

The Lutheran **AMBASSADOR**

February 27, 1996

Lamb

Spotless



Of Good

was He

— Philip P. Bliss

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

February 27, 1996
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AN ENCOURAGING WORD

Jesus our Good Shepherd

I am the good shepherd; and I know My own, and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

— John 10:14,15

During the Lenten Season our focus turns to Jesus' sacrifice for sin. His death was foreshadowed in the Old Testament by the sacrifice of animals on the altar. In the above verses, however, Jesus speaks of Himself, not as a sacrificial lamb but as a Shepherd — a Good Shepherd. As a Good Shepherd, He gave His life on behalf of the sheep!

I recall in driver's training being told to never place one's own life or the life of another in jeopardy for the sake of avoiding an animal that may cross the road in front of the car. Human life was to be viewed as possessing more worth than animal life. I would assume that most of the shepherds of Palestine in Jesus' day would have followed the same principle — but not the Good Shepherd! He laid down His life for the sheep — that is for us! Our lives were so precious to Him that He was willing to give His own.

If there was a Palestinian shepherd who died defending his sheep we may be sure that it was accidental. Jesus' death was planned! If a shepherd would have lost his life on behalf of his sheep it would have been disastrous for the sheep. Jesus' death resulted in life for His sheep. Recognizing that we were under God's just sentence for sin, Jesus took our place and bore the full blunt of the fierce wrath of God that we might be saved and have life.

But Jesus' dealings with His sheep do not end there. In John 10:14-15, He speaks of an intimate relationship between "His own" and Himself as the Good Shepherd. He did not die for us so that we could receive eternal life and go on our merry way. He died for us so that we could enjoy the daily blessings of eternal life which include precious communion and fellowship with Him. This has important implications for our observance of the Lenten Season.

Lent ought to be a time each year when our focus on Jesus' death for us (the gospel) enlarges our understanding of the price paid for our salvation, our appreciation for and faith in the saving grace of Christ, and our knowledge of Him — "My own know Me." In Ephesians 3:19 Paul prays that the church might "know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that (they) may be filled up to all the fullness of God." As we "feast" more intently on the good news of Jesus' salvation during Lent our experience will become one of growth in our understanding of the Good Shepherd's great love for us and our fellowship with Him will grow stronger and deeper.

May this Lenten Season find us focusing on our Good Shepherd and pressing on to know Him better so that we can confess along with the hymn writer:

*The King of Love my Shepherd is,
Whose goodness faileth never;
I nothing lack if I am His
And He is mine forever.*

— Henry Baker

— Rev. Les Johnson
Faith Lutheran
Lake Alma, Saskatchewan

Can you imagine that?

Therefore remember that you ... were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been made near by the blood of Christ.
— Ephesians 2:11,13

Without Christ! Can you imagine that? For those raised outside of Christ, it is a reality needing no imagination. In the margin of my Bible, next to these verses, I've written, "What a gift!"

It is a gentle reminder of my life at 32 B.C. (Before the Cross), when Jesus Christ was nothing more than a passing thought and an item of profanity. It all changed one July night in 1986. While being under an overwhelming cloud of hopelessness with the events going on in my life, God offered me His promise of forgiveness and redemption.

I accepted. I was an alien no more.

**I've never been to Israel,
but I've been to Calvary.**

Sometime after my conversion, it was God's will that I come to fully appreciate the One whose name I had taken in vain. Through His Word and prayer, He led me to realize the events of Calvary from the foot of the cross: the beating, the painful procession and the sickening sound of metal being pounded into wood as the nails were driven through His feet and hands; the jolt of pain as they raised the cross; the shortness of breath as tired muscles could work no more; and the loss of His blood, yes, the precious

blood that brought me, who once was far off, to be made near once again. It was His blood shed unto death that would pay for my sins.

His pain was my gain.

As horrifying as the scene of Calvary might be, God had another reason to visit the cross: the mystery revealed (Mark 4:11,12). The pain, the suffering, the shed blood and death, they were more than legal fulfillment of sacrifice. They were proof of God's gracious love. In the witness of His suffering on the cross, I could see my worth to God. I could see and measure His love for me. For what other reason would the Divine die for the sinner? If God, who is God of purpose, had allowed Christ to suffer as He did, then would He not also offer His "covenants of promise" to me? The answer is yes, He does, because He is faithful. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Because of His past work on the cross, I can (and you can too) live today with hope that comes through peace with God (Romans 5:1,2). The Apostle Paul wrote correctly when he said, "I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

He gave Himself for me. Can you imagine that!



— Pete Ward
Our Saviour's Lutheran
Zumbrota, Minnesota

Living with the cross

Christ crucified ... the power of God and the wisdom of God. — I Corinthians 1:23-24

The guest speaker at special meetings I attended recently told us that he has put the members of his own congregation on notice. He believes that they should all be ready at any moment to share what Jesus has done for them. He is helping them keep a great tradition which has been a part of our history for many generations.

Remembering what God has done in our lives is important. The Psalmist David knew how to use the memories of God's mercy and lovingkindness to find strength for living. Without discounting the importance of remembering the past, I wonder what the effect of the cross is on life today? Is my personal testimony only a remembrance of how I was saved, or does it also witness to what God is continuing to do for and to me today? What is the effect of the cross in my life now?

The Cross: God's dynamite

The Holy Spirit, speaking through His servant Paul, says this about the cross: "For indeed Jews ask for signs, and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (I Corinthians 1:22-24, NASB). The cross is God's "dynamite." It is the very force of life. It is the believer's motivation.

The cross is also our access into the very mind and will of God. It was the cross that God used to carry out His perfect will for lost and broken humanity. It is through the crucified Jesus that God calls us to Himself. So the cross then also becomes for us the passage into the mind and will of God.

The Cross: A Place of Surrender

A contemporary psychologist has suggested that those things we place into the

context of "the holy" take on a new priority in our lives. Each of us has those "things" we wish we could deal with but somehow find more convenient to put off for another day. Each of us has pain: the pain of sin, sickness and betrayal. Each of us has disappointments, things we wish were different. Each of us has fears, fears of losing or being rejected by that to which we so dearly cling. Each of us has areas in our lives that we have not surrendered to the "Holy."

As we make the cross a practical life application, it is our place of surrender. Like the burning bush to Moses, it is our holy ground. It is our place to bow, humbly releasing our hurt and pain and disappointments and fear. It is ultimately the place where we must daily give up the fight that wages against God for control. It is the place where we receive daily healing and joy and fulfillment and power.

The Cross: God's Message

Through the cross we see our need for the Savior. It is His death on the cross that paid the price for our redemption. His death is our punishment. His shed blood calls us to faith, repentance and to new life. Now the cross becomes our strength for life as we begin to glimpse and take hold of what it is God has for us to be and to do. The cross is not only something in the past. It is the symbol of Jesus today for "in Him we live and move and exist" (Acts 17:28a, NASB).

The cross is our message, actually God's message lived and spoken through us, to a dead and dying world. As we have received so we are commanded to give. As we have been forgiven so we are commanded to preach and witness to forgiveness. As we have been given victory and new life so we are commanded to point others to the power of God and the wisdom of God, the cross, Christ crucified.



— Rev. J. Christian Andrews
Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran
Palmdale, California



Relying on the cross for tomorrow

The power of the cross is a continuous power from God. To those who are perishing it is foolishness. To each Christian, to each one who is being saved, it is the power of God. God is working in our life now, but He will continue to work in our life in the future. What an assured hope that is to the believer!

Read I Corinthians 1:18-25. We learn that the cross has been given to us so that we may acquire God's wisdom by accepting the power of the cross into our lives. When God looks at those who reject the cross and Christ and seek after the wisdom of the world, it is foolishness to Him (v. 20). The Christian can continue to live in the power of the cross while the world offers empty recycling programs that do not offer true peace.

As the world raises their questions, we continue on in the power of the cross. We preach Christ crucified. This does not make sense to those in spiritual darkness, however, to the saved people of all ethnic groups, it is the power of God.

We can rely on God. The foolishness of God is wiser than that of men. His weakness is stronger than all of man's strength. The cross brings all men to an equal plane. In the January 15, 1996, *Our Daily Bread*, a story was told about General Robert E. Lee, a believer. After a communion service he was asked how he could kneel by a black man and take communion. He answered, "My friend, all ground is level at the foot of the cross." When we are at the foot of the cross the

only way to look is up to Jesus.

God does personally call us (v. 26). Each of us is special to Him. Our fulfillment comes in the Lord. This call to each one of us is not received by birth. It is not a call that we receive based on our status in life. Not many of us are noble, wise or mighty. His call is to rely not on our power but on the power of the cross for today and the rest of our lives. We are confident of a future in heaven as well because of the cross and the resurrection of Christ.

God uses the weakness of things to bring shame to the strong things. God works in ways that do not make sense to the world. This is a reminder to us that we are not to boast before God.

We can come to God because of what Christ has done for us on the cross. It is by God's doing that we are in Christ. Through His power we can remain in Christ. God has shown us the way by making Christ the wisdom from God. As a result, if we are to boast, we are to boast in Christ.

The question then is, "Do I want God's wisdom?" If I do, it is provided for me by placing my faith in Christ and allowing the cross to be central in my life as I deny myself, confess my sin, and follow Christ. May the cross of Christ be central in your life today and each passing day as you choose to live for Christ.



— by Rev. Dennis O'Neil
Lena, Wisconsin

***The Christian
can continue
to live in
the power
of the cross.***

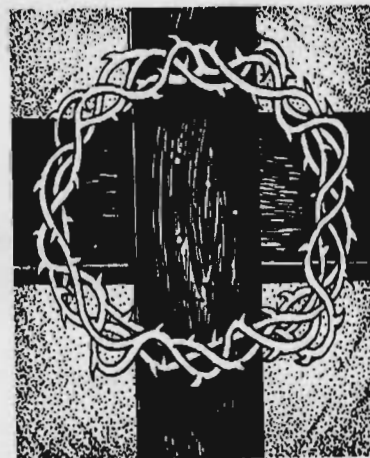
The cross

The cross is a thorn and a stumbling block to most of the world. They just don't get it! They believe they can outsmart God. They believe there has to be some way into heaven other than the cross.

It was at the cross that Jesus paid the penalty for our sin which we deserved to pay. It was at the cross where the blood of Jesus completely covered all our sins. It was at the cross where the power of sin was broken.

Can good people then get into heaven? No way! There are no good people! There are only forgiven people who are willing to come to Jesus by way of the cross. Have you come to Jesus by way of the cross? You cannot prepare yourself for heaven; Jesus has already done it for you. Hallelujah! Receive Him! Trust in Him! It's the only way.

— Rev. David Skordahl
taken from Parish News & Views
Dalton Free Lutheran Parish



Three drops of water

It was at a time when I was serving a church near Canton, South Dakota. Being new to the area, I sought out a barber shop. As the barber was clipping away, I told him I was serving a church nearby and I was a Lutheran pastor. At this he exclaimed, "Boy, oh boy, just wait 'till you meet up with Swanson and he will take you to task about infant baptism."

Well, I did meet up with Swanson, who had been raised in the Lutheran tradition and had totally rejected the thought of any benefit in infant baptism. He really poured it on sneeringly, "Three drops of water, what good does that do?" He blatantly spoke of his great and wonderful experiences in his church, of healings and tremendous prophecies. This was at a time when those of his persuasion in Texas were frantically digging caves because of the

soon nuclear destruction that was prophesied. He raved about his blessings derived in his new faith and threw in the additional "three drops of water." Then I said very cheerfully to him, "Now I've got you." He asked, "What do you mean?" I questioned, "The blessings of which you speak, how can you say with certainty that those blessings are not the result of, or related to, the 'three drops of water'?" He was speechless.

I too had the three drops of water. I went through confirmation, but alas, nothing was confirmed in me. Actually I hated Luther because I had to memorize the catechism while my friends were playing baseball not far off. I heard the sounds, "get him at third," "throw it home" and the other exciting banter of the game.

In retrospect, I am persuaded that the Lord had His hand upon

me. I came to love Luther. The Lord watched over me until the fullness of a new birth was realized or experienced in me.

Appearing before the seminary faculty of the Augustana Lutheran Church, I related the experience of how I had been accosted by one who had the audacity to ask if I was saved. Anger welled up in my heart at the question, and I almost floored him. Through that experience, the Lord became real to me, however, and I was born again.

This was most interesting to the learned professors, and subsequently there was the loaded question: "Now Mr. Persson, you speak of being baptized and the following spiritual experience, what we would like to know: up until the time of your spiritual experience, were you saved or lost?" I responded, "I will answer your question in this way: I did not have the Holy Spirit whereby I could say that Jesus was Lord" (I Corinthians 12:3).

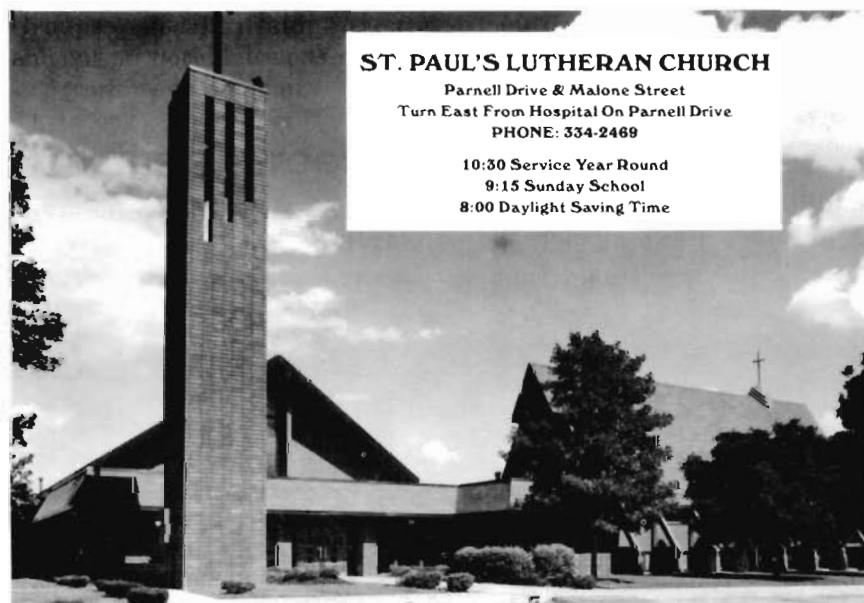
I do thank the Lord for baptismal grace, for all those born again in baptism, and I also rejoice in those having a subsequent affirmation of a new birth after baptism. Three drops of water are indeed sufficient, for it is not the amount of water that does such great things.

May I raise the question: does our church yet accept the words of Wislof: "Everyone who was baptized in infancy must personally meet Christ and must then have the experience of choosing to live in covenant relationship with God who accepted him in baptism."

Baptism will be of no benefit to him who chooses life away from God and shuts His grace out.

— Pastor Ray S. Persson
Astoria, Oregon

Missouri congregation votes to join the AFLC



ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Parnell Drive & Malone Street
Turn East From Hospital On Parnell Drive
PHONE: 334-2469

10:30 Service Year Round
9:15 Sunday School
8:00 Daylight Saving Time

St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Branson, Missouri, completed a two-year voting process on January 21, 1996, with a clear consensus to request membership in the AFLC. St. Paul's began as a Missouri Synod congregation but it has been independent for several years. At one time St. Paul's was the only Lutheran church in the community which in recent years has experienced major changes due to the now popular tourist attractions nearby. The congregation is served by Rev. John Brandt.

What's Next?

AFLBS Campus Days

March 1-3, 1996

Call today! 612-544-9501

Fri. — Registration at 6 p.m.

Gospel Teams

Fun/Fellowship

Sat. — Breakfast/Devotions

Sample classes, Choir

Recreation, Banquet,

Rally, Afterglow

Sun. — Worship, Dinner

See what life at Bible School

is really like. 100% FREE!

Fly Leadership Conference

Who is it for?

Anyone who wants to know how:

- to tell Chris about Christ
- to plan a part to reach Roy
- to take a trip to the Twins
- to invest in the inner city
- to take a look in the Book.

Whatever It Takes

I Corinthians 9:22-23

July 15-19, 1996

Call 612-545-5631

South Dakota District Rally

Ramkota Inn, Watertown

April 13, 3 p.m. —

April 14, 12 p.m.

Igniting Youth to Prayer

Billy Graham Crusade Youth Night

June 22, 1996

Minneapolis, Minnesota

Youth Notes

"You're not my friend anymore"

We have three young children. We have found that a five-year-old quickly tries to exercise control by using the statement, "You're not my friend anymore!" They find it extremely discouraging when this doesn't have any affect on mom and dad's decision to take away a toy. Acceptance is essential in our earliest years and this continues throughout our life.

I can remember a birthday party that our class had. It was the talk of the school. Everyone knew about it. It was going to be one of the big events of the year. A new kid in our school went and bought a present to bring to the party. He brought it to school the day of the party.

I remember him holding his present and someone asked him if he had received an invitation. He didn't know about invitations. Another person said, "You're not invited if you don't have an invitation."

His smile was gone, his body slouched, his lip quivered, and tears began to swell as he turned to walk home. I know how he felt because I was that boy. I was

crushed because of a lack of acceptance.

I wonder how many countless people around us are crying out for someone who will welcome them for who they are. Suicide is high among teens because they do not feel accepted. Gangs grow because of the cry of youth to be accepted. Our youth groups could thrive if we could establish an atmosphere of unconditional acceptance.

That acceptance is found in Romans 8:39: "Neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Now that is a message our youth of today need to hear. Perhaps there are those in your church who need to hear God's message of acceptance through your life.

"When (Saul) came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles" (Acts 9:26-27).

Acceptance — a powerful word. — Rev. Kevin Olson

Ideas to try

- Encourage a youth you know with a short note.
- Invite a child from a single parent family to join your family at some activity.
- Take a youth to the local hamburger shop, buy them a coke, and ask them, "how's life."

Summer missions

To Russia and Mexico. Call the AFLC Youth Office at 612-545-5631.

Prayer requests

① That the youth leaders would find encouragement in the up and down cycles of their ministry.

② That people would catch God's vision for youth ministry in their community.

③ That youth groups would grow in an atmosphere of love and acceptance.

④ For the upcoming youth events and open hearts to receive what the Lord has to say to them.

Congregations in mission

Last November, the youth group of Our Saviour's in Stanley, North Dakota received an Aid Association for Lutherans Youth Serve Grant for \$500. The money was used to purchase material and items to put together "Health Kits and Layettes" for the Brazil mission field.

It was an enjoyable experience for every one involved as each sensed the joy in helping others and serving the Lord in this way. We may not always be able to go, but we can pray and give to the work of the Lord.

If you have an AAL branch in your congregation, perhaps there is still opportunity to work on a mission project.

Emmaus Lutheran in Bloomington, Minnesota is desiring to be a part of the task of reaching the lost. The congregation has formed two Missions Task Groups, a local missions group and one on world missions.

According to Emmaus' Decem-



Our Saviour's youth packing the "Kits" for Brazil.

ber 1995, newsletter, they define missions as, "Any endeavor outside our local congregation to fulfill the Great Commission of Christ by proclaiming the gospel of Christ, making disciples, and relating to the total needs of mankind, spiritual and physical. The effort is divided between: 1) world missions — targeting cross cultural missionaries and ministries outside the metro area; 2) local missions — ministries and Christian workers within the

seven-county metro area."

Group members are encouraged to attend monthly meetings of the task group and volunteer for projects that need attention. They promote missions by sharing needs of missionaries with others and recruit new members. Above all, they make a special prayer commitment to missionaries and ministries. The groups also make recommendations to the church council on mission support.

Brazilian street children's ministry no longer active

The Brazil AFLC congregation in Vitoria is no longer directly involved in the street children's ministry. At the height of this ministry, two homes were providing care for some 22 children. The state government provided funds for the purchase of some homes and rent money for others. These homes were then turned over to other organizations, including many church organizations to administer. With a recent change in state government and the major loss of subsidy from the government for housing, rent and food, many of these homes have had to close, including one of the homes formerly run by the Brazil

AFLC congregation in the Vitoria area. The second home, which had been purchased with government funds, has now been turned over to another Christian organization which has greater experience in this type of ministry and was farther along in the legal process of registering the work and ministry with the government.

We are thankful to those who have provided periodic support for these street children's homes in Brazil. Our Miriam Infant Home at Campo Mourão continues in its ministry of providing for young needy children in that area. All future gifts received for children's home ministries in

Brazil will now be credited to this ministry.

— *Rev. Eugene Enderlein*
AFLC World Missions Director

Shierkolks to begin ministry in Aguascalientes, Mexico

Missionaries Todd and Barb Schierkolk and girls are enroute to their first assignment in Aguascalientes, Mexico, where they will work initially with missionaries Dan and Debbie Giles. Men from Faith Lutheran in El Campo, Texas, are assisting the Schierkolks in the move.

Missionaries available to share their vision with your congregation

Rev. Paul and Becky Abel and family expect to arrive in the U.S. in March to begin their furlough from mission work in Curitiba, Brazil. They hope to begin visiting congregations in April and through the summer before their children start school in the fall. You may contact them through the World Missions office at 612-545-5631.

Sonja Dahl, Winona, Minnesota, is filling her weekend schedule for deputation while continuing with her job as a nurse. She has applied for her visa to Brazil where she will work at the Infant Home and with other ministries in Campo Mourão. To set up a time when she can visit your congregation, call her at 507-453-0889.

Rev. Jim and Lorene Winters, Calgary, Alberta, were scheduled to have departed in February, for Campo Mourão, Brazil, where they will serve as short-term missionaries.

The Jonathan Abel family will return to Brazil in March to begin their second term. They will initially work out of Campo Mourão while surveying future outreach into the state of Mato Grosso Do Sul, northwest of Campo Mourão. The capital city of that state is Campo Grande.

OUR PRESIDENT WRITES

The 1995 Budget Report: lessons to be learned

Many readers of *The Lutheran Ambassador* have already seen the final report of AFLC budget receipts for the last fiscal year. I invite you to look at them again, and to see if the Lord might be showing us that there are lessons to be learned.

The combined budget totals for 1995 were \$1,147,831.32. This means that 77% of our goals were reached, compared to 82% for last year. Considering each separate ministry, however, World Missions and the Church Extension Fund exceeded their goals (101% and 141% respectively), and farthest from their goals were the Bible School (56%) and Capital Investments (53%). The General Fund finished the year at 81%, Home Missions at 73%, Parish Education at 68%, and the Seminary at 66%.

Although total budget receipts for the year were about thirty thousand dollars lower than for 1994, it must be noted that two special World Missions appeal letters resulted in non-budgetary gifts of over forty thousand dollars during the final quarter of 1995. Also, World Missions received over one hundred thousand dollars in additional non-budgetary contributions designated for new missionary support. This is a good reminder to all of our ministries that the people of the AFLC do respond when they are informed of the needs.

"And my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).

It is good for all of us to be reminded, too, that the Lord provides what we need, but not necessarily what we want. This is true for church associations, as well as for individual Christians. He calls us to learn His lessons from what He withholds and what He bestows. Stewardship is always a spiritual issue, and the AFLC must look at goals and gifts in this light if we are to walk in His will.

We thank the Lord for all His goodness to us, remembering that His greatest gifts are always the spiritual ones. Believers have grown in the grace and knowledge of Christ our Lord. Lost souls have passed from death to life, entering into the peace and joy of personal salvation. Dear friends, please remember, too, that the greatest gift that you can give to the AFLC is not to write out a check, but to pray regularly for all of our ministries, calling upon the heavenly Father to richly prosper His work among us.

— *Sincerely in His service,*
Rev. Robert L. Lee

Lent in the church calendar

The church year begins with the Advent/Christmas season which we've just passed through. This season celebrated Jesus' coming. Now we move into the Lenten/Easter season. Lent focuses on Jesus' suffering and death for us. Easter is the high point of the church year, celebrating the Resurrection.

After this, we remember Pentecost, the day the Holy Spirit fell on the New Testament church. Then we begin the Trinity season, the second half of the church year, from about seven weeks after Easter to late November.

Scripture texts given for each Sunday focus on two main areas. During the first half of the church

year, Advent through Pentecost, they focus on the major events in the life of Christ. During the Trinity season, the focus is on growth, applying the lessons from the life of Christ to the life of the Christian.

— *Rev. Jim Johnson*
taken from The Steeple,
Solid Rock Free Lutheran
Osseo, Minnesota

Meet the senior seminarians



W. Bruce Peterson

Son of William and Jennie Peterson, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Married to Phyllis Buchner.

Children: Dr. P. J. and Pam Bayait, Missionaries Brian and Patricia Arensen, David and Lisa Zeman and five grandsons.

Home congregation is Living Word Lutheran, Eagan, Minnesota.

Attended University of Minnesota.

Special interest is the resurrection and the regular exercise of a 1923 Model "T" Ford touring car.

Personal testimony

Before going to the seminary I worked for a large printing corporation in the Mechanical Maintenance Department. One day when I was in the pressroom foreman's office, he turned in his squeaky swivel chair and looked me squarely in the face and said, "Bruce, there is something about you that is different from the rest of these people around here. What is it?"

Let me tell you about that "something" that caused my life to be turned upside down. It was what you might call the "Show-down at O.K. Corral" of my life. It



Timothy L. Johnson

Son of Loran and Marge Johnson, Pipestone, Minnesota.

Married to Cindy Riemer.

Children: Jordan, 4 months.

Home congregation is Christ the King Lutheran in Pipestone.

Graduate of the University of Minnesota-Morris.

Special interests include music, sports and reading.

was the time when Jesus came roaring into my life and He biblically looked me squarely into my spiritual eye and He said, "Bruce, let's get serious.

"No more of this playing footsie with Me.

"No more of this playing word games with Me.

"No more of this totally ignoring Me in public and then play pious Peterson in church.

"No more of this wishy-washy relationship we have.

"Now is the time. Accept Me as who I am or reject Me as the greatest fraud this world has ever seen."

You know what? I got real serious with Jesus. I invited Jesus into my life and He became my personal Lord and Savior. I invit-

Personal testimony

I grew up in a family that consistently attended church and Sunday school and I was very involved in our church youth group. However, as a junior in high school, I began to walk away from the Lord and even started drinking occasionally with a bad crowd on weekends. I knew what I was doing was wrong and the guilt of not being in a right relationship with the Lord was weighing me down.

One night before I fell asleep, I asked God to help me. That night I had a dream of the end times and woke up scared. I knew something had to change. Then I remembered parts of the repentance verses Pastor Dave Skordahl had discussed in my confirmation classes such as Acts 3:19, "Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped

ed Jesus into my mind and heart and He took up a permanent residency there. At the time, I was carrying around an eighteen-wheeler jammed full of regrets, mistakes, guilt, failures and plain old down-and-out sin.

You know what Jesus did?

He unloaded that 18-wheeler into the deepest part of the ocean and promised its contents would never show their ugly faces again.

Jesus has made my life rich and full.

Jesus has made my life whole and complete.

Jesus has liberated me from the bondage of legalism.

Jesus has given me more and more freedom with every step of my obedience.

Jesus has set me free from the

away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord." It was there in my bed that I repented and surrendered my life to the Lord Jesus. The times of refreshing began immediately as I experienced forgiveness and the Lord gave me Christian friends.

As a senior in high school, the Lord began calling me into the ministry while I was preparing a sermon for youth Sunday. I wrestled with this call for nine years until the Holy Spirit hit me between the eyes with James 4:17: "Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin."

Seminary experience

My seminary experience has been a wonderful challenge and a great blessing for Cindy and me. It has been a privilege to be under the practical teaching of such godly men who live what they teach and who hold firmly to the inerrancy and authority of God's Word. Their concern for souls and their emphasis on a personal, living relationship with

Jesus Christ has been contagious.

Seminary has also been a time of precious fellowship with other students and their families. We have studied together, struggled together, worshipped together, and prayed together. Truly the Lord has been faithful in bringing us together to encourage us as His ambassadors for Christ. Cindy and I pray that we may be faithful with all the Lord has given us these last four years. May Christ be glorified as we wait upon Him and respond to His leading.

Schools get new address

If you have not made this correction in your address book, please do so. All correspondence to the seminary and Bible school students and offices should now be sent to: 3120 East Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55441. The mailing address of the AFLC offices remains: 3110 East Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55441.

frustrations of failure and the fear of failure.

Jesus has equipped me with all power and strength to endure and survive all the tragedies that life in a sinful world can dish out.

Jesus has never left me or deserted me although my emotions would tell you otherwise.

John 14:16 says, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit — fruit that will last."

Seminary experience

My coming to AFLTS was an act of obedience. It was my response to God's words spoken into my mind's ear that said, "Go back to school." I am a living, breathing, walking example of God's grace. You ask, "How

come?" The answer is rather simple. The day after I graduate, I will celebrate my 66th birthday.

I count it a privilege and an honor to have studied under some of the finest Lutheran teachers; teachers who have taught and lived their belief in the inerrant and infallible Word of God; teachers who have encouraged the absolute essential need to have a personal relationship with Jesus; teachers who have an unending source of patience and kindness. Praise God!

I praise God for the many folks who have made it their business to regularly pray for the seminary and us as students. I praise God for the many folks who have found it a ministry to financially support the seminary. May the richest

IMPACT funds received

The seminary recently received \$1,925 from Lutheran Brotherhood's IMPACT/IMPACT PLUS programs, Inviting Member Participation in Aiding Lutheran Colleges and Theological Seminaries. The latest payment covers 20 gifts of Lutheran Brotherhood members made during the fourth quarter of 1995.

Choir members share

In Psalm 110 we read, "Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs."

In less than three months, the AFLBS Choir will be flying to Norway to spread God's Word through Scripture and spiritual songs. I look forward to seeing God's beautiful creation and sharing with those who are in need of hearing the gospel.

How can one repay Christ for all He's done? He has provided me a wonderful job where I can share the joy God has given me, and tons of stress that leads me to my knees in repentance.

In response to the question above, we can't possibly repay Him, however we can praise and thank Him for all He's done.

One way God has provided for me is through His cheerful givers. It is humbling, but I appreciate it so much. He meets my every need.

— Brenda Salvendy
Battle Lake, Minnesota

This past summer I had the opportunity to serve on the Ambassadors Summer Gospel
(continued on next page)

blessings of a great God fill your lives with wholeness of the indwelling Holy Spirit and may you experience the ultimate joy of being used by a living Savior.

CHOIR TESTIMONY

Team. Choosing to do so, I knew that I would be struggling financially this year. However, I knew that the Lord would provide. When I came to school and was trying to decide on classes, it seemed that choir would be out of the question for me, because it would be hard enough for me to pay for school and my other bills besides. I prayed about what the Lord wanted me to do and the

day before posting the results, I decided that God would provide for me if He wanted me to go to Norway.

I wrote a letter to my parents' church (my former church), and the pastor said that it wouldn't be possible to support me because AFLBS was not affiliated with their synod. So I decided to write all the congregations that I had the opportunity to share with this

summer. The response has been such a blessing to me. I haven't struggled with a payment yet as the Lord has provided for me financially just when it has been needed. Although, I still have a ways to go to pay for the Norway trip, I know that the Lord will provide through the many giving Christians who love Him and who desire to see a spiritual revival in other countries as well as our own.

Another answer to prayer is that of my parents. Last year they did not support me in coming to Bible school. Now they have seen the changes in me and our family has been brought closer together. This year my dad told me they would do what they could to keep me here and they are helping me pay for school, so the money I receive from congregations and individuals goes toward the choir trip to Norway. I am so thankful for the way the Lord answers prayers (Philippians 4:6-7).

— Jason Sanford
Story City, Iowa

AFLC Memorial gifts

December 1995

Name	Given by	Department
Loreta Goetsch	Bethlehem Lutheran Morris, Illinois	World Missions
Carol Pauline Myhre	Mrs. Percy Strand	AFLBS
Jim Christiansen	Mr/Mrs. Percy Strand	AFLBS
Gunda Byfuglien	Gordon/Gladys Rugland	AFLBS
Erling Hoseth	Shelia Knudsvig	AFLBS
Horace Kasin	Robert/Helen Miller	AFLTS
Emma Knudsvig	Pastor/Mrs. R. Stueland	AFLBS
Edgar Johnson	Nona Mae Johnson	World Missions
Rev. James Tofte	Rev./Mrs. Ted Berkas	Missions
	Mr/Mrs. Robert Miller	AFLTS
	Lorraine E. Wasland	AFLTS
	Stanley Hjermstad	AFLBS
John Normand	Mr/Mrs. Bob Dietsche	Home Missions
Orville Haugen	Rev./Mrs. T. Pollestad	Schools
	Alyce Haugen/family	Schools
Marian Grage's mother	Sylvia Dahlgren	World Missions
Danielle Casselton	Rev./Mrs. Amos Dyrud	World Missions
J. H. Klemmetsen	Mr/Mrs. R. Rasmussen	Home Missions
Edith Swanson	Mr/Mrs. R. Rasmussen	Home Missions
Ethel Leland	Mr/Mrs. Kenneth Nash	Home Missions
Marvin L. Johnson	Paul/Elsie McCarlson	AFLBS

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences – January 1 - December 31, 1995

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN DECEMBER	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$268,591.00	\$30,776.43	\$216,467.67	81
Seminary	163,200.00	12,840.85	108,110.70	66
Bible School	244,800.00	16,451.11	136,255.05	56
Home Missions.	335,040.00	32,852.28	245,173.47	73
World Missions.	359,927.00	65,869.85	362,966.01	1.01
Capital Investment	35,425.00	1,006.28	18,659.33	53
Parish Education	67,868.00	4,045.89	46,071.07	68
Church Extension	10,000.00	881.93	14,128.02	1.41
TOTALS	\$1,484,851.00	\$184,724.62	\$1,147,831.32	77
TOTALS 1994	1,422,890.00	195,611.07	1,170,523.13	82
Goal 100%				

Scheduling open for BARNABAS teams

Congregations desiring to host a BARNABAS team this summer are encouraged to contact the AFLC Home Missions Department as soon as possible. Schedules for the summer of '96 are being finalized. Call 612-545-5631.

Congregations seeking to host a Majesty team should contact the Bible school office at 612-544-9501.

Oceanside, California — On December 17, 1995, during the morning worship service at the Community Lutheran Church, six new families were received as members. At the same service, five children and one mother were baptized. Only one adult was received by transfer as the others were received by adult confirmation.

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Rev. Donald Greven, AFLBS dean since 1984, has resigned from that position effective April 1, 1996, and has accepted the call to serve West Lisbon Lutheran Church in Newark, Illinois. Pastor Greven continues to minister in Hungary where he is on sabbatical from AFLBS. The Board of Trustees of the AFLC schools is seeking recommendations for the position of AFLBS dean from congregations and individuals of the AFLC. The board may be contacted in care of AFLBS.

1996 AFLC Pastors' Conference

The weather outside was cold but the fellowship inside was warm as pastors from the AFLC gathered for their annual conference, January 16 to 18 at the Association Retreat Center (ARC) in Osceola, Wisconsin.

Following a Monday evening and Tuesday morning and afternoon meeting of the AFLC home mission pastors, the main conference began on Tuesday evening with a communion service. The President of the AFLC, Rev. Robert Lee brought the message from Psalm 31. Pastors and guests then united together around the Lord's Table.

The morning and afternoon sessions on Wednesday were led by Dr. Waldo Werning. Dr. Werning is a pastor, an author, a teacher, consultant and seminar leader. A chief area of study of his has been in regards to stewardship. It was on that subject that he spoke. His sessions were titled, "Grace-based life and stewardship seminar: building functional Christians and churches in a dysfunctional world."

The pastors were given a number of books and other materials that have been written by Dr.

AFLC Canada to hold annual conference

Living Word Lutheran in Vernon, British Columbia, will host the AFLC Canada Annual Conference during April 12-14, 1996. The theme is "Behold the Lamb of God" from John 1:29b. Speakers will be Evangelist Olaf Friggstad, Rev. Ken Wilsdon and AFLC Canada President Gene Sundby. During the conference the new facilities for Living Word Lutheran will be dedicated. Rev. Gerald Gettis is the pastor.

Werning. Funding for the seminar came from Aid Association for Lutherans (AAL).

On Wednesday evening the pastors gathered for a banquet. They were challenged and encouraged from God's Word by AFLC Home Missions Director, Rev. Paul Nash.

The Thursday morning sessions included a time of discussion of vision for the AFLC. Rev. Lee stated, "We are called to the task of building free and living congregations. ... We exist as an AFLC to help congregations to fulfill their vision for reaching their communities."

The time of discussion also included a presentation by Rev.

Rev. Lynn Wilson, Roslyn, South Dakota, was the featured speaker at an AFLC regional Mid-Winter Bible Conference at Calvary Lutheran in Fosston, Minnesota, during February 23-24. The conference focused on the theme, Back to Basics of Sharing Your Faith.

Rev. David Molstre, Camarillo, California, has resigned from the Coordinating Committee and his name has been removed from the AFLC Clergy Roster.

Rev. Mike Klenner, Freeman, South Dakota, has resigned as pastor of the Salem and Immanuel Parish where he has served since 1989, and has accepted the call from Hope Lutheran in Ishpeming, Michigan. He expects to begin his new ministry later in the spring.

Steve Snipstead, Kalispell, Montana, of a recent statistical study done on growth and trends in the AFLC. (That same study can be found in the January 9 and 30, 1996 issues of the *Ambassador*.)

As the conference closed on Thursday noon, some pastors, whether they wanted to or not, were unable to leave because of weather. Some spent another night at the ARC. The gracious hosting of the ARC staff, led by Director Eric Westlake, was appreciated then and throughout the conference.



Pastors Lloyd Quanbeck, Todd Schierkolk, and Michael Peterson.

NEWS OF INTEREST

San Francisco, CA — Two Lutheran congregations that ignored their denomination's policy and ordained practicing homosexual ministers have been expelled. The First United Lutheran Church and St. Francis Lutheran Church, both of San Francisco, were expelled from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, which allows ordination of homosexuals only if they vow to abstain from homosexual activity. The churches were suspended in 1990 and given until December 31, 1995 to rescind the ordinations; they refused.

Bethlehem, Israel — Palestinian authorities allowed the showing of the now famous *Jesus* film on Palestinian national television during the holidays, a report said. The film, which highlights the life, death and resurrection of Christ, was broadcast by the network December 22. *Jesus* has been translated into numerous languages and helped evangelicals to win thousands to Christ.

Cambodia, Phnom Penh — The Christian and Missionary Alliance reports that many new churches are being started in Cambodia. In a three-month period, 13 new congregations were established by the denomination. Cambodia has a long history of religious persecution. Thousands of Christians and Buddhists were killed when the Khmer Rouge sought to eradicate all religion. Since 1979, there has been less open persecution, but Christian gatherings were made illegal in 1983.

Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea — Wycliffe Bible Translators passed a milestone recently when they completed their 400th translation of the New Testament and presented it to a native group in Papua New Guinea. The Barai natives, a group of people who live in southeast Papua New Guinea near the Owen Stanley Mountain Range, were the recipients of the new translations, according to the German news service Idea.

Morris Are, a native of the Barai people, said, "If we read the Bible in English, our people do not understand the texts. However, if we read to them in their mother tongue, the message speaks to their hearts."

Wycliffe Bible translators, named for 14th century English theologian and Bible translator John Wycliffe, have translated portions of the Bible into more than 2,000 languages. Currently, more than 6,700 languages are known to be spoken throughout the world. Wycliffe estimates that another 1,000 translations are needed before the Bible will be in a language readable by every nation.

Minneapolis, MN — Evangelist Billy Graham will perform a miracle of sorts this April, when he'll preach in every country of

the world on a single day. A television program, featuring Graham, will be broadcast in 42 languages in more than 160 countries via satellite April 14.

Church leaders from throughout the world helped organize the "Global Television Series" in cooperation with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA).

BGEA estimates that more than 2.5 billion people will have access to the program.

Knoxville, TN — An interracial church in Knoxville, Tennessee, was destroyed by arson January 8. Authorities discovered racist graffiti spray-painted on the back door of the church, and local news reports say at least 18 homemade Molotov cocktails fueled by kerosene were used in the attack. The fire destroyed the two-story Inner City Church and caused serious damage in an adjoining structure that housed a radio station and nursery. Last year four predominantly black churches in west Tennessee were attacked by arson, but those fires were set differently and no racist graffiti was found.

Football great Reggie White, defensive end for the Green Bay Packers and associate pastor of the church, has expressed concern that police are not taking the crime seriously enough. Asked what would motivate somebody to attack a church, White said, "It's spiritual. These people are demonic — filled with demonic hatred." Church officials say they will rebuild, and Packers fans in Green Bay have started a fund to help the church recover from the attack. The church was insured. "God is not through with the Inner City Church," said Pastor Jerry Upton. "I got news for the devil. The best is yet to come. We will rebuild."

(The above news stories are used with permission of EP News Service.)

ARC retreats Osceola, Wisconsin

Men's Retreat

March 8-10

Speaker: Rev. Elden Nelson

Cost: \$48

Pre-register by February 26.

Women's Retreat

May 3-5

Speaker: Laurie Nash

Cost: \$48

Pre-register by April 22.

Summer Prep Fest

May 24-27

Speaker: Eric Westlake

Cost: FREE with "strings" (work)

Pre-register by May 20.

(715) 294-2877

EDITORIALS

Life on the Other Side

I am a pastor. I am generally the one who does the serving. Recently, however, I have been on the receiving instead of the giving end. Others have been serving me and my family as we have been mourning the death of my sister. It is a little different being on the other side.

"I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God." I sing those words with a little more heartfelt sincerity now. The family of God has been very good to my family. They have cared for us and cried with us; prayed for us and served us; encouraged us and been a needed source of strength. They have mourned with those who are mourning (Romans 12:15). They have carried our burdens and so fulfilled the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2).

My vision of the beauty of a congregation, what it is and what it can be, and the blessing of being a part of one has deepened. It is so needed. It is so good to be a part of the family of God.

Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35, NIV). Some times and in some ways it seems almost easier as well. Receiving is humbling. It means admitting need. It means facing the reality of our own limitations.

When going through a trial such as my family has, limitations and needs become quite apparent.

They are always present, however, whether it be a time of joy or sorrow. We are continually in need of being served by others and, most of all, by Christ.

On the night before the cross Jesus went from disciple to disciple, washing their feet. When He came to Peter He met resistance. "No", said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet" (John 13:8, NIV). Peter was uncomfortable with the idea of being served in such a manner by Jesus. The Lord said, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me" (John 13:8, NIV). Peter had to humble himself and admit his need. He had to receive Jesus' service.

Jesus went to the cross to serve us. He paid the penalty for our sins. He purchased our salvation. He offers cleansing and forgiveness. It is a gift without equal. It is a gift we need but cannot earn. Receiving it is humbling, but also healing. It is an admission of limitations, and the discovery of freedom.

Jesus said He came not "to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45, NIV). The Lord of the universe came to this earth because He wants to serve sinners like you and me. What an incredible and wonderful truth!

We are called to be servants, but before we can serve others we have to let the Lord serve us. Let Him amaze you by the way He wants to serve you today.

Praising the Rescuer

The television show "Rescue 911" tells stories of people getting into difficult situations, but then being brought to safety. Each segment usually concludes with the one who was in danger being reunited with the one who rescued them. Much thanks is given, but not to the equipment that was used to save them. The one who was rescued is thankful for the equipment, but they give their thanks to their rescuer, the one who used the equipment.

In Hebrews 12:2 we are called to "fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith." He is our Rescuer. He is the One who responded to our desperate need and saved us. He is the One worthy of all praise and honor.

In a similar fashion to the rescuers on television, Jesus uses "equipment" or means in bringing us to safety. The chief means is the Bible, the Word of God. Through that means God convicts us of our sin and shows us our need of forgiveness. He also declares what has been done for us by Christ, who died for our sins and rose again so that we can have life abundant and eternal.

God also uses what we call the means of grace:

baptism and communion. He works through these means to bring us into the kingdom and strengthen us in our walk with Him, showering His undeserved goodness upon us.

As we are each unique individuals, so God works in each of us in unique ways. He uses a wide range of equipment to bring the chief means, His Word, into our lives.

For some God used the equipment of a Sunday school. For others it was a neighborhood Bible study. For some it was a one-to-one sharing of the Word. For others it was a large stadium evangelistic crusade. For some it was a Bible camp. For others it was a Lenten service. For some it was a walk down the aisle at a special meeting. For others it was a private time of Bible reading and prayer.

God works in lives in a variety of ways. We must not hold up our experience as the norm nor look down on those in whom God worked in a different way.

We are thankful for the "equipment" but we focus on and give thanks to the One who did the work. He alone could do what was needed. He alone deserves the praise.

SOMETHING TO SHARE

Communicating Christ to children

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these."

— Mark 10:14

One of the most beloved hymns sung in Sunday school is "Jesus Loves the Little Children." Jesus took time for the little ones. With Christ's Word working through us, we can effectively communicate the gospel and meet the challenge of relating to children.

We need to communicate the meaning of the law (to point out the dreadfulness of sin) and the gospel (to show them that Christ Jesus took our sins upon Himself at the cross) so that a child may understand.

When leading a child to Christ, I often use the phrase, "invite Jesus into your heart as your best Friend." One can also ask the child if he wants to someday go to heaven, and then explain that it is sin that keeps us from entering heaven. Children can understand that Jesus took all our wrong doings on Himself so that we do not have to be punished forever. He wants to bring us to heaven. The Bible is the source book of evangelizing anyone, including children.

The home is the first place to begin child evangelism. Parents are to teach their children constantly (Deuteronomy 6:5-7). If a

child has been baptized, we rejoice that God has begun a wonderful work of grace in that child. Even when a baptism has occurred, it is important that a child has assurance of salvation by grace through faith in Christ Jesus. Encourage your children and grandchildren. Talk freely about salvation and pray for and with them.

Sunday school and Vacation Bible School is often overlooked as a place to evangelize children. Every lesson is an opportunity to communicate Christ to children. In our congregation, the "Ambassador Club" on Wednesdays includes a flannelgraph story and the way of salvation is explained. Follow-up is so important after a child has been led to Christ.

Pastors and other church leaders have opportunities to reach children through home visits. Situations may arise where a family is unchurched, but desires their children to be baptized. What an open door to explain the way of salvation to the family. When the child is an infant, in explaining their responsibility to bring up the child in a Christ-centered home, parents often-times become the recipients of the gospel message!

Children's sermons are another opportunity. Sin and forgiveness can be illustrated through object lessons.

Evangelizing children need not

be limited to church. When our children have friends in our home for an overnigher or a birthday celebration it is a wonderful time to spread the light of Jesus Christ. Getting involved in your children's extra-curricular activities provides another avenue to touch lives. Some people host a birthday party for Jesus around Christmas.

Children today face more dangers than ever before. Homes abound that are abusive, broken, dysfunctional and filled with broken dreams. Many grow up with a diet of ultra-violent and sexually explicit video games, MTV, etc. They need the cleansing and life-changing message of Jesus. Besides the words we speak, we need to love the children and see them as Christ sees them — precious souls.

Evangelism is the work of God through His written Word. We dare not pat ourselves on the back. We are simply God's instruments communicating His truth. May we rejoice with the angels whenever salvation comes to a little one.



— Rev. Todd
Klemme
Zion Lutheran
Wadena, Minnesota