

The Lutheran AMBASSADOR

FEBRUARY 28, 1995

*A look
at the
cross*



THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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AN ENCOURAGING WORD

Repentance unto life

Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret (II Corinthians 7:10a).

Repentance is a word that often tends to repel us. It may even have had a bit of that effect on you now. But there is a life-giving word for us here!

When It Can't Be Fixed

We all know something of remorse over past mistakes and sins, especially when it can't be fixed. There is something about the irreparable that takes the heart out of us and there is always plenty of "help" to make the most of a bad situation.

The unbelieving world knows exactly how a Christian **ought** to act. Since the grace of God has not been experienced, their judgment comes by way of the law, usually honed to the finest detail.

Sadly even friends can speak from "Mount Sinai" as did Job's three friends who had plenty of pat answers. Surely they thought, using the law as a whip could straighten out Job.

Finally, there is our old adversary the devil, whom, we are told, accuses the brethren day and night before their God (Revelation 12:10). He has plenty to work with — some true, some false; but all mixed with half-truths carefully orchestrated to do the most harm and bring hopeless guilt.

A Deadly Mixture

It has been aptly stated, "heresy is truth out of balance." It has always been the enemy's way to emphasize one truth at the expense of all others. Some affirm we should never talk about sin lest it gives people a "guilt complex." But that only leads to denial. Others stress only the holiness of God and His law. This leads to futile self-effort and despair. Both views are all wrong

because they are only half right!

It is not always easy to distinguish between godly sorrow that leads to life and worldly sorrow that brings death, but there are some signs to go by.

False Guilt

Our enemy only has one purpose: to discourage and destroy. His main weapon is the lie by way of "half truths." It is characterized by a reminder of sins long since confessed, forgiven and forgotten by the Lord. It always leaves one in bondage and hopelessness. This is the "worldly sorrow that brings death" (II Corinthians 7:10b).

God's Way

God cannot lie. Therefore He speaks to us about our sin but He does so in order to free us from its guilt and power. Godly sorrow for sin is a gift from God (Acts 5:31b). It is the gracious work of His Spirit to draw us to Himself. Take heart friend, the godly sorrow you feel is a sign of life!

Listen to the whole truth! God's Word says, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). It is equally true that "the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin" (I John 1:7b). In fact, the last overrides the first.

Hear them both. "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32).



— by Pastor
Martin Christensen
Elbow,
Saskatchewan

*When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.*

— by Isaac Watts,
Ambassador Hymnal No. 63

When I survey the wondrous cross

We have seen many crosses, beautiful ones. Some are ornately carved in ivory, polished wood or stone. Some gleam with gems set in artfully crafted precious metals. Some are formed from delicate needlework or intricate embroidery. How fitting to thus honor the symbol of Jesus' sacrifice for us. But the value of the "wondrous cross" derives from its horror.

Horrible the cross was, even before Jesus hung on one. An instrument of humiliation, torture and death; it was meant for those who were to receive the cruelest punishment. And what Christ experienced on that cross was greater than anyone else had ever known in their crucifixions.

Real Humiliation

How very deep was His humiliation, for after all, He really was the "Prince of Glory." His humbling began with his birth as a human being, and continued through His ministry as He "came to his own, but his own did not receive Him." He "did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing ... He humbled himself and became obedient unto death — even death on a cross."

And He was without sin. He whose delight it was to do the will of His Father, who knew the harmony and peace of unbroken fellowship with God, who experienced fullness of joy being loved by the Father of Light, now became hideously disgusting in God's eyes as the putrefying rottenness of the sin of the whole world became His very own. "Despised and rejected," says Isaiah, "a grave with the wicked" and "numbered with transgressors."

Real Torture

How indescribable was the torture! His pain was not just the suffering of one, but on Him was laid "the iniquity of us all." And His pain was not just physical. All

who hung on a cross knew the agony of unrelieved tension on joints and ligaments and the struggle to draw each breath. But Jesus knew also the pain of separation from God. What was left when the source of all goodness and beauty and truth and love abandoned Him? "Crushed," says Isaiah, and "oppressed, smitten and afflicted."

Real Death

How real was His death. His heart stopped and His lungs ceased to draw breath. His skin grew cold and His limbs stiffened. How can the Lord of Life be dead? But separation from God is the greater death, and so it was with Jesus. Can we comprehend it? "Cut off from the land of the living," Isaiah writes, "He poured out his life unto death."

Real Peace

Why this humiliation, torture and death for the Prince of Glory? "He died for our sins." Does the answer come too quickly to our lips, we who have known it so long that we do not catch the implication?

"It was the Lord's will to bruise him," Isaiah says. "The Lord makes his life a guilt offering ... He will bear their iniquities." The Lord's will? To crush and cause to suffer the One of whom He said, "This is my Son, whom I love, with whom I am well-pleased"? Yes and Jesus agrees to this plan: "I lay down my life for the sheep," He says. "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give

WONDROUS CROSS

give his life as a ransom for many." Such a drastic solution have the Father and the Son agreed upon — so filled with sacrificial pain!

When I see the great sacrifice that God deemed necessary so that I may be accepted by Him, how can I think that my effort has power to acquire the thing I truly need? My "richest gain" may be impressive in terms of material possessions, power, or the love and esteem that people may give, but in the light of what God considers essential, it can be seen for the worthless thing that it is. Righteousness is what God sees that we need and do not have and can never acquire by ourselves. Without it we cannot stand before God or live in His presence. Without it we go hopelessly from death to death, cut off from Him. God's solution is to give us the righteousness of Christ through His death for us.

If God thought we could solve the problem and accomplish our own salvation, the suffering of His beloved Son would have been unnecessary. My attempt to bypass His solution by presenting to Him my own efforts to become righteous arises from pride. But as we survey the wondrous cross, He graciously opens our eyes to our own wretched need and useless endeavors.

"The punishment that brought us peace was upon him," says Isaiah. And peace with God is ours, when our pride has been appropriately covered with contempt and we gratefully accept His incredible sacrifice of love.

— by Kathryn
Greene
Trinity Lutheran
Grand Forks,
North Dakota

Now it is not sufficient for anyone, and it does him no good to recognize God in His glory and majesty, unless he recognizes Him in the humility and shame of the cross.

—Martin Luther



It is a far different thing to comment on a verse or passage of Scripture then on a stanza of a hymn. When we look at the Scripture, we know we are dealing with the Truth (John 17:17). We can consult with the author of the Scripture (the Holy Spirit) and have Him teach us the right meaning of that Scripture.

When we work with a hymn, we need to check whether the words and thought are in accord with Scripture. And at least regarding writers of the past, we have no way of consulting with them as to what they really meant by what they wrote.

What was Isaac Watts' burden as he wrote this second stanza of the great hymn?

It seems to me he is stressing what is frequently set forth in the New Testament. Salvation can only be ours as we receive it as a sheer gift from God. In no way can we work for it, earn it, nor deserve it. Yet while salvation is a gift, this does not mean that it will cost us nothing. Often, yes usually, definite pain is involved, if we are to be truly saved.

Another way of putting this is to say that there is no life without death.

A large, wooden crucifix, a gift from my brother from Italy, hangs in my office. Even those who prefer an "empty" cross, usually comment about it when entering the room for the first time. Interestingly, I had seen it so often that I hardly noticed it — that is, until recently. For the past few weeks, I have been thinking about the third stanza of Isaac Watts' well-known hymn, "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross." As a result, this old crucifix has once again become a precious devotional aid ...

John, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, helps us put this scene in its historic context: "The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on His head. ... Finally Pilate handed Him over to them to be crucified" (John 19:2a,16).

Isaiah, one of God's Old Covenant

***Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ, my God:
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.***

Supremely, this means it is only through the death of Jesus that we can have peace with God and eternal life. His sinless life, His matchless teaching, His mighty miracles cannot reconcile any sinner to God. He had to die to be our Savior!

There must also be "death" in our life and experience if we are to have salvation.

To repent is to make a choice against sin. And Jesus clearly says in Luke 18:3,5 that "unless you repent, you **will** perish." I must admit my sin and that I deserve only the judgment of God. And I must say something like this: "Lord, you know that I am attracted to my sin, but I am willing to have you make me different." To take such a step is not easy and may be downright painful; but such is true repentance!

Death is required not only in regard to sin and sins, but also in giving up all trust in anything else and to trust **only** in Jesus!

No New Testament passage makes this

clearer than Philippians 3:3-9. Paul writes that there must be "no confidence in the flesh." He then testifies of many things that he personally had once trusted in and thought would contribute to his salvation. But now he had given up all confidence in any of these "**in order that I may gain Christ.**" He had to die to all other sources of hope to have righteousness in Christ. He admitted this was distressing: "I suffered the loss of all things."

In this second stanza, the author cries out that he does not want to boast in anything else but the death of Christ. He confesses he "sacrifices" or gives up all trust in other vain sources of help.

Other hymn writers express this same truth: "Nothing in my hands I bring ... other refuge have I none ... no merit of my own I claim ... and, without one plea, but that Thy blood was shed for me."

— by Rev. Harvey Carlson
St. Paul, Minnesota

***See, from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet?
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?***

spokesmen, graphically explains the meaning of what Jesus was doing: "Surely He took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered Him stricken by God, smitten by Him, and afflicted. But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:4-6).

Isaiah certainly used emphatic terms, didn't he? We can see the violence; we can

almost feel the pain. What was happening? Who inflicted such agony on this Suffering Servant? Humanly speaking, according to our old, sinful natures, our attitude is "We considered Him stricken by God, smitten by Him, and afflicted." Of course, our reasoning, darkened by sin is faulty, but our words are correct. Surely He took up *our* infirmities and carried *our* sorrows. He was pierced for *our* iniquities. The punishment that brought *us* peace was upon Him. By His wounds we are healed. Yes! the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of *us all!*

I now look with care at the old crucifix †

WONDROUS CROSS



— by Rev. Paul E. Jecklin
Christ Lutheran Church
Savannah, Georgia

on my office wall. I contemplate Jesus' pain and suffering, and I think about the hideousness of my iniquities, and of your iniquities, and of the iniquities of the world. Oh the wonder of God's love. The Father so loved the world that He gave His Son. The Son so loved that He have Himself. Truly, Jesus Christ is the Righteous One, who became sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God (I John 2:1b; II Corinthians 5:21). Truly, "He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not

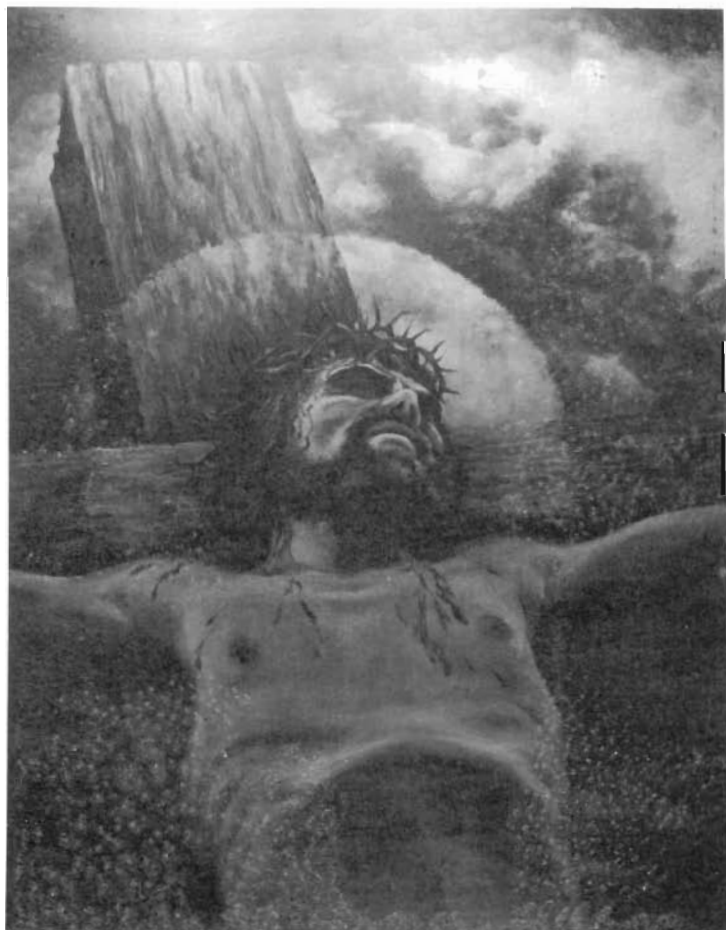
only for ours, but also for the sins of the whole world" (I John 2:2).

Yes, look at Jesus' head, His hands, and His feet. No, never have such love and sorrow met! No, thorns have never composed so rich a crown!

The author was raised in Immanuel Lutheran Church (ALC), Dixon, Illinois. He is a graduate of Wartburg College, Waverly, Iowa and Bethany Lutheran Seminary, Mankato, Minnesota. From 1969-76, he served St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church in the inner city of Chicago. Since then he has served Christ Lutheran Church, Savannah, Georgia. He was accepted for the AFLC's regular clergy roster in 1994. He and his wife, Carol, have two college age children: Andrew in Denver and Heather in Savannah.

Artist — Richard Gorsuch

Joel Strasser — photography



**This is how we know what love is:
Jesus Christ laid down His life for us.**

I John 3:16

The cross will always be God's final statement on what He thinks about the best we can do. —John Fischer, *On a Hill Too Far Away: Putting the Cross Back in the Center of Our Lives*

***Were the whole realm
of nature mine,
That were a present
far too small;
Love so amazing,
so divine,
Demands my soul,
my life, my all.***

As one travels and sees the majestic mountains, the wide expanse of the oceans or even the rolling seas of the Great Lakes, the miles and miles of beautiful forests or the acres of cropland in green or gold, we are in awe of all that God has created. If all of this were ours or in our control, it would be beyond imagination. But if it were ours and we could give it away as a gift, it would indeed be a great gift! However, when we stand at the foot of the cross and survey all that God has given us, this great gift of all nature would

The measure of a church

How large is the AFLC?

This is a question I am often asked while conducting informational meetings in interested congregations. My response usually includes the current count of member churches with the number of states/provinces where they are located. (I am completing this article in the lobby of an eastern airport while waiting for a flight to India, which is a powerful reminder that the AFLC is a worldwide church body, too.)

The AFLC is a growing church body, challenged with a steady stream of opportunities for new outreach. My travels in recent months to Alabama, Arizona, Indiana, California,

Canada and Mexico reveal open doors in every direction, and there are indications that this wave of interest has not even begun to crest.

How large is the AFLC?

God's measurement is often based on different standards than ours. A careful count of "nickels and noses" can be one indication of God's blessing on AFLC ministries, and it is okay for us to be glad about our growing fellowship. If the opposite were true, we would certainly see the decline as a call to a serious self-examination; for the outward state is a mirror of the inward condition.

The faithful guide for measuring any church body (or local congregation) is God's Word. The

standards can especially be seen in the epistles:

*For this reason, ever since I heard of your **faith** in the Lord Jesus and your **love** for all of God's people ... (Ephesians 1:15).* See also Colossians 1:4-5, where **hope** is added, and I Thessalonians 1:3, II Thessalonians 1:3 and Philemon 1:5. It is interesting, too, when we read in I Corinthians 13:13 of the emphasis on these same three measurements.

How large is the AFLC?

God grant that we might be growing in faith, love and hope!

— by Rev. Robert L. Lee

be very small — far too small — to give to God.

The love that God has for us cannot be measured. Jesus said in John 15:13: "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends." This is what Jesus did in obedience to His Father's will.

This love of God demands my soul, my life, my all. It can be nothing less.

MY SOUL

It is my inward nature; the spiritual part. In Christ's power we can begin to follow Ephesians 4:22-24, where we are told to "put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness." In Matthew 16:24 Jesus tells His disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

MY LIFE

This is all the activities of my days.

Unless we **commit all** to Him, it will not happen. Psalm 37:5 says, "Commit your way to the Lord, Trust also in Him and He shall bring it to pass."

MY ALL

This includes all my possessions of wealth and inward power. It is plain to see or calculate the wealth, but have we given Him our inward power; including our personality and abilities? Does the Savior have our power to be leaders and creators as we use our talents for the growth of His Kingdom? Colossians 3:23 reminds us: "Whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to man." And the following verse promises: "Knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance, for you serve the Lord Christ."

It isn't that God needs anything more in the form of a payment, for Christ paid it all! However, it is out of gratitude to God that I give Him my soul, my life, my all!



— by Carol Haugen
New Luther Valley Lutheran
McVile, North Dakota



Earl Korhonen

Esko, Minnesota

Son of Mr. and Mrs. Tim Korhonen

Married to Joan Dahl

Child: Erika, 18 months

Home congregation: St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran, Cloquet, Minnesota; Rev. Peter Franz, pastor.

Education: AFLBS, University of Wisconsin-Superior

Internship under Rev. Richard Gunderson at Elim Lutheran Church, Lake Stevens, Washington.

Testimony: Can a child realize his sin? Is it appropriate for a child to repent of sin and be

We need help!

AFLBS is looking for an assistant cook. Please contact Dean Don Greven for more information. Call (612) 544-9501.

**High school students
— don't miss this
weekend!**

**AFLBS Campus Days
March 3-5**

**Come and be our guest!
Let us give you a taste
of life at Bible School!
(612) 544-9501**

Meet the seminary seniors

saved? I answer an emphatic, "Yes." God showed me my sin and my need for the Savior at age seven through a Child Evangelism Fellowship Five-Day-Club. I believe God has kept me in fellowship with Him from that very day. "Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6). I praise God for my godly parents and the support of my evangelistic home congregation. Their obedience to the Lord has biblically shaped my understanding of sin and grace.

Seminary Experience: "God's Word is our great heritage." I am so thankful for the opportunity I have had to study in an intense seminary curriculum under gifted men of God who are called to teach. At times it seems that "life" is mostly studying, and in fact, most of it is. But those of us at seminary have not been exempt from the trials of life, nor the "flaming arrows of the evil one." Many of us have faced financial concerns, loss of possessions and even deaths in our families. God has indeed allowed me to learn much these past four years; not only about theology, but of life and death.

God has truly instilled in Joan and me a desire to share the gospel. We desire to see people of all ages come to see the wickedness of their sin in the sight of a Holy God, so that they see their need to repent and live for Christ. "Say to them, 'As surely as I live,' declares the sovereign Lord, 'I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?'" (Ezekiel 33:11).

May God continue to love people through us.



Randy Nelson

Son of the late William C. Nelson and Mrs. Linda Combs of Chanahn, Illinois.

Married to Brenda Feil.

Children: Matthew, 7; Stephanie, 5; Paul, 2; Steven, 3 months.

Home Congregation: Fox River Lutheran, Norway, Illinois.

Education: Trinity College, Deerfield, Illinois.

Special Interests: computers, camping, sports.

Testimony: I am grateful for the fact that I was born into a home where the need to know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord was clearly and consistently presented. I am also grateful that through the ministry of my home congregation I came to have assurance of my salvation and a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It was during my high school years that I first felt called to go into the ministry. However, at that time I had other plans for my life. My father was a successful businessman and I wanted to be one also. Over the next several years I struggled between doing what I wanted to do and what God wanted. I attended one semester of college and then went to Saipan with Youth With A Mission for six months as a short-term missionary. I returned to college and then went out with a

CAMPUS

Lutheran Evangelistic Movement Gospel Team. I accepted a job in California and got married. Despite my good job, there was still an emptiness and a lack of satisfaction that reminded me of God's call upon my life. Then tragedy struck and my father was killed in a car accident. My world was shattered. Over the next couple of years I experienced a great deal of soul-searching and wrestling with God. Finally, through God's healing power, I came to the point of genuine peace with God again. God again made it clear that I was to go to seminary.

Seminary Experience: Despite the many obstacles that stood in the way, I finished college and moved our family to Minneapolis. God has miraculously made a way for my family and me to get to this point and we give Him all the credit! My internship was spent with Pastor Ray Klug in Deshler, Nebraska.

The verse that God gave me when I went back to school was Proverbs 3:5-6, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight." There have been many times since then that I have had to set aside my own understanding and trust in Him, but in every case God has been faithful, and things have always worked out. We look forward with great excitement and anticipation to see what God has planned for us in the months and years to come as we seek to be used of Him.

Special Announcement

AFLBS dormitory space is full for the Promise Keepers meeting in Minneapolis on July 14-15, 1995!



Kevin Olson

Kevin and Pam Olson have two sons, Nathan, 5 and Andrew, 3 and one daughter Naomi, 1.

Education: South Dakota State University, B.S. in Electrical Engineering.

Home Congregation: Faith Lutheran, Shakopee, Minnesota, Les Galland, pastor.

Special Interests: Spending time as a family in a variety of activities, camping, sports, and computers.

Testimony: I believe that the Lord has kept me in His baptismal covenant since my baptism. There have been many times of growth and re-commitment to the Lord throughout my life. At first my walk with the Lord included choosing to spend time in worship and personal devotions. Later, I had a growing desire for evangelism and the spread of the life-changing gospel message. The difference Christ has made in my life has prompted a desire within me to share the excitement of knowing Jesus Christ. I have been able to do that both at work and through our church involvement.

Work Experience: I have

worked at three companies over the past nine years doing electrical engineering, computer programming, and program testing. I viewed those years with the attitude found in Colossians 3:23, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men." During five of those years as an employee my wife and I were working with youth at Faith Lutheran in Shakopee. I am currently serving King of Glory, Eden Prairie, and Faith as their youth pastor. At the 1991 Colorado National Youth Convention, the Lord prompted me to make my full-time occupation that of the ministry. The following January is when I began seminary at AFLTS. I will be available for a call next fall.

Seminary Experience: A Scripture that encouraged me as seminary began comes from Exodus 4:10-12. As Moses and the Lord talk, the Lord says, "Now go; I will help you speak and I will teach you what to say." The instruction that I have received under our faculty has been a great blessing from the Lord. Their depth of wisdom in Scriptures and their godly lives have brought about real growth in my life over the past 3 1/2 years. Along with that blessing was the year of internship in Camarillo, California under Pastor Walter Johnson where growth continued. The highlights of internship were visiting and getting to know the people, facilitating a men's discipleship group, working with their Christian elementary school, and working with the youth. Pam and I are looking forward to serving the Lord wherever He leads us and know that our future is in His hands.

AFLC Schools' Missions Conference March 19-22, 1995

For more information call (612) 544-9501

Parents' important role in youth work

Some couples hesitate to take the assignment as a youth advisor because they feel it would inhibit their son or daughter's participation in the youth group. Some also feel it could damage their communication with their children and stop them from attending. That may happen. However, for the most part, being an advisor enhances communication with family members. Many very effective advisors have children in the youth group!

Parents are good sources of up-to-date information on youth and on youth culture. Their young people often tell them what will work and what will not work in the youth group! The parents' own family becomes a sounding board and a very vital resource. In fact, a family can look at this ministry as a team effort! The family can work together to evangelize and win souls for Christ and His Kingdom! The family can teach Bible life-skills and values to others.

If parents are asked to be youth group advisors, they should openly discuss the matter with the teens in their family. If the teens indicate this would not be desired, it may be best for the parents to not be advisors. Those parents can then encourage and support other adults by working behind the scenes. As an example, every youth group needs adults to help with transportation!

Effective youth work requires active and supportive parents! The greater the support of parents, the greater the decrease in

YOUTH

problems in the youth group. Alienating parents from youth ministry is suicidal. We have encouraged teens to own their own ministry, but that is not saying there is no need for adults in the ministry! Adults are always needed!

Some might say that the presence of a pastor or other adult will hamper discussions and generate a negative spirit. Though this can occasionally be the case, generally youth want adults to be involved. They do not need them to run and do the ministry, but they want them there!

The owning of their own ministry is simply training youth to be responsible for their own ministry. When they take on the responsibility, the ministry grows in depth and in numbers. The youth need to be planning the ministry and carrying it out with the aid of adults.

Regular parent meetings are a must! Often this is where we fall down in youth ministry work. Parents need to know what is happening! They need to know when a meeting starts and when it ends. Don't make them wait beyond the announced time.

Quarterly meetings may be the best. The advisors, pastor, youth director and all parents should meet together. One of the adults will explain the strategy and lead in a discussion about it. Parents who miss meetings should be given a written report of the meeting so they feel they are part of the group too.

Congregations can develop resources for parents. They can develop resources for the youth advisors and for the youth themselves. These resources would be videos, books and magazines which encourage Christian families and youth work.

If you have a youth council,

parents should be represented on this council. They should be welcome to attend planning meetings.

Don't hesitate parents! Get involved! Make your congregational youth program the best it can become. Get your teens there and be involved yourself!

— Rev. Dennis Gray
AFLC Youth Ministries Director

Hats off to — Robby Farbo, Mandi Rodahl and Becca Palmer of Our Saviour's Lutheran, Thief River Falls, Minnesota for being in the 28th Annual Edition of *Who's Who Among American High School Students*.

AFLC-Brazil holds annual conference

On January 15-17, 1995, our sister congregations in Brazil held their annual conference. Retired missionary George Knapp, Willmar, Minnesota, addressed the conference.

"Preserving the Faith" was the theme chosen by the conference for this year.

According to Missionary David Abel, "Much prayer was offered for our Annual Conference which also turned out to be one of the most positive and blessed conferences that I can remember. The following Sunday, the congregation in Vitoria which had 23 delegates at the conference, felt a

Partners in Mission

Pastor Al Sather, president
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Missionary candidates, David and Sarah Nelson, Upsala, Minnesota are the parents of Samuel Taylor, born January 25, 1995. He joins his brother Josiah as the Nelson family continues to make plans as scheduled to depart for Brazil this spring.

Gunter, India — On December 15, 1994, all gospel workers, pastors, evangelists, and their wives and the Bible women gathered at the home of D. Satyanandam, secretary of the Bible Faith Lutheran Church. Pastor Yesupadam led the Christmas service

strong moving of the Spirit as we considered the dangers of "pitching our tents towards Sodom" (Genesis 12:12-13). There was much weeping as conviction caused many to rededicate their lives to Christ. The result has been a change in the spirit of many members and a larger attendance at our prayer meetings. One lady shared with another, 'I was planning on resting this year and not taking on any responsibilities in the church. Now God has shown me that I need to let Him use me and stay active in the work of the Lord.'

Outreach Board

Clark Berg,
KalisPELL, MT
Richard D. Crouthers
Nogales, AZ
Randy Kjos
KalisPELL, MT
Rev. Jeff Swanson
Newark, IL
Ken Williams
Ishpeming, MI

WORLD MISSIONS

Leon, Mexico

The AFLC-Mexico congregation in Leon had a busy Christmas season. From December 15-23, the congregation held nightly services after which they enjoyed plays and songs around a bonfire

which was followed by a traditional Indian Christmas dinner. A small monetary gift was presented to all the workers and a sari was given to each of the pastors' wives and Bible women.

It costs approximately \$40 a month to support one of our

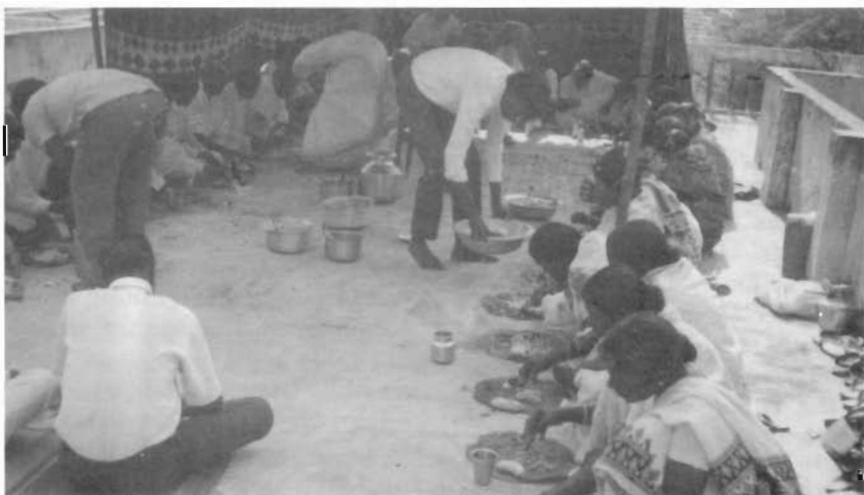
on the patio with lots of fruits, candies and the breaking of piñatas.

On Christmas Eve the winter Vacation Bible School children participated in a "Pastorela," a small play of Christmas. On Christmas night, the congregation had a worship service followed by a supper. Rev. Samuel Flores is the pastor.

national workers in India. if you would desire to support one of our workers on a regular basis, please contact the World Missions office. We will specifically identify one of the workers for you. Perhaps a church organization would like to get involved and learn about our work and people in India.



The Bible women and pastors wives in their new saris.



Christmas dinner outside the home of D. Satyanandam.

Texas congregation plans missions fest

Christ Lutheran Church of Wichita Falls, Texas will be sponsoring their fifth annual Missions Fest the weekend of October 7-8, 1995. This year, Elim Lutheran of Lake Stevens, Washington will also be joining the special weekend of mission emphasis. They invite **all AFLC congregations to join**; designating these days to lift up our missionaries in prayer, remembering the various missions, inviting speakers and holding seminars on missions' activity both at home and abroad.

Attention amateur radio operators!

The weekend will also provide amateur radio operators the opportunity to talk with missionaries world-wide and between the various AFLC congregations. Arrangements are already underway for special event stations at Wichita Falls, Texas; Lake Stevens, Washington and at the AFLC Schools and headquarters. Congregations are encouraged to contact local "ham" clubs for assistance if there is not an active ham operator in your congregation. What a great way to reach out into your community as you share the Great Commission with some radio operators who per-

Partners in Mission Outreach take third group to Mexico

On February 10, thirty people from Michigan and Illinois communities returned after two weeks in Mexico helping with construction and evangelism. On February 23 through March 10, the third group of short-term missionaries are continuing to work in the village of Agraristas, the location of the ministry of Gabriel Mercado. This last group left from the Dakotas, Minnesota and Montana.



New AFLC Church in Northern Minnesota

Abundant Life Church, Thief River Falls, Minnesota, voted overwhelmingly at their annual meeting on January 15, 1995 to affiliate with the AFLC. The congregation was organized eleven years ago by a group of people who withdrew from another Lutheran church in the community. They built a new church which is now debt-free.

Rev. Burton Hushagen served the independent congregation until his retirement in May 1994.

The congregation has a baptized membership of 358. Along with Sunday School and other activities, three women's circles are active as well as a women's fellowship group. The ladies are well known for the quilts made at their weekly meetings. The congregation is served by Rev. Wesley Langaas.

haps are not church-goers.

To facilitate national and world-wide publicity for the AFLC Missions Fest, those congregations who are considering going "on the air" are asked to notify Rev. Mike Crowell at Elim Lutheran Church, Box 318, Lake Stevens, WA 98258. Please let him know as soon as possible so that notices can be put out to the national amateur radio publications at least **three months in advance** (early May).

Join in and personalize your contact with missionaries. Talk to the AFLC missionaries and others via radio! For more information on how to set up a Missions Fest with radio contacts, contact Pastors Mike Crowell (206-334-1911) or Paul Nash (309-274-4444), or Mr. Lester Dykes, Christ Lutheran Church, 4300 FM 1954, Rt. 6, Wichita Falls, TX 76301.

Rev. Reuben Unseth, Roseau, Minnesota, has resigned as pastor of Roseau and Norland Lutheran where he has served since 1989, to accept a call to Salem Lutheran in Radcliffe and to Stavanger Lutheran, Garden City, Iowa. The Unseths expect to move in May.

WMF Rallies

Illinois District Rally will be on Saturday, April 22, 1995 at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Morris. Registration begins at 9:30 a.m.

Eastern North Dakota Rally will be on Saturday, April 29, 1995 at Zoar Free Lutheran in Hampden. Registration and coffee fellowship starts at 9:30 a.m. The Eastern North Dakota District also will hold its annual Spring Retreat at the Cooperstown Bible Camp on March 24-25, 1995.

Rev. Donald Greven, AFLBS Dean, has been approved by the Board of Trustees for a ten-month sabbatical beginning September 1, 1995 to June 30, 1996. Pastor Greven expects to visit and teach in Bible schools in Scandinavia and Europe.

Pastor Mark Olson, Arlington, South Dakota, has joined the senior class at AFLTS for the second semester which began January 30. He expects to graduate in the spring. He continues to serve Calvary Free Lutheran while completing his course work.

Minneapolis District WMF Rally will be April 8, 1995, at Medicine Lake Lutheran Church in Plymouth, Minnesota.

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Dr. Jonathan Strand, an AFLTS graduate, is teaching philosophy at Concordia College in Edmonton, Alberta. He and his wife, Ruth (Nelson, AFLBS, 1980), and their three children moved to Edmonton last fall from Valparaiso University in Indiana.

Fergus Falls, Minnesota - Calvary Lutheran accepted 37 new members on Sunday, January 22. Calvary has been worshipping in their new sanctuary since last spring. The original sanctuary added space for the fellowship hall and classrooms.

Dr. Francis Monseth, AFLTS Dean, is scheduled to teach at the Tartu Theological Academy in Estonia and at a seminar for laity, sponsored by the Lutheran Church of Latvia, from March 21-April 11, 1995.

Rev. Fred Faughn, Metz, Michigan has resigned as pastor of St. Peter's Lutheran Church. His future plans are not definite.

Rev. Frank Cherney, Hatton, North Dakota has resigned as pastor of Zoar Lutheran where he has served since 1991 in order to accept the call from Living Faith and Body of Christ Lutheran in Tucson, Arizona. The Cherneys expect to move after school is out.



Virginia, Minnesota - Pictured are the recent new members of Good Shepherd Lutheran. Pastor Donald Norr (back center) serves the congregation.



Buxton, North Dakota - Pictured are the five families who recently joined Ny Stavanger Free Lutheran. Rev. Larry Haagen (far right) is the pastor of the congregation.



Reva, South Dakota - Rev. Alvin Magnuson (center) was installed as the pastor of Slim Buttes Lutheran Church on December 4, 1994. Pictured with him are AFLC President Robert Lee (third from right) and members of the church council.



Garden City, Iowa - Pictured are the new members received at Stavanger Lutheran. Rev. Joel Rolf (far left) was the pastor at the time. The Rolfs have since moved to Valley City, North Dakota where he serves the Grace and Zion Free Lutheran Parish. Their new address is: 1310 3rd Ave. NW, Valley City, ND 58072.

Pastors' conference "looks to Jesus"

"Lift your eyes and look to Jesus" was the invitation extended to AFLC pastors from Isaiah 40:26 by AFLC President Robert Lee as he spoke at the January 17 communion service which began the 1995 AFLC Pastors' Conference at the ARC in Osceola, Wisconsin.

The pastors began Wednesday, January 18 by gathering in small groups for prayer. They were then led by Rev. James Johnson of Coon Rapids, Minnesota in the first of three Bible studies during the conference in the book of II Thessalonians. Other conference sessions included teaching on strengthening marriages given by Rev. Richard and Audrey Gilmore of Lacrosse, Wisconsin and a discussion of the connection between baptism and circumcision led by Rev. Jerry Moan of Minot, North Dakota. Rev. Jack Aamot, director of Lutherans for Evangelism, spoke at the Wednesday evening banquet on the importance of putting aside minor differences and working together in unity for the sake of evangelism. His message was greeted with warm and overwhelming approval by the pastors gathered.

West Coast Bible conference scheduled

West Coast WMF Rally will be on Friday, March 24, 1995 at Elim Lutheran in Lake Stevens, Washington. Registration starts at 8:45 a.m. Beginning that evening, also at Elim Lutheran, will be the West Coast District Bible Conference. The conference will include a Friday evening service, March 24, sessions throughout the day on Saturday, March 25 and a Sunday morning service, March 26. The rally and conference will be part of a week of special events at Elim Lutheran

Housing information for the annual conference in Osceola, Wisconsin

This summer's annual conference during June 14-18, 1995 will be held at the Association Retreat Center in rural Osceola. Housing is limited. Area Bed and Breakfasts and motels are traditionally busy in June. **Early reservations are necessary!** Complete information on housing, meals and the conference schedule will be in the May 2, 1995 issue of *The Lutheran Ambassador*.

Rooms at the ARC 2372 30th Ave, & King's Way, Osceola, WI 54020 Phone — (715) 755-3131 FAX 294-2398

2 single beds — \$20/night

4 single beds — \$30/night

6 single beds — \$40/night (Please bring your own bedding.)

RV parking — \$10 daily (includes electricity and showers)

\$2 daily for use of air conditioners.

Please send \$10 deposit to hold rooms.

Local Bed and Breakfasts (prices range from \$44 - 200/night)

Stillwater, Minnesota (30 minute drive)

Battle Hollow — (612) 439-0449

The Elephant Walk — (612) 430-0359

Ann Bean House — (612) 430-0355

James Mulvey Inn — (612) 430-8008

Outing Lodge at Pine Pt. — (612) 439-9747

Rivertown Inn — (612) 430-2955

William Sauntry Mansion — (612) 430-2653

St. Croix Falls, Wisconsin (15 minute drive)

Amber Wood — (715) 483-9355

Osceola, Wisconsin (11 minute drive)

Pleasant Lake Inn — (715) 294-2545

St. Croix River Inn — (715) 294-4248

Lessard's on the Lake — (715) 294-2447

Local Motels and Hotels

Stillwater, Minnesota (30 minute drive)

Lowell Inn — (612) 439-1100

Stillwater Inn/Best Western — (612) 430-1300

Super 8 — (612) 430-3990

Somerset, Wisconsin (15 minute drive)

Somerset Motel — (715) 247-5487

St. Croix Falls, Wisconsin (15 minute drive)

Dallas House — (715) 483-3206

Amery, Wisconsin (30 minute drive)

Country Dam — (715) 268-8115

Camelot Motel — (715) 268-8194

Forrest Inn — (800) 763-1263

New Richmond, Wisconsin (20 minute drive)

AmericInn Motel — (800) 634-3444

Holiday Motel — (715) 246-4632

Dresser, Wisconsin (10 minute drive)

Valley Motel — (800) 545-6107

under the theme "One Awesome Week in March," celebrating the 25th anniversary of the congregation. Special speakers will include

former pastors of the congregation, Rev. Richard Anderson and Rev. Michael Brandt along with Mrs. Michael (Jeanne) Brandt.

If you had five minutes ...

The leader of the group posed the following question: "If you had the ear of the world for five minutes, what would you say?" What would be your answer? What is the message you feel the world needs to hear the most? It is a question worth considering. How a person thinks they would act in that imaginary situation says a great deal about their priorities in the present.

Many messages would be good to share, but the issue to consider is what would be best? It has been said that the greatest enemy of the best is the good. Often it is not worthless but worthwhile words which get in the way of the most important truth being proclaimed.

If I had the world's ear for five minutes I would read from the Bible and I would read verses that speak of Jesus and the cross and the resurrection. I would read the powerful word picture given in Isaiah 53 that tells us Jesus "was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed." I would read from John 3:16 of how "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but shall have everlasting life." Part of the time would be spent in Romans 5 reading of how "God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." The time would run out but the verses would continue on proclaiming the wonders of what Jesus has done.

The world most needs to hear about the cross and the empty tomb. It is tempting to think "that is an old story and people have already heard it. We need to deal with the issues of the day. We need to give people instruction on how to live." Before people can be instructed on how to live they need to be given life; the life which is found only in the crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ. People need to hear what He has done before they can do what they should do.

"The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing" (I Corinthians 1:18). Sadly, even God's children at times treat that message as if it is impractical and of little importance. The same verse declares that "to us who are being saved it (the message of the cross) is the power of God." The simple message of the cross has more power than any "how-to" instructions. No other message is more relevant. No other message has more potential for changing lives. No other message is more needed.

The One to go to

It is the end of the basketball game and the score

is tied. The coach has to decide who he wants to take the final shot with the game on the line. Will he go to the one who missed every shot he attempted? Probably not. The one he will depend upon will be the one who has been successful in the past. As coaches say, "You go with the one who got you there."

The Apostle Paul is inspired by God to teach a similar type of principle in the book of Galatians. In chapter three Paul reminds his readers that "Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified." After pointing out to them how they began their walk with God he asks them, "After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?" For growth in the Christian life you need to depend upon the One who has been successful in the past. You need to go with the One who got you there.

John Fischer in his book *On a Hill Too Far Away* says, "When I was growing up the cross was preached to people who were unsaved, remembered among believers as essential to salvation. But once you were a Christian, it pretty much faded back into the wall. The bulk of our time and attention was taken up with trying to be good Christians." The problem with that approach is that "If the meaning and presence of the cross diminishes once we become Christians, than being a Christian is not much different than being a Pharisee. We are back to trying simply to be good people ... All the cross accomplished was to get us in on the program. Once in, we are left to our own devices to come up with something that resembles what we think the finished product should be."

That is a sad picture of life, but unfortunately it is the picture of the lives of many Christians. They began at the cross, but they have wandered away. The cross has become "too far away." It no longer occupies the center place in their lives. Instead of depending on the One who brought them there, they are trusting in ones who offer no real hope of success: themselves.

Martin Luther's teaching has been described as "a theology of the cross — a theology to live by." According to Herman Preus in his book *A Theology to Live By*, Luther made "clear that according to Scripture we can know neither God nor man except through the cross." We "must learn to look for God where He has revealed Himself, and that, says Luther, is in the cross." Knowing God, growing in the Christian life and tasting the sweetness of following Jesus is possible when we continually focus on the cross and remember to depend upon the One who got us here. Great things are possible when we cling to Christ crucified and risen again.

How is the Bible different than all other books

What makes the Bible so special? Why should it be regarded higher than any other book? Here are five reasons the Bible is *The Book of books*.

REVELATION

God is a limitless spirit being. As quite limited material creatures, we are incapable of ever understanding Him; that is unless He should choose to reveal Himself to us in a way we can understand. This He has done in His Word. The Bible is His personal message to each of us. It tells us, "I am here. This is Who I am. This is what I am like. This is what I desire for you."

INSPIRATION

The wonder of inspiration is how God through sinful men gave us His perfect Word. The Ten Commandments were carved by the very finger of God. Some passages were actually dictated by God for the prophet to write down. But most of the Bible was given by the miracle of inspiration.

"Inspire" means to breath into. God breathed into men and what came out was the very words of God. Every thought and word came just as God inspired it! Yet

BUILDING THE BASE

the process did not rob the human authors of their personalities, writing styles or vocabularies. Each wrote as they chose; but what they chose was exactly what God wanted them to choose. All without error. What a miracle!

AUTHORITY

Because the Bible is "inspired" by God, it carries the full authority of God Himself. It is the voice of God to us. The Bible is the absolute authority on all matters of which it speaks. Whether it be theology, history, morality, science, prophecy or everyday living; it is the Bible which has the final say as to what is true or false, right or wrong. We as individuals or as a society never have the wisdom or the right to sit in judgment on the teachings of God's holy, inerrant Word. It is the Bible which must judge, instruct and correct us. God's Word surpasses our wisdom and knowledge to the extent that God surpasses us. So if you just can't agree with something the Bible says; guess who needs to change?

POWER

As the Word of God, the Bible carries with it the power of God. Unlike any other book, it is

always accompanied by the Spirit of God. Through the means of the Word, the Spirit reaches into the very depths of our beings. The Bible is the instrument God uses to perform surgery on our hearts and minds — even our very souls. The Word of God always affects those who hear or read it. Those hearts that resist the Spirit's work will become calloused as the Word bounces off of them. Where the Spirit does not find resistance, He uses the Word to cut through the calluses and soften hard hearts, to change minds, to renew and bring about the new birth.

DURABILITY

Only two things in this world will continue beyond this world: human beings and the changeless Word. Everything else will be destroyed on the Day of the Lord. Buildings and monuments, empires and legacies, homes and businesses, accomplishments and assets, will all be gone in a moment! But the Word of the Lord and the souls it was given to touch, will last ~~forever~~ and ever! Some will eternally regret that they did not receive God's Word. Others will rejoice forever for the grace they received through the eternal Word of truth.

— by Rev. Don Voorhees
Dannebrog, Nebraska