

The Lutheran AMBASSADOR

February 4, 1997



**On course
for life**
at the AFLC Schools

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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Be a lifelong student

About the only thing I liked during high school was extra-curricular activities. My high school graduation was one of the happier days of my life. I had no goals, with no thought of further education. I was more interested and content with seemingly more practical and tangible things like driving the car or going back and forth across the field on a tractor (even without radio, air, or a cab). I wanted to see what I was accomplishing.

Then one day God placed a desire in my heart to go to Bible school. While I had previously read the Bible, I had never really studied it. As I began an in-depth study of God's Word, I gained a new appreciation for it while at the same time being filled with the joy of discovering its life and power. Those days at Bible school were some of the most valuable of my life. Little did I believe then that ten years later God would call me back to the books for college and seminary. God has truly brought the truth home to me that "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1).

One of the greatest needs in the church today is more students of the Bible, ordinary people who are willing to take time from their busy schedules to study the Scriptures on a regular basis. It's vital for our spiritual growth.

Can you imagine a baby being born and receiving nothing for nourishment but milk? In time the child would die from malnutrition. The writer to the Hebrews put it this way: "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes

AN ENCOURAGING WORD

only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Hebrews 5:11-14). Adults need adult food and spiritual exercise.

Perhaps we can't all attend Bible school, but we can all take time to be students of the Word. There is so much God wants to give us as we immerse ourselves in the study of His Word. Psalm 119 is the longest chapter in the Bible and uses several words to represent God's Word — *Law, testimonies, precepts, statutes, commandments, judgments, Word*. Study this chapter and discover the rich treasures of God's Word.

The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandments of the Lord are pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yes, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honeycomb. Moreover by them Your servant is warned, and in keeping them there is great reward.

— Psalm 19:7-11 (NKJV)



— Pastor
David Skordahl
Dalton,
Minnesota

sound bites

"A man once told me, 'You know, Brother Hendricks, I've been through the Bible twelve times.'

1

That's wonderful. But the real question is, how many times has the Bible been through him? ... We must get into the Word of God for ourselves. But then we must allow that Word to get into us, to

make a permanent difference in our character and conduct."

— Howard Hendricks

2

"Many are hampered and confused in the spiritual walk by simple ignorance of the truth."

— Richard J. Foster

"It is chiefly through books that we enjoy intercourse with superior minds. In the best books, great men talk to us, give us their most precious thoughts, and pour their souls into ours.

4

God be thanked for books. They are the voices of the distant and the dead, and

make us heirs of the spiritual life of past ages."

— William Ellery Channing

"The time has come for evangelicals to wake from our lethargy or turn from our fear, blaming, and victim-playing. We must move out into all spheres of society, presenting the case for the gospel of Jesus in ways that are fresh, powerful, imaginative, compassionate, and persuasive. A sure sign of a genuine reformation of our appalling anti-intellectualism will be the rise of a new generation of Christian apologists."

3

— Os Guinness

"And as I close this chaotic volume, I open again the strange small book from which all Christianity came; and I am again haunted by a kind of confirmation. The tremendous figure which fills the Gospels towers in this respect, as in every other, above all the thinkers who ever thought themselves tall."

5

— G. K. Chesterton

6

"Knowledge is horizontal. Wisdom is vertical — it comes down from above."

— Billy Graham

Why we support the seminary

When asked why we support the seminary, we had to stop and consider once again our reasons for doing so. There are several reasons, some personal and some biblical. Actually we don't support the seminary itself, but the cause for which it exists.

Have you marveled recently at the harmony within the Scriptures? You can see the Master's hand conducting the symphony of writers whose minds were in tune with His will. Truly, God has woven throughout His Word, a divine plan for

the work of His kingdom. It's amazing and wonderful how He invites imperfect people like you and me to be in His orchestra.

Take for instance the matter of the training of the men who stand in our pulpits. In Romans 10:14, God draws our attention to the good news of salvation through the preaching of His Word.

How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?

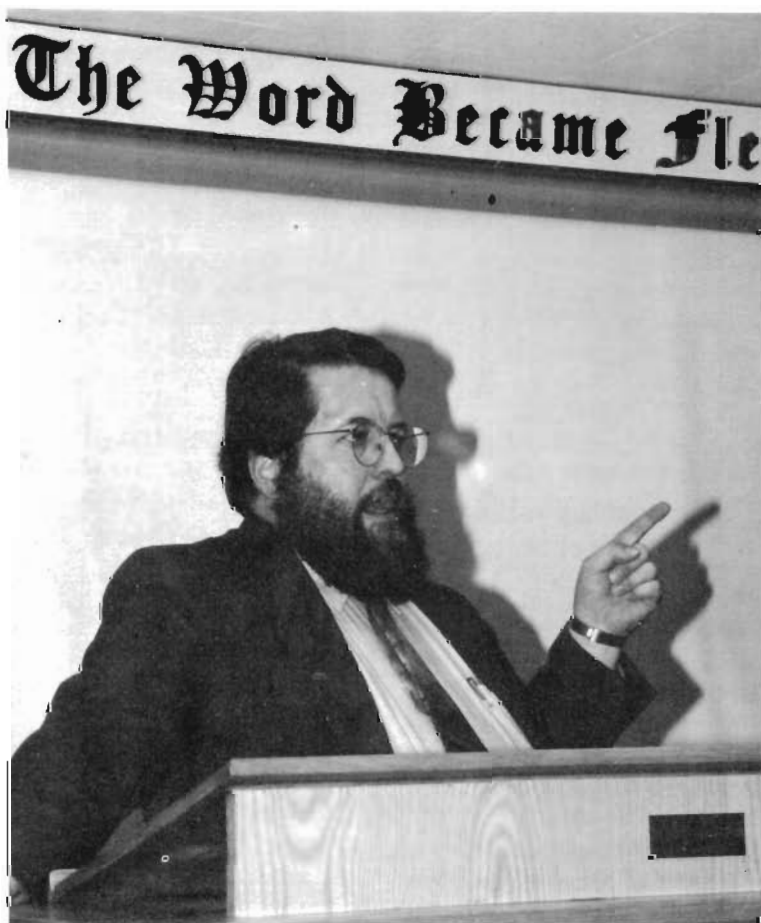
God had a purpose for Paul writing this — to make us aware of the need for pastors. And where shall the preachers be trained? For most AFLC pastors, it is at our Free Lutheran Seminary (FLS).

In 1964, the founders of the AFLC saw that need. They shared a vision for men to be trained in parish ministry. It led to the establishment of our FLS. So what does this have to do with harmony within the Scriptures? Briefly speaking, it means God, in His perfect plan, must have established a means of support for the institutions that train His pastors.

It's found in Galatians 6:6: *Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches.* Here He has given our family opportunity to express our appreciation for what He has done for us by supporting the people who are called to train the men who bring the good news of our Lord Jesus Christ into our lives. So what is it that brings us to give to our seminary? It's the love of Christ.

When God says to "Let him share," it's much like when a family member tells us of some need requiring our participation. Where there is love, there is no compulsion to give, but rather, from it comes a desire to share, in order to express the very love from which giving is born. This

— Pete and Mary Ann Ward
Our Saviour's Lutheran
Zumbrota, Minnesota



Professor Jerry Holmas.



Dr. Francis Monseth, FLS Dean.

Seminary news

Seminary Inter-Term held

The Free Lutheran Seminary's annual Inter-Term was held January 6-17, and 27-31, 1997. "Equipping for Effective Ministry" was the theme. The first session's classes were *Youth Ministry* taught by Pastor Kevin Olson and *Christian Education*, taught by Pastor Richard Anderson. The second session was a class on *Confirmation Ministry*, taught by Pastors Tonnes Pollestad and James L. Johnson.

Dr. Francis and Ellen Monseth, Rogers, Minnesota, spent the last two weeks of January, 1997, on a teaching assignment in Estonia and Latvia. Dr. Monseth is also the teaching and preaching pastor at Medicine Lake Lutheran Church. He will continue to serve as Dean of the Free Lutheran Seminary. Other pastoral duties are shared within the Medicine Lake congregation.

is what God has invited each of us (lay people, pastors, seminary students, confirmation students and teachers) who are being taught from His Word to share in.

There is another personal reason why our family supports our seminary. The men who train and are trained in our seminary have a purpose: to teach and to preach the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. When they do so, then those who have not heard will hear. When they hear with repentant hearts, they come to know Jesus Christ. And when that happens, another orchestra strikes up in celebration, except this one is in heaven: *I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance* (Luke 15:10).

The wonderful part of all of this comes from knowing that our Lord has invited us to share in that joy going on in heaven, even while we're still here on earth.



Middler seminarian, Gary Haug.

We need your prayers

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

— Phillipians 4:6,7

When we pray “with thanksgiving” we are acknowledging our dependence on God for every good thing and remembering His past blessings. But most of all, we are thankful for the privilege of being able to bring our concerns directly to God in Jesus’ name! I invite you to begin your prayers regarding the Free Lutheran Seminary with grateful praise and worship to Him who has blessed us so abundantly.

We can be thankful for this institution itself and we can thank Him, too, for our faculty and their solid stance on God’s inspired Word. How grateful we are for the many people who regularly support our school through prayer support and monetary gifts.

As I think back on all of the adjustments my family and I made as we came to study and work in Minneapolis, I thank Him for His faithful and complete

care for each one of us. I’m sure each of us seminarians would ask you to join us in giving thanks for His everyday, personal care and provision for all our needs.

As we continue to prepare for our future ministries, we do so eagerly, trusting God to lead us. Romans 8:26 reminds us, “And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.” Seek the Lord’s guidance as you pray, asking Him to lead you as to how best to pray for our seminary, faculty, and students.

When we pray for the administrative needs, we should pray for continued godly wisdom for our dean, Dr. Francis Monseth, and the important decisions he has to make. Remember the financial needs of the school itself. Pray that the Lord will bring in adequate support. We should pray, too, for the Board of Trustees, asking particularly for guidance for them in the possible selection of an additional faculty member.

Praying for personal needs could be just that — very personal. You may want to pray for each faculty member and student over a period of time, or I would suggest that if you have a prayer group, each member could take one person to pray for in a very concentrated manner. Pray for wise use of the seminarian’s time so that each man has adequate time to care for his family as well as his studies. Personal finances are an ongoing challenge as is the necessary juggling of work schedules so that the student can be a good steward of his time in his studies, as well as a good witness as a Christian employee.

Our seminary studies are very intensive and require a single-minded effort in order to be done adequately. Please pray for the grace necessary to be able to disentangle ourselves from former responsibilities that may take our concentration away from our study of the Word. Some of us have moved away from close friends and relatives and so, from time to time, loneliness can be a problem. Would you



The Seminary Chorus at the Christmas concert, (L. to R.): Jon Bylkas, Gary Haug, David Johnson, Darwin Jackson, Jason Holt and Curtis Johnson. Other seminarians are: Ivars Krafts and Craig Benson.



AFLC Schools' faculty (L. to R.): Rev. Jerry Holmaas, Rev. Nelson and pictured below, Rev. James L. Johnson. Jerry Moan, Dr. Francis Monseth, Rev. Aamos Dyrud, Mr. Jerry

pray that the Lord will bring new friends into our lives and that we would be blessed with regular contact with relatives? Naturally, we would love to be in your prayers concerning the safety and happiness of our own families.

Biblical examples like that of Elijah's weariness in I Kings 19 warn us of the dangers of exhaustion even when involved with godly work. Pray that students and faculty alike will set aside adequate time for rest so as to be better able to remember to rely on God's provisions for withstanding the spiritual attacks of the enemy. It seems that when we are tired we are more likely to slip into self-reliance. Pray that He will keep us steadfast to His Word in every way and that our top priority will be our personal relationship with the Lord. Finally, we ask you to pray that the Lord would work in the hearts of men and their families to bring more men to prepare for full-time ministry. The need is great.

We thank God that so many desire to pray for our seminary. We take great encouragement from the words of Isaiah 65:24, "It will also come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear."

— *Seminarian Gary Haug*



Pastor James L. Johnson, AFLBS Dean.

Dreams fulfilled and yet to come

— Pastor Lyndon Korhonen
Chairman, Board of Trustees
Cokato, Minnesota

Since I already have experienced a white Christmas, I want to share with you the dreams for our Bible school and seminary. Many are already a reality, but I want to reinforce them and expand our vision. One pitfall in this busy world is never taking time to dream or plan for the future.

It's been thirteen years now since I left that seminary classroom and entered the pastor's study and pulpit. As I reflect

back on those days, it makes me so thankful for the solid biblical, Lutheran education I received. The Bible is still held up as God's inerrant Word and we still believe God uses means to bring Jesus to people. I dream of a day when those who have placed themselves over God's Word and have made the "means" to be the Savior would be awakened to their heresy and seek out at our schools solid, biblical, evangelistic training.

I am very thankful for what our Bible school presently is, but in our changing culture it is going to become increasingly important that the environment of our school be a place where young men and women are accepted and loved, regardless of their wounds or some strange styles. What do I mean by that? Back in the 1960s, I came home and asked my mom what she thought of "mixed marriages." She said she thought they worked out fine, since she as a Swede was married to a Finn! Well, we have gone a long way down the slippery slope from that meaning. More and more we will be experiencing students coming from broken homes. More than ever, young people today are grasping for a place to belong. **Who can better provide that than Christian young people who know they are sinners saved by God's grace in Christ?**

If we can daily keep in God's Word, it



Guest teacher, Pastor Tonnes Pollestad and the junior classroom.

Never a waste of time

How many people have contemplated Bible school and then asked themselves, "Will it be worth it?" I can answer, "It's one of the best things you could possibly do. It was for me!"

I arrived at the Association Free Lutheran Bible School (AFLBS) in September, 1994, right after high school. It had not been a hard decision for me to

make. I felt the Lord was leading me to AFLBS. Though I had been raised in a Christian home and had received a biblical education, my desire was to get grounded deeper in the Word of God and to learn more of my Savior so that I could serve Him better.

Once on campus, I quickly made many wonderful friends and got into the swing of things there — the choir, a gospel team, off-campus work, and of course, those homework assignments. But I found that it was easy to just go through the motions of being a Bible school student without really taking the things I was learning and applying them to personal, daily living. I learned that as I neglected this aspect, the spiritual growth

reminds us of what we once were and who we now are. This will increase our compassion and love for those who have been left with nothing but scars from sex, drugs and gangs. I was reminded of this in I Timothy 1:14 just this morning: "The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus." **Accepting young people and feeding them the Word of God will always be used by God to change their lives!** God's Spirit works within them to bring them to Christ and to give them a desire to obey the laws of God as well as the school handbook.

I want more students to experience what fellowship is and the powerful impact it can have on one's life. During college days, we had a great couples' and singles' fellowship in Cloquet, Minnesota. When I had to take a stand for my convictions in cautioning friends about how they used the Lord's name, or what they said about girls, God had a safety net provided for me in this fellowship group. When old friends rejected me, the church was there to welcome me. That was the first time I experienced the power of fellowship or positive peer pressure. We had Bible studies, played volleyball, put on nursing home services, invited friends to studies and went to Basic Youth Conflicts Seminar together. **I want Bible school to be a place where students are encouraged and respected by their peers as they apply God's truth to all areas of life.**

that I wanted to see in my life was severely affected.

I also saw my great need for personal time spent with the Lord where I could allow Him to show me my weakness and discover what depending on Him could do. I was then given many opportunities at Bible School to step out of my comfort zone and rely upon the strength that God so willingly gives to those who wait upon Him. It was not until I stepped out in faith, believing the promises of God, that He delighted me with results.

I thank God there is such a place as the Bible school which offers an education in the Word of God, creating the ideal environment and giving opportunities to learn to apply that Word to one's life. My

Finally, I want our schools to be a place where our students are aware that all of life must be built on Genesis. What do I mean by that? Virtually every basic norm that you and I grew up accepting is being challenged today. Our students must be equipped when confronted by the homosexual, why that is not an acceptable alternative; why abortion and euthanasia are tampering with God-given life; and why an animal and a human are different. **It's because the Creator of all of life set the rules in Genesis and we must play the game of life by His rules. If we don't, we destroy ourselves.**

How do our dreams become reality? The same way our schools have become what they are today. Our forefathers planned, prayed and listened to the leading of the Lord. Keep praying and giving, that God's schools can be in step with Him. How good one day to awaken in heaven and see souls in glory because these schools were ones through which He could work. May it be so.



(Please be in prayer for your School Board on February 17-18 as they meet together to do some waiting on the Lord, dreaming and planning.)



Marty Moser
Kalispell, Montana

two years at Bible school were a complete blessing. I received an education that will never be wasted. Now I feel better prepared to live out the calling of each Christian: to follow in the steps of Jesus Christ, serving Him willingly and wholeheartedly in all I do, and spreading the gospel message to others.

Anyone who has the desire to live for Jesus, take time to sit at the feet of Jesus and listen to Him. He calls each of us to do just that. Give God the opportunity to work "in you to will and to act according to His good purpose" (Philippians 2:13). He wants to. Are you willing?



— Liz Welsch
Amery Free Lutheran
Amery, Wisconsin

AFLBS TRANSFORMATIONS



One of the perks of serving on the faculty at a college-level school of the Bible like AFLBS is watching the changes.

Fresh, young believers — some quiet, some bold, some serious, some hilarious — come to Bible School ... for a change.

- **The woodshop guys.** These seniors work every afternoon at a door manufacturer in Plymouth. They work hard, make \$7.50 an hour, and spend a lot of time telling their co-workers about Christ. They discuss their evangelism attempts in class.

- **The urban mission crew.** One's a talented musician; another just loves kids; another has served time in prison; another transferred from a college nursing program. But once a week they all head to north Minneapolis to work with little Black, Hispanic, Asian and Native American children in an evangelistic mission. They come back with great stories.

- **The missionary kid.** He came to Bible School as a luke-warm believer. Now he's a leader. He wants to translate Bibles in Africa.

- **The last-minute decider.** Two weeks before September, she changed her plans and withdrew her registration from a state university. She wasn't sure she could handle the no-jeans-to-class guidelines. Tried it anyway. Now she's

sparkling with the joy of the Lord, singing on a worship team, thriving in her studies of the Bible.

- **The former Marine.** One of the few good men wanted to complete his spiritual turnaround with a few good months at AFLBS. He has a tender heart for the Lord and loves to tell others about Jesus.



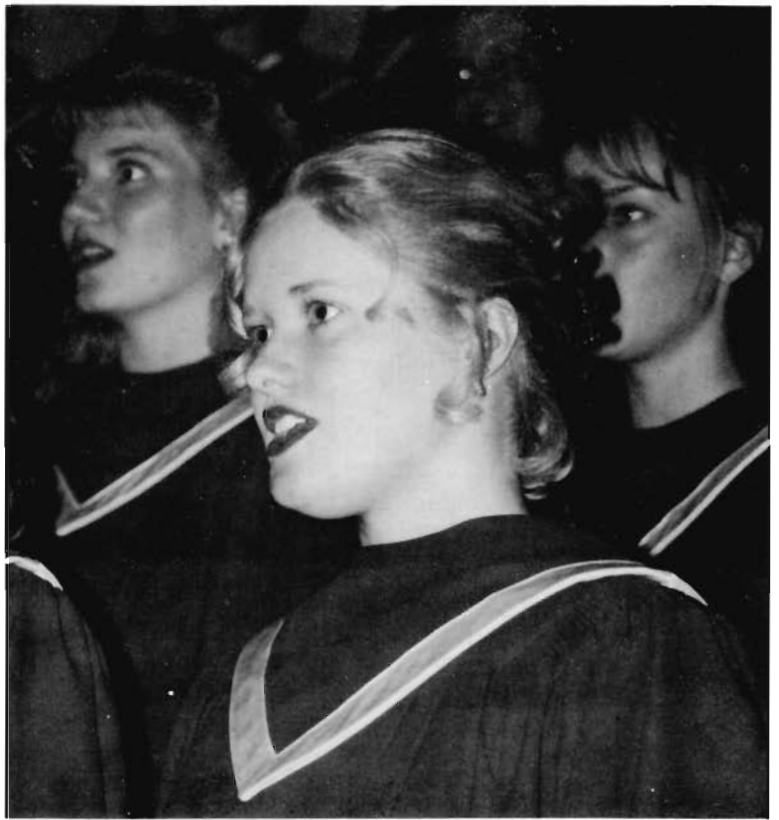
Melanie Blawat, Viking, Minnesota.

I wish you could see these students and their classmates. Feel free to drop in on any of our classes, anytime, Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to noon.

But if you can't you can listen to a few of their testimonies.

"People do not understand why I would want to spend two years at a non-accredited college," says **Stacy Keller, a senior from Wallace, South Dakota**. "They think that if I don't get some sort of degree, I'm coming out with nothing. But my response to them is just the opposite. I tell them I want to strengthen my relationship with my best friend, Jesus Christ. And that my time here has been a great growing experience for me. I'm leaving here with much more than any degree could give me! Praise God."

"Bible School isn't about credits — it's about eternity," says **Tara Cherney, a senior whose father Frank is a pastor in Tucson, Arizona**. "What can I do with my life that will draw me closer to God, to make me more like Him? The biggest change I've had at Bible school is learning to be content with God alone. If I have Him, I have everything I need. After all, we were created to have fellowship with Him. Bible school has been the place I've learned to give myself totally to God — and I'm still learning."



Robin Craig, Olathe, Kansas.

"The biggest change in my life at Bible school, by far, is for me not only to *talk* the Christian life, but to *walk* it as well," says **senior Adam Jordan of Faith, South Dakota**. "The fruit of the Spirit needs to be seen by others, and as the book of James tells us, 'a faith without works is dead.'"

(continued next page)



Some fall softball fans at AFLBS.

— Holly Roed
AFLBS Senior
McIntosh, Minnesota

A heavenly perspective

I remember that night at Bible camp when I was twelve. We saw the movie "A Thief in the Night" and our attention was on the rapture and the end times. I was scared. I stayed up late talking to my friend and our counselor. We talked of how we can be assured of salvation and the importance of sharing our faith. I will never forget that feeling of urgency to let others know they have to be ready.

Christians are called to do many things and be many things. The purpose of our life on earth is two-fold. First of all, we are to want to be more like Christ and to be growing in Him. Second, we are called to certain tasks or peo-



Holly Roed with her parents, Earland and Dianne Roed.

ple in order to share the love of Christ with them.

Those around us should be able

to see our love for Christ through our day-to-day life. There are times, however, when something



Before the Christmas concert, Kerry Brodland, Freeman, SD, and Heidi Quam, McIntosh, MN, tuned their flutes with the help of Mrs. Marian Christopherson.

when the Bible School Choir came to sing in his church. He skipped the concert, but his mother invited two choir members to lodge in their home and the two witnessed to David about Jesus. Soon David was an AFLBS student himself. "Alumni I have met have told me that their years at Bible school were incredible blessings — if not the best years of their life." Dave and five other AFLBS students serve in a youth ministry on Wednesday nights at Good Shepherd Free Lutheran, Cokato, Minnesota.

"There is so much freedom in letting go," says **Sonja Olson, a senior from Shakopee, Minnesota, who also serves in the women's dorm as resident assistant.** "After realizing that God is working in my life not just on Sunday, but everyday, I began to surrender my will to God's will. The Bible and prayer are incredible power sources. Sometimes submitting to God is painful, but mostly it's very liberating. If I am in God's will, I will be happy. Since giving up my dreams and aspirations and relying on God completely, He has given them back to me — but with a grander purpose, because He is at the center of them all."



TRANSFORMATIONS

"Few people understand the two years at Bible school are probably the most instructional, character-building and love-filled years many people will ever experience," says **Senior David Dummermuth from suburban Cleveland, Ohio.** Dave was a fallen-away believer

extra needs to be done. It may be simply going out of our way to deliver groceries to someone or answering His call to go to Africa as a missionary.

As those who have been forgiven much, we have much to share. Christ's Return is closer than ever as we see more and more people groups being reached with the gospel in their own language. Our witness and our zeal should be evident at our work place, school and our churches. Each individual is an eternal soul, a part of God's amazing creation.

Will our loved ones and friends ask us on that day of judgment: "Why, why didn't you tell me that hell wasn't just a party with all my friends when I joked about it? I thought you were my friend."

Heaven is going to be a wonderful place. It is going to be perfect, something we cannot comprehend. In the same manner, hell is going to be more awful than any of us want to think about. Both heaven and hell are for all eternity. How great it would be to have all of our friends and family members in heaven with us. Let's make use of every opportunity God gives us to be used by Him in what we say and do to point others to the Savior.



Lutheran Brotherhood funds to AFLBS

AFLBS recently received \$1,200 from Lutheran Brotherhood's Member Matching Gift program. The latest payment matches 13 gifts from Lutheran Brotherhood members made during the fourth quarter of 1996.

Aid Association for Lutherans awards grant to AFLBS

AAL recently awarded \$10,400 in grants to Association Free Lutheran Bible School. A \$5,400 grant will allow the school to redesign and market its recruitment catalog. An additional \$5,000 grant will fund student recruitment and retention efforts.

OUR PRESIDENT WRITES

AFLC Schools and the AFLC

1997 marks the 35th anniversary of the AFLC. Such a milestone year offers the opportunity to take a fresh look at the family of ministries that we have established — almost obligates us to do so, in fact. The theme of this issue is AFLC Schools, which is a good place to begin, because no other organizations are more central to the life of our church. The office of president provides an important perspective on the schools of our association. It is my privilege to share with you the special view from my unique vantage point.

The need for a theological seminary was a high priority on the minds of those who attended the organizational conference in 1962, and two years later Free Lutheran Seminary welcomed its first class. Soon thirty years of graduates will be serving our congregations, including a majority of the pastors on the AFLC clergy roster. No two pastors are the same, of course, and the differences among our seminary graduates could probably fill a textbook. Yet it is clear that by God's grace the seminary has performed a wonderful service to the AFLC by producing a generation of pastors who personally profess as well as proclaim our evangelical Lutheran convictions. In congregation after congregation I am privileged to hear words of appreciation to the Lord for the ministry of their pastors, most of whom are products of Free Lutheran Seminary.

The burden of establishing a Bible school was evident early in the history of the AFLC. Prayers were answered, and it was in the fall of 1966 that the first class of thirteen students began to study the Word of God on the Medicine Lake campus. The impact of the Association Free Lutheran Bible School within the AFLC is quite evident, and I encounter graduates within our congregations across the country. Some are serving as pastors (and pastor's wives), while many others minister in a variety of ways according to opportunity and ability — on church councils, in Sunday school classrooms, with youth groups, etc. It is especially encouraging to see former Bible school students establishing Christian homes, and passing on to a new generation their love for the Lord Jesus Christ.

One of my duties is to introduce the AFLC to interested congregations, and it is sometimes the case that the Bible school has prepared the way for me. A visit from the summer Ambassadors or a Barnabas team, for example, or a concert by the choir or choral club, has proven many times that our youth are often the best "ambassadors" who could be commissioned on behalf of the AFLC. Not only their platform performances, but also the witness presented in the homes where they stay, leave a lasting impression for the Lord as well as for the church body that they so effectively represent.

I thank God for our AFLC Schools! There are few who are privileged to see the scope of their impact as I am, and this brief survey is presented with the prayer that you will join me in praise to the Lord for His gift to us of the Seminary and Bible School. As we celebrate the past, may we rededicate this vital ministry to His service and His glory.

— Pastor Robert L. Lee

HOLD YOUR APPLAUSE

Sound theology is
sometimes as simple
as good manners.

— William H. Smith
reprinted with permission
from WORLD, August 31, 1996

When I first met her she was a spirited, feisty young teenager. I supposed she was born that way.

When she was eight years old, her family attended a conference where her father was one of the speakers. One evening there was a musical program during which the enthusiastic leader encouraged, "Let's give God a hand." At that she got up and began to walk toward the exit. Her surprised father reached her before she fulfilled her intention.

"What are you doing?" he inquired.

"I'm leaving," she firmly replied.

"But," he reasoned, "wouldn't that be rude?"

"Well," she clenched her argument, "they're being rude to God!"

The family followed her out.

As a college student today she knows it gets a lot worse. People aren't just flippantly "giving God a hand." In many services they routinely give each other a hand, especially in response to musical offerings.

Ministers will note that the practice has not caught on as a response to sermons. Perhaps we will have to install applause signs in our sanctuaries (or "worship centers" as they're now called) before people will get the idea. Then we'll have to learn to pause until the clapping subsides.

In this context, it's a pleasant surprise to hear a word of sanity from the secular priestess of manners, Judith Martin.

In *Miss Manners Rescues Civilization*, she answers a question about applause in church with "Having forgotten church manners, people are substituting those that would be proper for a performance. ... Hard as it may be to imagine, musicians in church are supposed to play or sing for the glory of God, not the pleasure of the congregation (which people interestingly slip and call 'the audience'). That is why there should be no applause in church. Not even for small children, who particularly need to have the purpose of their performance explained to them."

In response to the protest that the Bible authorizes clapping (as in Psalm 47:1), Miss Manners proves herself a better theologian than many evangelical worship leaders. "Where," she asks, "is the biblical reference by which God commands applause to honor musicians ...?"

Miss Manners hopes she is not pressing too fine a point when she distinguishes between the clapping of hands as an "expression of religious awe or joy and the clapping of hands to denote approval and appreciation for the achievements of our fellow mortals."

Not too fine, just fine, Miss Manners.

The specific problem Miss Manners addresses is the tip of

an iceberg of worship malpractice. Too many evangelical worshipers are like the man shopping for his wife's Christmas present in the Victoria's Secret catalog. He's buying a gift for himself. So we go to church expecting to be soothed, entertained, and sent home feeling good.

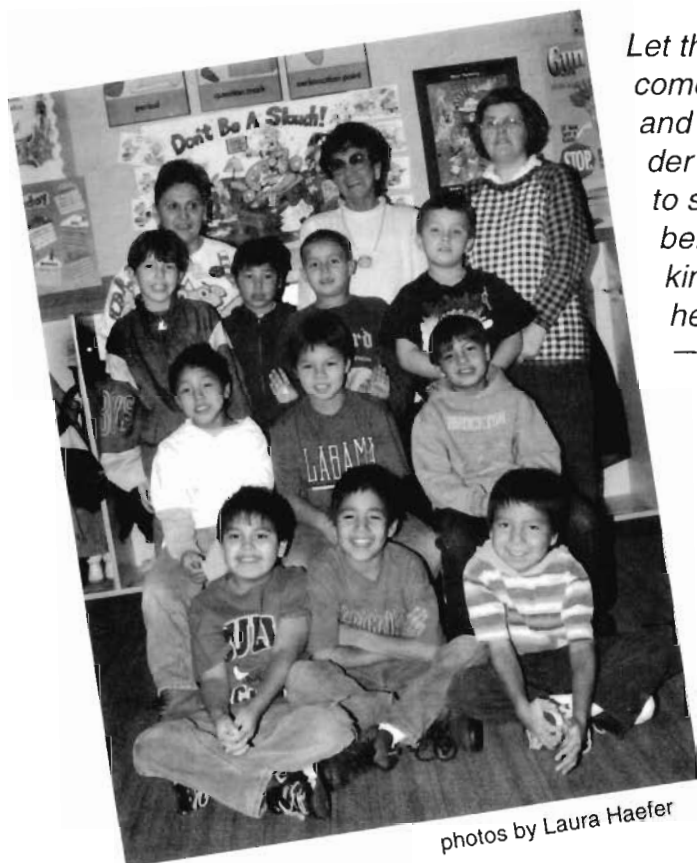
It hardly occurs to us to ask, "What will please God?" The subjects, not the Object of worship, are the focus. The result is that we no longer know how to conduct ourselves in God's house. We lack worship manners or even the sense that we need them.

If you invite me to your home, I'll come with my manners, which are both attitude (I respect you) and actions (I'll conform to the expectation of your household).

What actions does He approve in worship? Singing, praying, reading and preaching His Word, testifying to and confessing our faith, giving offerings, celebrating sacraments and making holy vows.

If you think worship manners are no big deal, you might check out the story of two Old Testament fellows who forgot their manners and lost their lives because, "Among those who approach me, I will show myself holy; in the sight of all the people I will be honored" (Leviticus 10:1-7).





photos by Laura Haefer

*Let the children
come to me,
and do not hin-
der them; for
to such
belongs the
kingdom of
heaven.*

— Matthew 19:14

The author,
(upper right)
with some of
the teachers at
last fall's Son-
beam Club.

We wondered if they would come. We had the chairs set up and the flannel board ready for the Bible story. As the time grew nearer we each prayed we would not be disappointed if only a few came; this was for the glory of God.

Suddenly we could hear the sound of children's voices coming down the hall. First a few and then more. Soon our room was filled with the sound of music, "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so." Children heard of God's gift of salvation and of Jesus' love for them. All too soon it was time for them to go. It was touching to hear them "parrot" the closing prayer. Thus the first meeting of the *Son-beams' Club* became history.

The club developed from a desire that Donna Dethman, Sue Jenks, Lori Kirn and I had. We felt a need to reach children with the Word of God. Our problem was that our church facility, Faith Free Lutheran, north of Brockton, Montana, was 25 miles from the

children. It happens that all four of us work at the public school in Poplar, Montana. Going through the proper channels, we applied for use of the building for an after-school Bible club.

God was at work and our application was accepted! We

would be able to meet in my second grade classroom. Now, we needed to invite the children. We couldn't advertise through the school so flyers were made and we went door to door in the neighborhood close to the school to invite the children. Other members of our church family were behind the scene workers, printing flyers and providing treats and prizes. A fellow teacher helped with the music.

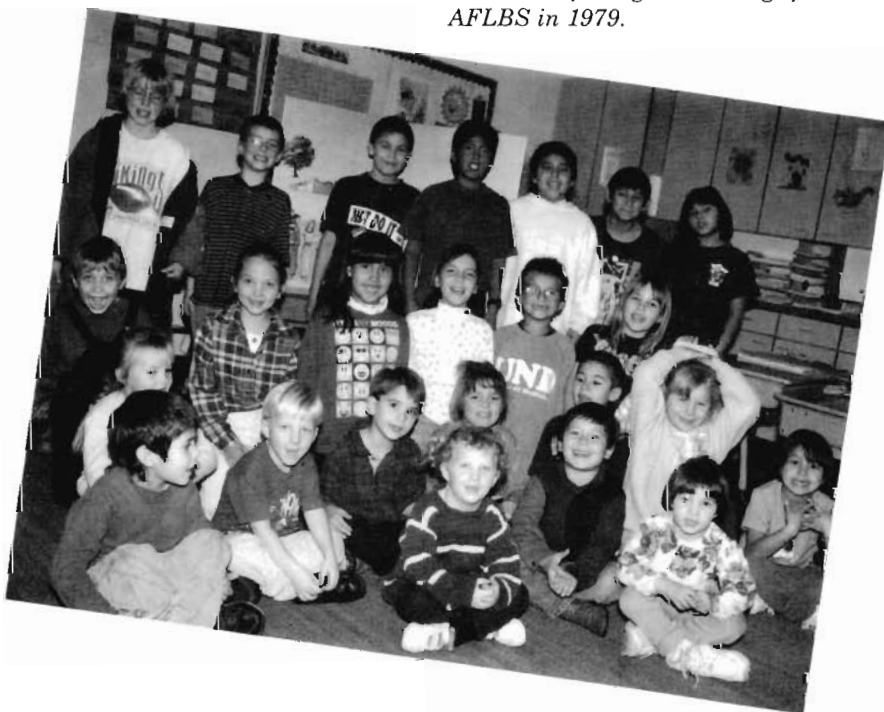
We planned the club for six weeks with hopes of another six-week program in the spring. Each week there was a average of 25 children who came and every week there was someone new. Over 60 children heard the message of salvation.

I recall when I was still in school, a teacher asked what we wanted to be when we grew up. When my turn came, I responded with "a missionary." Often we forget that we don't need to go to another country to be a missionary. Our neighborhood is our mission field.



— Cindy Alpert
Poplar, Montana

The author spent some time in Brazil as a short-term missionary teacher after graduating from AFLBS in 1979.



"Come to Jesus ... Share with Others," the 1997 Women's Missionary Federation (WMF) Bible Study by Barb Hubner, focuses this month on Forgiveness. Various WMF members are being asked to share during the year on topics related to the lessons. Florence (Dixie) Dickson, of Calvary Fee Lutheran, Fosston, Minnesota, reflects on the blessings of forgiveness and the joy of sharing.

God has given me a good life. I have cancer now and the doctors have done all they can for me. My life is in God's hands — but that's where it has been for a long time. I am the Lord's and He loves me. I know this because of John 3:16.

It was that love that compelled me to go to Bolivia in 1941. I was a nanny for a missionary family for a year. Then there was a need for a helper in the orphanage for Bolivian children so I worked there for five years.

I returned to the States but after a short time at home I got a telephone call asking me if I'd consider going back to Bolivia. "When do they need me?" I asked. "Yesterday," was the response. "When can you come?"

"Tomorrow," I replied. Because I was confident that God was going to send me back to Bolivia, I had kept my passport and other papers in order.

The Lord taught me many things when I was growing up on a farm in northern Minnesota which prepared me for life on the mission field and continue to benefit me today. Knowing how to ride a horse made travel by mule in Bolivia easier. I was the eighth of ten children and learned how

Forgiven



"My life changed when I first realized that Jesus loved me enough to forgive me."

will in no wise cast out."

Hardly a day goes by without someone stopping in. Sometimes I pause in my kitchen, on the way to the door and pray, "I'm glad in You, Jesus." I ignore any feelings of reluctance I may have and welcome the one who comes with love Jesus gives me.

I know that we are not saved because of what we do, but when we are saved, we are to tell others about Jesus. Sometimes I plan the verses I want to share with someone. I've also learned to "roll with the punches" and just look

to care for the needs of others. I also learned hospitality. When a car would turn into our long driveway, Mother would quickly direct us to set on more plates and food and suddenly we were ready for company. Mother's sense of humor and calmness are two attributes I still ask the Lord to give me.

My life changed when I first realized that Jesus loved me enough to forgive me. A heavy weight was lifted from my heart. My whole outlook toward others changed, too. I saw that I could not carry unforgiven sin. I must forgive. How helpful it has been to say, "I'm going to hand this sin to You, Lord. The past is Yours." Then He gives me that gracious gift of peace. Though I keep receiving His peace, Satan still comes to remind me of past failings. But I know that Jesus has forgiven me. Many Scriptures help me verify that, particularly I John 1:9.

I am the Lord's and He loves me. It is a great joy to know that God loves me because He is love, not because of anything in me. I base my assurance on what Jesus said in John 6:37, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me and him that cometh to me I

1996 WMF Bible study

It was delightful to learn more about our founding fathers in the 1996 WMF Bible Study, "Freedom's Holy Light," by Mary Christenson. We need to recall their emphasis on Scripture and their reliance on a strong faith in God. Our own faith walk is strengthened in studying the journey of others.

If you found yourself wishing for more information about the founders of our country and the way it was "back then," you might also enjoy the stories in the series, "The House of Winslow," by Gilbert Morris. These historically accurate fictional narratives begin in the "old country" with persecutions leading to the voyage on the Mayflower in search of religious freedom in the new world. Books in the series feature the

for natural opportunities to share what God has done. This often opens possibilities I never could have planned.

I ask God to help me see others through the eyes of Jesus. I can only point them to Christ and His Word. Sometimes I meet people who are discouraged. I remind them of Scripture promises like Proverbs 3:5-7 or Romans 8:28.

God has poured out blessing upon blessing through the years. It is my prayer that in the days to come I will neither grumble nor complain. I have asked the Lord to help me say, "Thank You," each day no matter what happens. I know that He will make everything come out for good — and it's all of grace.

Exchange

*All that is His is imputed to me;
Lovely and fair is my Lord!
And He gives me the robe of His own righteousness
To cover my sins, says His Word.*

*All that I am was imputed to Him,
Black were my shame and my guilt —
Which were laid upon Him on Calvary's cross!
But precious His blood that was spilt.*

*Was ever a bargain so wondrous as this?
Matchless His love and His grace!
My guilt for His glory, my pain for His peace,
My night for the light of His face!*

— Martha Snell Nicholson

inspires more reading

Winslow family, and the Pilgrims who established our country. They continue with family members through the Revolutionary and Civil Wars and on to the westward expansion.

Each volume shares the characters' love of the Lord. Their faith is shared during struggles with the difficulties and the joys of their lives. As we observe the speech and activities of the faithful characters taking part in the growth of our nation, we might be encouraged in our own growth.

Each volume in the series builds on plots in the previous ones, however, every book is an enjoyable and complete story in itself. As 1997 begins, there are 18 volumes to the series.

— Deanna Hobelmann
Abiding Word Lutheran
Deshler, Nebraska

A people hungry for books

—Janice Baldwin
Everett, Washington

In August 1994 I took early retirement from the Boeing Company and went to Hungary as a teacher of business and foreign trade. At that time it was only four years since the fall of communism. When I made assignments to my students they returned to me saying, "Mrs. Baldwin, there are no books." I went and inspected the Szeged Public Library and, sure enough, it had only one little section of books, maybe two shelves.

I thought of all the books we as Americans have access to that we give or throw away. It became a burden on my heart to have books shipped into Hungary. I wrote to friends and prayed for the Spirit to move them to ship boxes of

books. Along about January, the books began to arrive. The school opened another room to accommodate them and some went to the public library.

I came home in June 1995 and continued to search for books and shipped several boxes to the Szeged Lutheran Church, which had been my home church while I was overseas. In the meantime, I was not in a financial position to continue to fund the shipment of the books, which by this time had reached 500 pounds worth that had been shipped to Hungary.

I met a flight attendant who knew the global director of the
(continued on next page)

**"It became a burden on my heart
to have books shipped into Hungary."**

HUNGRY FOR BOOKS —

airlines in Geneva, Switzerland. I thought this was the answer. We could request 1200 pounds of books to be shipped with the airlines picking up the tab. Many times they have spare space for freight and it would be easy for them to deliver the books.

It took months of seeking permission, but finally the answer came back, "No, they would not carry the books."

I was very discouraged. I said to God, "I thought you wanted me to ship the books. Did I misread what You wanted me to do? I give up. I don't know where to go now. If you want me to continue with the book project You will have to show me how."

In September 1996 I was a guest speaker in Spokane, Washington at the AFLC West Coast District Women's Conference. I was asked to speak about my experience as a missionary and teacher in Hungary. I was also to tell people some practical ways they could assist missionaries on the field. I spoke of the books that continued to accumulate and the costs of transporting them.

God continues to smile on me and keep me in awe. This fall due to the generosity of the AFLC congregations in Lake Stevens and Kirkland, Washington money was donated that made it possible for five large boxes of books to be sent to Hungary. An arrangement has been made with Elim Lutheran Church in Lake Stevens to allow contributions to be made to the church to be used for shipping books to Hungary.

The books are easily obtained. Transportation money is an ongoing problem.

(For further information about the Hungary Book Project contact Janice Baldwin at 9210 Market Place, Everett, WA 98205.)

SVERDRUP'S DREAM (continued from page 24)

effects on the theological students and pastors. Both Sverdrup and Oftedal studied under him.

Second, before they emigrated, both had lived under the state church of Norway, an extremely hierarchical, synodical-type system where clergy were often aloof from the common man and more interested in their churchly duties than the spiritual condition of their congregations. (Some were so enamored of their status that they felt obligated to wear their vestments even when they left the parsonage to chop wood.)

Finally, Sverdrup felt there was little scriptural basis for a synodical structure. Rather he says: "In the New Testament there is no talk about any bishopric ... nor about any papal kingdom, nor about any department of churchly affairs, nor any church council, or synod. There is a congregation in each place where there are Christians, and this congregation has its elders of bishops; but there is no 'church leadership' of any sort."

Let us briefly, then, compare the two structures. The organization (or polity) of a synod might be said to resemble a triangle with authority flowing from a president at the top, through bishops, conferences, and finally down to the congregations forming the broad base at the bottom. Tip the triangle upside down, and we have a free church. The many individual congregations represent the authority at the top which narrows down through corporations, conferences, and leaders that, in turn, serve the congregations.

A free church is a paradox. In a synod, congregations are kept in line by the authority of the hierarchy. But if the congregations hold the authority and are held together in a loosely organized association, what prevents chaos and anarchy? Human logic calls for strong leaders that direct us,

constitutions that bind us, and rules that restrain us. But in our association, we have leaders that can only influence, conferences that can only recommend, and "Fundamental Principles" that can — only if understood — prevent us from *doing what we please*.

"So what preserves us a free church? The Holy Spirit and the Word. ... This concept must be rediscovered by each generation if our heritage is to continue."

So what preserves us as a free church? The Holy Spirit and the Word. Without the Spirit and the Word, the AFLC is powerless, and that is precisely why Sverdrup empowered the congregations as he did. A synod's structure will perpetuate itself by continuing the social function of marrying and burying even though it is spiritually dead. But if the Holy Spirit leaves the Association, there is no earthly structure to hold it together, since our congregations are bound together by a spiritual rather than a constitutional bond.

Thus, we are totally powerless in ourselves and solely dependent on the Spirit, the Word and the sacraments. We draw both our power and freedom from them. Without the Spirit's guidance in our congregations, our freedom will often lead to divisiveness. This concept must be rediscovered by each generation if our heritage is to continue.

As Sverdrup biographer and LFC historian Professor Andreas Helland says: "Viewed from a

materialistic standpoint, the organization of the Lutheran Free Church (AFLC) is weak. It has no strong constitution and no strong central government. There is a wide opportunity for congregations and individuals to misuse their liberty and to shirk their duties, as there is no strong human hand to take them to task and bring them to terms. The Lutheran Free Church (AFLC) is strong only insofar as it gives room for the Word and the Spirit of the Lord to do their work in the hearts of its members."



— Loiell Dyrud
Our Saviour's Lutheran
Thief River Falls, Minnesota

Thank you and welcome!

The Lutheran Ambassador would like to thank those who recently completed a time of service as column writers. Pastor Alvin Grothe of Astoria, Oregon brought us "An Encouraging Word" each issue for the last half of 1996. Pastor Bruce Dalagar of Grand Forks, North Dakota wrote on the Fundamental Principles of our church body during the past year while writing in the "Building the Base" column. Pastor Todd Klemme of Wadena, Minnesota gave us instruction in evangelism in the "Something to Share" column. Thank you for using your gifts in God's service.

Our new column writers will include Pastor David Skordahl of Dalton, Minnesota sharing from God's Word in "An Encouraging Word" column. The "Building the Base" column begins this issue with Mr. Loiell Dyrud of Thief

Standing Fast in Freedom

History, Organization, and Principles of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

This new booklet is just off the press. It includes a history of the Free Church Movement in America, the structure of the AFLC, *Fundamental Principles*, and informational documents often given to congregations and individuals inquiring about the AFLC.

It may also be used for new member instruction, adult forums, etc.

The editor is Larry Walker, Home Mission's administrative assistant. To order your copy, write to AFLC, 3110 East Medicine Lake Blvd. Minneapolis, MN, 55441 or call (612) 545-5631

Calling lay people in Home Missions

In AFLC Home Missions, we're working to apply the principle of lay leadership to church planting.

Right now we're concentrating on **nurturing** our mission congregations. We hear congregations saying, "We're hurting out here." Our strategy is to use the priesthood of all believers to meet these needs. Here are three resources we're using:

VISION 2100 is a series of seminars, presented by Pastor Richard Anderson, designed to help congregation members set goals for their churches and develop a plan to reach those goals. Each member gets the opportunity to think about their own part in realizing those goals, and members are encouraged to develop deeper, mutually building relationships with one

another.

PARISH BUILDERS are couples, either Bible School graduates or retired people, who assist a mission congregation by moving into the community, finding employment if necessary, and assisting the pastor in teaching, visitation, etc. Through relationship and example they help build lay leadership in the church.

BODY BUILDERS is a program in which established AFLC congregations "adopt" a mission congregation, offering their support, experience and expertise (they may help financially, but that would be worked out between them, and is not required). Friendships develop, and members get to exercise their gifts and see the fruit of their work.

River Falls, Minnesota helping us to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Lutheran Free Church and the adoption of the Fundamental Principles by writing throughout this year on our heritage and its

significance for today. Pastor Richard Long of Arlington, Washington will help us to grow as evangelists while writing in the "Something to Share" column. We look forward to God speaking to us through these writers.

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Ernest Miedema, Valley City, North Dakota, has accepted a half-time position as Director of Development for the AFLC. He has been serving in that position full time for 17 years.

Pastor Todd Olson has resigned as pastor of Christ the King Lutheran in Pipestone, Minnesota and accepted a call in another denomination.

Pastor John C. Rieth, Grand Forks, North Dakota, was formally installed as chaplain of United Hospice on October 23, 1996. AFLC Secretary, Pastor Bruce Dalager, represented the AFLC and officiated in the installation, a part of the celebration of Pastoral Care Week at United Hospital. Several area AFLC pastors were in attendance.

Chaplain Rieth serves as both chaplain and bereavement coordinator for United Hospice. His time is divided between providing assessment of needs and pastoral care to hospice patients and their families, including follow-up bereavement care for hospice families for thirteen months following a death. He also trains current hospice volunteers in bereavement counseling, and they assist in making periodic phone contacts with the families.

The Rieths (John, Pat, and Christopher) address is 2209 Springbrook Court, Grand Forks, ND 58201; phone (701) 795-1941.

Pastor Robert and Muriel Giles, Sun City West, Arizona, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in January, 1997.

Plymouth, Minnesota — Medicine Lake Lutheran Academy was awarded a \$500 grant for the 1996-97 school year by Aid Association for Lutherans. The grant program is designed to provide in-service training for Lutheran elementary school faculty.

Dickinson, North Dakota — Dwight Jacobson, 49, was killed in a car accident on December 11, 1996. He was a Gideon, a deacon and recently had become chairman of Our Saviour's Lutheran Church. He is survived by his wife Claudia; two children, Tim and Christine and two grandchildren.

Pastor Rodney Johnson, Stanley, North Dakota, spoke at a series of meetings and led morning Bible studies at Faith Lutheran in Lake Alma, Saskatchewan.

Bismarck, North Dakota — Calvary Lutheran has been served by Pastor John Abel, Hitterdal, Minnesota, since before Christmas. He will continue through February when he expects to visit Brazil. While there, he will work in tent evangelism and Bible camp ministry.

Pastor Richard Anderson, Lakeville, Minnesota, has accepted the call to serve King of Glory Lutheran in Eden Prairie, Minnesota, for one year. He will continue to do some work with the Tentmakers and AFLC's Vision 2100.

Salmon Arm, British Columbia — Emmanuel Lutheran, organized in 1989, was pleased with their first special meetings held last October. The guest speaker was Canadian evangelist, Olaf Friggstad. The congregation is served by Pastor Kelly Henning.

Phil Kittleson was appointed to be his political party's official presidential candidate and is actively campaigning in Bolivia with the national elections scheduled later this spring. He returned to Bolivia last fall after studying in the U.S. for two years. During that time he and his family attended Helmar Lutheran in rural Newark, Illinois. Pray for God's protection for him and his running mate as they campaign.

Metropolis, Illinois — Faith Lutheran was accepted into the AFLC at the December Coordinating Committee meeting. The congregation just recently organized in this southern Illinois community.



Upsala, Minnesota — Pictured is the new Word of Life Free Lutheran Church, dedicated last fall. This is the first permanent worship facility for the congregation which was formed in 1988. Future plans include a separate fellowship hall and wing for classrooms. The majority of the labor was volunteered by members and friends. The church sits on a nine-acre parcel of land one mile west of Upsala donated by long-time member Erling Johnson and his wife, Palma. Erling's funeral was held the day after the first worship service in the building.

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Bloomington, Illinois — A fellowship group is meeting here the first and third Sunday nights with the pulpit supply being provided by Illinois district pastors.

Newark, Illinois — Newark Lutheran, formerly an AALC congregation, voted on December 22, to request affiliation with the AFLC. Retired missionary, Odell Kittleson is the interim pastor. The congregation was previously served by Pastor Harlan Johnson, now at St. Paul's Lutheran in Jewell, Iowa. Newark Lutheran's AFLC neighbors are: Helmar, West Lisbon and Fox River Lutheran congregations. Newark is southwest of the growing Chicago area.

The Illinois District Mid-Winter Bible Conference will be held at West Lisbon Lutheran, rural Newark, on February 8. The district pastors will speak at the four sessions between 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Missionary Jonathan Abel, Campo Grande, Brazil, continues to build the new congregation with the assistance of Maria and Artur Boaventura and their son and his wife, Artur Jr. and Cida. They have been instrumental in leading several to the Lord and helping in discipleship ministry. Jonathan and Tamba's daughter, April, has broken her arm again due to a cyst and is again in a half-body cast.

Campo Mourão, Brazil — Missionaries David and Sarah Nelson and Sonja Dahl are working at the AFLC-Brazil schools and Miriam Infant Home. The Nelsons reside in the home of the Connely Dyruds while they are in the States on furlough, and are carrying on with the ministries in the Campo Mourão area. They took the 26-hour bus trip to the AFLC-Brazil Annual Conference held in Vitoria during January 17-19.

Holy Land trip scheduled

Pastor and Mrs. Orville Hiepler, Oceanside, California, are directing "The Journey of a Lifetime" to Israel beginning March 3, 1997. The cost is under \$2,000. They have led about a dozen tours abroad; six have been to Israel. Included will be a one-day tour of Rome. Pastor and Mrs. Oliver Olson will assist with studies and lectures on the tour. Pastor Olson was the founder and president of the Omaha Lutheran Bible School. Former Home Missions Director, Pastor Elden and Faith Nelson, Kandiyohi, Minnesota, plan to be on this tour. Already tour members are planning to embark from Minneapolis, Miami, Seattle and Los Angeles. For more information call: (619) 731-0980.

Curitiba, Brazil — On December 30, over forty people gathered at the airport to welcome Missionaries Paul and Becky Abel and family back from their year of furlough. Seminarian Marshall and Tara Nessa and family are with the Abels as they begin the last half of their internship in Brazil.

Missionaries Dan and Debbie Giles, Aguascalientes, Mexico, have battled severe health problems recently. While the family was suffering with the flu, Debbie was diagnosed with typhoid fever. She has been ill since last October. Pray for the Giles family, their children Ingrid and Daniel, and for the Todd Schierkolk family ministering with them.

Pastor Edward A. Johnson, Jasper, Indiana, passed away on December 6, 1966. He was a lifetime friend of the AFLC and a board member of Mercy and Truth Publishers, a ministry headed by Pastor Gerald Mundfrom, Osceola, Wisconsin.

Volunteers needed for mission home at the ARC

AFLC World Missions recently purchased a home at the ARC, near Osceola, Wisconsin. Before it is ready for furloughing missionaries, the house needs extensive remodeling, including an addition. Volunteers are needed each Saturday for several months to complete the project. Housing and food will be provided at the ARC for those involved. Call the ARC at 1-800-294-2877.

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences - January 1 - December 21, 1996

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN DECEMBER	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$241,472.00	\$32,236.71	\$211,369.55	88
Seminary	122,626.00	27,587.21	105,570.11	86
Bible School	184,696.00	32,798.08	169,337.90	92
Home Missions.	253,270.00	71,035.11	243,920.15	96
World Missions.	341,257.00	49,042.83	394,826.04	1.16
Capital Investment	24,639.00	1,655.64	15,274.49	62
Parish Education	49,289.00	5,315.80	45,319.35	92
Church Extension	15,018.00	981.93	12,269.52	82
TOTALS	\$1,232,267.00	\$220,653.31	\$1,197,887.11	97
TOTALS 1995	1,484,851.00	164,724.62	1,147,831.32	77
Goal 100%				

NEWS OF INTEREST

Looking for meaning? Why not go to the mall?

Bloomington, MN — If the Mall Area Religious Council has its way, you'll soon be able to visit the "Meaning Store" at America's largest shopping mall — the Mall of America — and pick up a little meaning to go.

The goal of the Mall Area Religious Council is to have a religious presence at the mall. Because people go to the mall expecting to find stores, the council believes a store that offers information on various world religions would fit right in. The council hopes to launch such a store by November 1, 1997.

"We've been working on this in the community for about nine years," says the Rev. Delton Krueger, a community action specialist with the United Methodist Church and former pastor of Portland Avenue United Methodist Church. "When plans were made for the mall, a group of churches and their leadership said to themselves, 'What should be the role of the religious community?' The vision for the organization is to have a spiritual presence at the Mall of America and we've experimented with different ways of coming at that."

Though organizers are putting together a business plan, the "Meaning Store" won't be a business in the traditional sense. "Our idea is to be present in the mall with something that's more than buying and selling. People love to shop — it helps give meaning to their lives. We know that," says Krueger. "But what if there was a place where you could safely talk about religion for a while? Why not a place where you can be quiet for a while? Why not a place where you can buy something to

help you understand your own faith, or to help you understand another person's faith?"

"We use the term 'store' because that's what they've got at the mall, but 'meaning' is what religion is about," says Krueger. "People have responded with curiosity about the name. We've had some initial designs done, and a concept design drawn, and we have divided our board of directors into subgroups working on various areas: the design of the store, how you put together a viable store, how you handle the

money side. Those are the items we're looking at now."

What Krueger calls "the money side" is the major obstacle at this point. He estimates that it will take \$500,000 to open the store, and thousands more to operate it. Although it is anticipated that the store will conduct some business — perhaps by selling some of the items often found in religious bookstores — it is unlikely that it would generate enough revenue on its own to break even. For that reason, organizers are exploring other avenues for financing.

ELCA issues statement on sex emphasizing areas of agreement

Chicago, IL — After years of fierce debate, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is releasing a pastoral statement on sex that avoids areas of controversy and focuses on areas of agreement.

The statement mailed to the church's 11,000 congregations says, "We pray for the grace to avoid unfair judgment of those with whom we differ, the patience to listen to those with whom we disagree, and the love to reach out to those from whom we may be divided."

The church outraged its more conservative members with an early draft statement which downplayed marriage and said that the Bible supported homosexual relationships. An attempt to draft a more moderate statement pleased neither liberals nor conservatives. Last year, the church decided to indefinitely postpone action on an official church statement on sexuality.

Instead, church officials released a statement which takes a stand only on areas of broad consensus, such as opposition to prostitution and pornography.

The new statement, "Sexuality:

Some Common Convictions," presents marriage as a sacred union, and defined marriage as a lifelong covenant between a man and a woman. It condemns sexual desires that lead people to leave their spouses and families.

The statement supports sex education, but says such education must emphasize "respect, mutuality, responsibility and abstinence outside of marriage."

The new statement avoids the issue of homosexuality, except to say that Christians are called to respect the dignity of all people, regardless of sexual orientation. It condemns adultery, promiscuity, prostitution, pornography, and media depictions of sexuality that emphasize sexual gratification outside of marriage.

The statement concludes, "To a world obsessed with sexual self-fulfillment, divided by differences over sexuality and weary of how sexuality is abused, the message of the grace of God lightens our burdens, lifts our spirits, renews our commitments, and reminds us of the deepest basis for mutual respect — the love of God we have in Jesus Christ."

Recipe for a Good Student

I recently had a couple weeks where I did more cooking than usual. I followed recipes that are a little more complicated than the one found on the side of the Kraft Macaroni and Cheese box. The experience with recipes caused me to consider, what might be the recipe for a good student at the Free Lutheran Seminary, the Association Free Lutheran Bible School and in the school we are each a part of — the school of life?

Start with as large a helping as you can find of grace and keep asking for more. None of us can learn a thing of eternal value apart from God's grace. We rejoice in His willingness to teach and to shower upon us undeserved blessings. It is that which makes learning truth possible. As Jesus said, "apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5, NIV).

Another necessary ingredient is faith. "Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him" (Hebrews 11:6, NIV). Many have a mind full of facts and information, but a heart of unbelief. It is impossible to have a true knowledge of God and His will and His ways without faith.

The recipe for a good student needs to include an abundance of hope. The Psalmist learned because he had a soul that waited in expectation (Psalm 5:3). He had confidence that God would hear his voice and respond. "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord" (James 1:5-7, NIV). Confident hope and assurance that God desires to give wisdom leads to growing in wisdom.

A main part of the recipe must be a large and growing supply of Christlike humility. The Lord "guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way" (Psalm 25:9, NIV). The best student is not the one who knows the most facts, but the one who knows himself, his limitations, his sinfulness and his need to learn from the Master. It is not necessarily the knowledgeable and talented who are truly wise. It is the humble who are teachable and willing to be molded by God who grow in truth.

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Businesses often avoid hiring employees who make clear their confidence in the amount of knowledge they possess. They are more interested in employees who are willing to learn. God is looking for the same kind of workers in His kingdom.

To develop a student who is growing in wisdom a strong dose of worship must be added. In worship we are called to get our eyes off of the things of this earth and onto God. In doing that, knowledge of who God is and who we are is acquired and strengthened. The church in Antioch became knowledgeable of the will of God to send out Barnabas and Saul as missionaries "While they were worshiping the Lord" (Acts 13:2, NIV).

Other Christians must be sprinkled throughout this recipe. Growing in wisdom involves spending time alone with God, but worshiping and serving God alongside other Christians is also vital. We cannot become truly wise on our own. We must be in relationships with others. "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another" (Proverbs 27:17, NIV). Are you wanting to grow in wisdom and knowledge of God? Then get involved in the lives of others with a similar desire, and let them get involved in your life.

The right textbook has to be a part of the recipe. That book is the Bible, the inspired and authoritative Word of God without error. It is in that book where true wisdom can be found. "Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me. I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes. I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts" (Psalm 119:98-100, NIV).

The good student also needs to be in love with the Great Teacher. An amazing truth about God's school is that the Teacher deeply loves each one of His students. "God so loved the world" (John 3:16). We the students are invited to enter into a relationship of love with Him. The most important commandment and a crucial beginning step on the path to wisdom is to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30, NIV).

The Greatest Teacher that could ever be found loves us and invites us to come to Him and learn. It is a recipe for blessing that must not be passed up.

— Pastor Craig Johnson

BUILDING THE BASE

Georg Sverdrup's dream – a free church in a free land

*Where the Spirit of the Lord is,
there is liberty.*

— II Corinthians 3:17

What does it mean to be a *free* association of congregations or a free church? Rev. C. J. Carlsen, a revered pastor and historian of the Lutheran Free Church (LFC), wrote an article in the 1950s that addresses some misunderstandings of the word *free*: "Individuals have understood it to mean you don't have to pay ... others think it means that ... everybody does as he pleases." Carlsen concludes both are obviously farfetched.

Nevertheless, Georg Sverdrup's dream of a *free church in a free land* was not easily understood nor achieved during his lifetime, or the sixty-five-year life of the LFC he founded, or even today in our AFLC after thirty-five years. Yet when the Lutheran Free Church voted to abandon its "free church" status and merge with the American Lutheran Church in 1963, the remnant that still believed in Sverdrup's dream met in Thief River Falls, Minnesota, in

the fall of 1962 to organize what became known as the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations. (A court injunction forbid the retention of the Lutheran Free Church name after the merger, requiring the words "Lutheran" and "Free" to be rearranged as the "Association of Free Lutheran Congregations," though it retained the polity of the LFC.)

Thus Sverdrup's dream has continued for one hundred years, and when we gather in Thief River Falls this summer from June 11-15 for the 35th Annual Conference of the AFLC, we will be celebrating two historical events: the founding of the Lutheran Free Church on June 12, 1897, and the 35th Anniversary of the continuation of that heritage in the AFLC.

Though idealistic and appealing, a "free church" or an "association of free congregations" is organized like no other Lutheran

church. Even if one has been raised in this heritage the idea of a free church may be as difficult to understand as a foreign language. I grew up in the LFC and have belonged to the AFLC from the beginning, yet until recently in my mind I viewed the AFLC as a synod, though in my heart I knew it was an association. So prevalent is synodical thinking that even when we "know" better, we still tend to think synodically. For, after all, the concept is easier to understand than the concept of a free church.

Why then were Georg Sverdrup and his close friend and colleague Sven Oftedal so convinced that a congregationalist approach was the "right form of the Kingdom of God on earth"?

First, their roots were in nineteenth century Norway where a revival led by Hans Nielson Hauge had awakened the laity to a personal faith in Christ Jesus. This revival was followed by a second awakening led by Professor Gisle Johnson at the University of Oslo that had far reaching

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