
Reuben Swenson	Friends/family	Parish Ed
Hildur Dye	Aini Myking	AFLBS
Mabel Weidemann	Harvey/Janet Jackson	AFLBS
Chad Davidson	Carola Davidson	AFLBS
Luella Anderson	Gordon/Gladys Rugland	General Fund
Maribeth Hagen	Marvid Peterson	AFLTS
Ida Walla	Duane/Kristi Twedt	Evangelist

Legacies

Magnus Berntson to Capital Investment

NEWS OF INTEREST

Oslo, Norway — Some engaged couples register preferences for china patterns and flatware. David Holme and Ingunn Lyngset decided they wanted something else for a wedding gift — a church. The Norwegian pair became acquainted with a poor congregation in the Belarus town of Berezino during a visit to the former Soviet republic. "You can never be the same after meeting people who have so little, yet so much," Lyngset told the Norwegian news agency NTB. Wedding invitations for the couple urged cash donations to the struggling church rather than gifts. Guests and friends reportedly raised a total of \$17,200 — enough to purchase and remodel a building for the church.

Washington, D.C. — Abortion is less readily available in the U.S. today than at any time since the Supreme Court legalized abortion in 1973. The National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League says that laws restricting abortions are on the rise while the number of abortion providers decreased in 45 states from 1982 to 1992.

Beaumont, TX — A program which brings volunteer clergy members into public school classrooms can continue, a federal judge ruled late last year. U.S. District Judge Joe Fisher denied a request for a restraining order filed on behalf of three anonymous Beaumont Independent School District parents who oppose the Clergy in Schools program.

"The court feels clergymen may volunteer and serve a very worthy purpose, and have," Fisher stated at a hearing. "The court does not find that there's any violation of Constitutional rights."

The Clergy in Schools program, new this year, brings volunteer clergy members into Beaumont schools to meet with students representing a cross-section of the

Commission on Evangelism update

God is at work, people are praying, people are giving and the commission is interviewing men for the position of evangelist/director of evangelism.

We still are in need of pledges from people of the AFLC. God has called us to go into all the world and make disciples (Matthew 28). We first have to tell them of Jesus. Please help! We need many to give and to

pledge their prayer support.

We thank you in advance.

We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints. — Colossians 1:3,4

— Pastor James Rasmussen
AFLC Commission on Evangelism

student body.

The three anonymous families filing the complaint have four daughters among them, none of whom have participated in the voluntary program. Attorney Scott Newmar, who represented the parents, said his clients don't oppose religion, but believe that the program interferes with their right to determine how religion will be presented to their children. Newmar argues that the program is an unconstitutional attempt to "get religion in through the back door."

Newmar said the program should be expanded to include members of other professions. Beaumont school Superintendent Carrol Thomas said that members of other professions volunteer in other ways, and noted that the Clergy in Schools program is designed to use the communication skills of clergy members.

Norwalk, CT — Does religious faith play a role in speeding recovery from physical maladies? Fully 99 percent of doctors in a recent survey said yes. An equally high number said they believe that religious practices such as prayer and meditation can speed recovery of those who are ill.

Of those doctors surveyed, 95 percent said they had treated patients who believed that religious activities improved their physical condition. The study also found that 68 percent of doctors

said they had prayed or meditated while seeking to recover from an illness of their own.

A smaller majority (71 percent) said that physicians who are asked for prayer should join a patient in prayer, while 79 percent said they believe that God sometimes intervenes on behalf of a seriously ill person.

"Through the ages physicians have witnessed recoveries they can't attribute solely to medical procedures," explained Dr. Herbert Benson, president of the Mind/Body Medical Institute at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston. "Now many physicians are beginning to hold that belief can have a profound influence on health and well-being and they see it as an integral part of their traditional treatment plan."

Lutheran Brotherhood acquires Lutheran Trust

Lutheran Brotherhood has announced that it has acquired Lutheran Trust as a wholly owned subsidiary. Lutheran Trust offers a full line of property and casualty insurance to individual Lutherans, as well as to Lutheran congregations and institutions. It has begun marketing personal auto and homeowners' plans in five Midwestern states (Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Illinois and Wisconsin) and expects to expand to other states in the future.

“Man of Sorrows — What a Name”

Suffering is something we generally run from, not toward. That is how we operate — but not Jesus. The Bible describes Him as “a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. ... Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows” (Isaiah 53:3,4, NIV).

Many of us are “familiar with suffering.” We are familiar with it, however, not by choice. We try to avoid it. We seek a pain-free existence. We fear taking chances, because we might experience failure. Loving deeply scares us, because it so often leads to hurts that are deep as well. We are tempted to try to shelter ourselves in some kind of a cocoon. In the cocoon the opportunities for joy are limited, but we give little heed to that. We just don’t want to hurt. We don’t want to suffer.

Jesus chose to become “a man of sorrows.” He became “familiar with suffering” because He wanted to. “It was the Lord’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer” (Isaiah 53:10, NIV). He “carried our sorrows” not because they were thrust upon Him against His will. He knowingly, willingly, came to grab hold of them.

We often strive to present to God achievements and good deeds, thinking foolishly those will impress Him. But instead of coming to sort through our accomplishments and pick out the best, God comes to take up our infirmities.

The word used in Isaiah 53 for infirmities speaks of sicknesses and ailments. They are sicknesses we are afflicted with because we live in a fallen world and because of our own sinfulness. They are the things that hinder and weigh us down and prevent us from truly living and being what we were created to be.

The sinful habits, the damaged emotions and relationships, the corrupted thinking, the messed-up attitude, the shameful past, the wounded heart and the scared mind — all these ugly infirmities we drag around like a ball and chain, Jesus comes to take upon Himself on the cross. “My sin, not in part, but the whole, is nailed to His cross and I bear it no more, praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul,” declares the hymn writer.

As Jesus takes our infirmities upon Himself He bears the burdens and suffers the consequences that come with them. He is the Doctor who knows that getting close to sick people will result in Him catching their germs. Nevertheless, He comes to the sin-

sick people we are and willingly takes our ailments upon Himself and clothes us in His health and wholeness.

Jesus covers Himself with the filth of our sin; to such an extent that God the Father had to turn His face and let Him suffer. He then offers to make us ones who are fit and ready for His coming, dressed in “fine linen, bright and clean” (Revelation 19:8, NIV).

“Familiar with suffering” speaks of what Jesus did at the cross and also of what He does for His children today. He is One to whom we can go with our suffering. He is One who understands. He knows what encourages and what helps and what doesn’t.

I have some friends who have walked with Christ through some days of unique difficulty. As I have been walking a path that has involved some trials during the past year, it has been those friends who I have turned to and found help from the most. It is not that other friends have cared less. But those friends have known best from experience what was a help to them and can be a help to me.

The Friend who helps the most is the Friend who knows suffering the best. Jesus walked a path far more difficult than any you or I will ever walk. The most severe trials that we deserve, we will not have to endure because He has endured them for us.

Some trials remain which we must face, but they are not ones with which

Jesus is unfamiliar or for which He is unprepared. “I can do everything through him who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:13, NIV). The trials can be faced and endured when we do so holding the hand of the “man of sorrows.”

Jesus mourns when we mourn. He weeps when we weep. He knows the severity of our trials. He knows the depth of our pain. It is no small matter to Him. As the hymn writer correctly says, “O yes, He cares; I know He cares, His heart is touched with my grief.”

The Lord is familiar with our hurt, and familiar with how to help. He is able “to sympathize with our weaknesses, ... Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Hebrews 4:15,16, NIV).

“Man of Sorrows!” what a name for the Son of God who came ruined sinners to reclaim! Hallelujah, what a Savior!”

— Pastor Craig Johnson

**God comes
to take up
our
infirmities.**

BUILDING THE BASE

It's time for boldness

For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake. — Philippians 1:29

In the December 1996 issue of *The Voice of the Martyrs* magazine is an article entitled, "An Unusual Gift," written by the director of that organization. He tells how he has recently gained a new perspective on Christian persecution and suffering.

A friend recently shared with him that Chinese children growing up in Christian homes are taught to expect to suffer for their faith and to do so with the attitude expressed in Philippians 1:29. Note the two privileges granted to us through Christ: *not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.* One example of suffering mentioned in the article was that of Li DeXian, a Chinese pastor who has been beaten and had Bibles repeatedly taken from his church by the police.

Suffering for Christ's sake — so directly and physically — is obviously something that most of us in America know little of by personal experience. But the tide is shifting. We live in the midst of increasing skepticism, unbelief, and even hostility toward historic Christianity. I write this just two days after a judge's decision in Hawaii approving of same-sex marriages. What do these and

similar decisions and attitudes forebode for those who continue to hold and speak forth the biblical truths and standards. Surely those who oppose homosexuality and other immoral practices widely condoned and practiced in our country will be more and more hated, ridiculed, and persecuted in the future.

It really isn't too soon to ask, "How high of a price am I willing to pay to remain faithful to my Savior and continue to share Him and His ways with others?" I don't mean to minimize what that price may be, but could I propose to you that the answer to that question is fairly simple? You and I need to bear only what God in His love and wisdom calls upon us to bear. You see, there is no need to lie awake at night restlessly or to sit wringing our hands wondering what the future may hold. Give it to Him. Allow His will in your life. What He allows, He also gives the strength to endure. And if our commitment to our faith should result in experiencing strong opposition and even persecution, is Jesus not worthy of it?

I love the examples we have from Scripture of Jesus' own boldness and obedience. In John 4, Jesus obediently traveled through Samara, going from Judea to Galilee, evidently because He understood that it was God the Father's will for Him to witness

to the residents of Sychar. John 4:4 simply says, "He needed to go through Samaria." In Luke 18:31 Jesus told His disciples they were going up to Jerusalem, even though He knew suffering and death awaited Him there. And, in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus models the height of courageous obedience when, only hours from crucifixion, He says, "Not my will, but Thine be done" (Luke 22:42).

So how can sharing our faith be a consistent reality in our lives?

* Let your life be a response of love for and praise to Him who was willing to give His life for you.

* Live in the confidence that our loving heavenly Father is watching over His children and will not allow any greater challenge than that He gives the strength to endure.

* Know that our faithful witness will be used by God to touch lives for eternity as well as bring glory to His name.

* Pray for holy boldness because God hears and loves to answer the sincere prayers of His people for spiritual blessings.

God grant us all the courageous, obedient boldness in our witness that will challenge and change the world.

— Pastor Rick Long
Atonement Lutheran
Arlington, Washington