

# THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

February 6, 2001

Why do we  
avoid repentance?

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Through prayer  
I was renewed  
and restored.

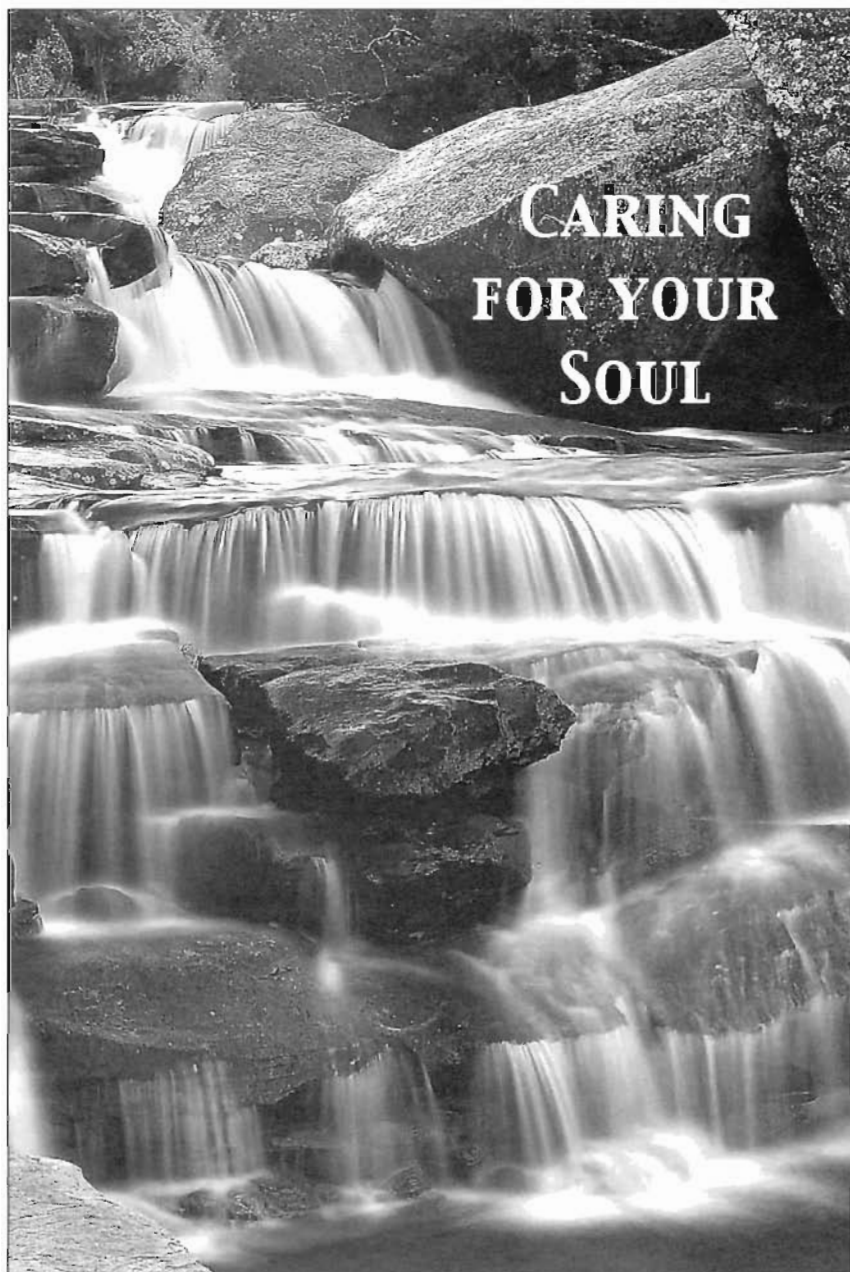
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In awe and  
wonder, get a  
glimpse of God.

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How do you  
eat God's Word?

p. 8



**CARING  
FOR YOUR  
SOUL**

# THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

February 6, 2001  
Volume 39, Number 2



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### The Lutheran Ambassador

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## AN ENCOURAGING WORD

### A true friend

Friendship is something we all value highly. Researchers tell us, that in a lifetime, one is very fortunate to make one to three truly close friends. Such an individual is one you can pour your soul out to and know that is where the information stops. The old adage: "loose lips sink ships" is all too true! Listen to the words of Proverbs 18:24, "A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." Who might this friend be?

Every one of us can benefit from such an acquaintance. We have all suffered from the betrayal of cowardly retreat of those who called themselves friends. We have had our own family members let us down at times. We have even suffered betrayal at the hands of fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. The very ones who were to edify and encourage us (Hebrews 10:24-25), have either stood on the sidelines and watched as were attacked or joined in the attack themselves. The friend described in Proverbs 18:24 knew this all too well.

When Jesus was arrested in Gethsemane, it was one of the twelve who led the enemy to the place Jesus had been praying. During the trial, those who could have served as character witnesses to Jesus all vanished, some even denying Him in the process. Yet how did Jesus treat them in return? While dying on the cross, He spoke the words which comfort-

ed the troubled heart: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." If anyone needed to hear those words that day, it was the disciples who had failed Him so miserable.

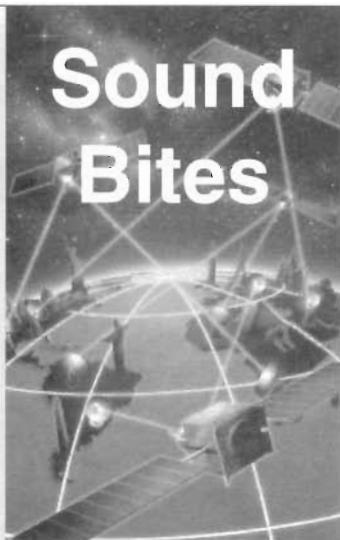
In those words, Jesus asked God the Father to not hold that sin to their account, and also to forgive it on the basis of His atoning sacrifice. In addition, Jesus later called these same men to His side, wanting them to know that He still loved them and had a marvelous plan for their lives. He was willing to forget the past, because that is what forgiveness is all about. He was willing to give them another opportunity to experience His grace, mercy and love. He called them into a new friendship bond. He let them know again and again how important they were to Him. He wanted them to realize it would take more than a cowardly act for Him to divorce them as His friends.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, what a friend we have in Jesus!



— *Pastor Edward Strom  
Emmanuel and Hauge  
Lutheran Parish  
Kenyon, Minnesota*

## Sound Bites



Enjoy the Lord.  
Don't endure some  
"religion." Enjoy the

**1** Lord Himself.  
Enjoy your  
salvation in  
Christ Jesus. The  
Lord wonderfully,  
richly, marvelously  
bless you as you  
do this.

—John Mitchell

**4** What we do in God's  
kingdom is entirely  
dependent upon what we  
are. And what we are,  
depends again upon what we  
receive. And what we receive,  
depends again upon prayer. This  
applies not only to the work of  
God in us, but also to the work of  
God through us.

—O. Hallesby

**6**

**Authentic spirituality is all about my  
freely given, freely received relation-  
ship with God through Christ.**

—Bob Beltz

**2**

What is the one  
thing that most  
often keeps  
Christians from  
experiencing God's mak-  
ing a dramatic difference  
in their lives? Is it care-  
lessness? Lack of good  
Christian fellowship?  
Temptation? May I sug-  
gest prayerlessness?

—Luis Palau

**3**

Worship for me is no longer some-  
thing I do because of social or peer  
pressure. It's not a requirement that I  
endure for legalistic reasons, or  
a painful process in which my  
sensitivities are offended.

Rather worship is an  
experience I long to have, a  
necessary part of my spiritual  
diet, a central source of my spiritual  
formation.

—Robert Webber

Over a period of time, faithful  
reading of Scripture makes the  
Bible part of your interior  
vocabulary and your thought  
processes. Such a relationship  
helps us think God's thoughts  
after Him and live them out in the  
details of our journey.

—Neil Wiseman

**5**



# a regular spiritual discipline

*"In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it" (Isaiah 30:15).*

**W**hy is it that when God encourages His children to repent (return to Him) and rest, to find our strength in quietness and in trust, that we will "Have none of it"? I believe I understand why.

As I grow older, I find it increasingly difficult to exercise on a regular basis and keep my body fit. It's not a matter of being ignorant about the benefits of exercise — I know I need it and I also know it's good for me. I even find the right exercise to be fun and enjoyable when I engage in it. Yet, in spite of all I know about exercise, I still procrastinate and avoid it like the plague. Perhaps it's because I take my health for granted and don't think much about it, or maybe I'm

looking too much at my past failures. In spite of many good intentions I usually fall out of a regular routine after a few weeks, or even days. And,

frankly, exercise is a lot of hard work!

I would suggest some similarities exist between having regular physical exercise and practicing the spiritual discipline of "daily repentance." Christians are certainly not ignorant about the value and benefits of repentance, defined for us in the above Scripture as "returning and rest." As believers in Christ we know it's necessary to turn from sin and that our souls need to experience the cleansing blood of forgiveness. Repentance brings comfort and release for the weary soul. Yet, all too often, we procrastinate and avoid the practice, just like we do with exercising physically.

Could it be for similar reasons? Do we take God's mercy and our spiritual health for granted, or is it that we look too often at our past failures here as well? Why do we want "none of it" when it comes to repentance?

I believe the answer is that we tend to either take sin too lightly, or the opposite, we look at our sins too harshly. Either way, the result may be a reluctance to come to God in daily repentance.

For me, it's hard to find the right balance in my attitude toward the sin in my life. Since I know and have experienced the forgiveness of God in Christ, my human nature tempts me to take that grace for granted — to take the attitude that "it doesn't matter too much if I sin, because I am living under grace," and "there's no hurry to repent now, I can always do that later when I have more time." Even Christians are tempted to rely on their own strength to follow Jesus, and to feel somewhat "better" than the openly sinful and rebellious people who live all around them.

What a terrible misunderstanding of God's mercy! When I have become complacent about my sin, that's exactly when I need to repent. Complacency toward sin suggests an attitude of looking at God's grace too cheaply, of not fully realizing the great cost of my salvation, "not with silver and gold ... but with the holy and precious blood of Jesus." When I do not consider my sin to



—Pastor John D. Mund from  
Spencer Creek Lutheran  
Eugene, Oregon



be that significant is when I am in danger spiritually.

Yes, we can take our sins too lightly, but we can look at them too harshly. By that I mean that we listen to Satan, the great Accuser, who wants us to think that we are so terrible and so wicked that God wants nothing to do with us. He wants us to believe that there is no use in returning to God, no sense in trying to practice daily repentance. In fact, when I was approached to write this article, my first thought was "who am I to write about something that is so difficult for me to practice personally? I would feel like such a hypocrite." I believe it was Satan suggesting that I was not qualified. He lies to us and whispers, "You have sinned so deeply and repeated the same sins over and over again, that God has lost patience with you and wouldn't want you to return any more." Satan wrongly suggests, "You are so out of shape spiritually that you'll never become fit for God again." In these lies, the Accuser drives us to despair.

But just when I am tempted to despair over my sin is exactly the time when God wants and invites me to come. In fact, it is only when I realize the depths of my sin that I can truly repent at all.

Yes, God wants us to look at our sins seriously, but not so that we would run away from Him in despair. Rather, He desires that we would fall at His feet in sorrow and repentance, and receive the mercy He intends for broken sinners.

The question is asked in *Luther's Small Catechism Explained*, "But does a sanctified person need the forgiveness of sins every day?" The answer given is, "Yes; because sanctification is never perfected in this life, and sin cleaves to a Christian as long as he is in the world."

In order to practice "daily repentance," every believer needs to keep a delicate balance in his attitude toward sin. On the one hand, I must remind myself repeatedly that I am a miserable sinner, but on the other hand, that I am also a holy and beloved child of God saved by grace. I am both sinner and saint; I am both holy and unholy at the same time. I am unholy as I look at myself, and holy as God looks at me through His Son.

Because of Christ we can daily come before the holy God in repentance, and in Him we can find rest.



## The lifeline of prayer

# "Lord, save me"

— Fern Bohling  
Abiding Word Lutheran  
Deshler, Nebraska

I recognized the path. I'd been down it before. The scenery was different and the seasons had changed but the path was familiar. Though it wasn't easy traveling, I found myself plummeting on the downhill slope. Why was I treading it once again? Oh, I had plenty of excuses: 1) as a good citizen, I should stay "tuned in" to current events; 2) the busyness of the season; 3) the uncertainty of our "journey," and on and on. But God doesn't forgive excuses, does He?

Like Peter when trying to walk on water, I was sinking as the shifting winds blew around me and the waves of uncertainty lapped at me. The fear of the unknown had gripped my soul. I had lost my focus on Jesus. Though I was praying "Thy will be done," I was struggling to let Him have control in some areas of my life as I focused on the circumstances of my life and my nation. I was preparing to do battle, not allied with Jesus, but with what I saw as right.

At first the joyous song and liturgy seemed empty that Sunday morning. But, as we sang Psalm 51:10-12, my heart's desire was to be renewed in spirit and restored in the joy of salvation. It was then that God searched me, knew my heart, tested me, and helped me to know and begin to confront the anxious thoughts within me (Psalm 139:23). Within the sermon, the text from Luke 21:34: "Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness, and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap," seemed to come as a warning to me.

Later that day, in conversation with a Christian couple, my anxieties began to tumble out and my tears began to flow. I was not intimidated or chided but, in love, I was accompanied down my path of brokenness by these two as my

(continued on next page)





# Communion with God

— Dave Van Acker  
Sunnyside Lutheran  
Stacy, Minnesota

## PRIVATE WORSHIP

It is having just come off a sweet time of private worship that I write these words. My fingers are light because my mind is full and my soul is still panting. Is there anything sweeter than kneeling at the throne of grace with freedom and confidence? I delight in the fact that God, by His grace, allows me to be continually renewed. My Father in heaven allows me to look upon Him more and more each day.

## WHAT IS PRIVATE WORSHIP?

*Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory." Then the LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the LORD. And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation." Moses bowed to the ground at once and worshiped (Exodus 33:18; 34:5-8).*


Private worship begins with our echoing the prayer of Moses, "Father, show me your glory!" and it reaches climax in God answering that prayer. John Owen defines it as, "God giving himself to us and our giving ourselves and all that he requires to him. This communion with God flows from that union which is Jesus Christ." In other words, in God unveiling Himself before us, and in our offering our bodies as living sacrifices to Him, a spiritual act of worship takes place, which is made possible by the cross. Communion with God is experiencing the true person of God and exulting in this truth by our spirit. For the Christian there is nothing to be desired more than communion with God.

## PRAYER

brother in the Lord prayed fervently for me. Prayer became once again the avenue through which I could cry, "Lord, save me," through which Jesus took my hand, using my fellow Christians, and restored my relationship with Him; and through which I was renewed in spirit and restored in the joy of salvation.

Prayer brings us into a personal relationship with our Triune God when we first pray, "Come into my heart, Lord Jesus, come in today, come in to stay, come into my heart, Lord Jesus."

Through prayer our relationship with the Lord is strengthened as we continue down the road of our spiritual journey. When we deviate off that road, prayer restores us to that relationship each time we return with a broken and a contrite heart. Prayer is virtually our lifeline to our Lord.

Thank you, Jesus, for inviting us to pray and for all the prayer warriors who are willing to go to battle allied with You. 

## WHO DO WE WORSHIP?

*Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know ..." (John 14:21-22a).*

Who do we worship? On one hand, it might seem unnecessary to ask this question. Obviously, the object of a Christian's worship is God, right? When I was in college, I had the opportunity to dialogue with many students on metaphysical issues. Most of the students claimed to believe in "god." When asked, "what god?" the two most popular answers were "my god" and "some force." Most of us recognize the inadequacy of worshipping a god that we create or some mysterious force. The problem is, many people who call themselves Christians are doing just that. Paul cursed the Pharisees harshly for worshipping something they had attached his Father's name to, "for I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge" (Romans 10:2). Like the Samaritan woman, they were worshipping something they did not know.

I am not suggesting that to properly worship God we need advanced degrees, for the Pharisees had that. I am saying that to properly worship God we need to have a proper understanding of God. We must make sure that our zeal is for the Lord and not something we have created and called "LORD." It is our duty to pour ourselves into the Word and allow it to shape our understanding of God, not the other way around. We must worship God as He is, not as we would make Him.

## HOW DO WE WORSHIP?

*Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24).*

We have just looked at the fact that worship begins when God engages our minds by revealing to us His glory in perfect truth. Our response to this revelation is the

answer to the last question, "how do we worship?"

When we stand before the splendor of the Grand Canyon or the Rocky Mountains or Niagara Falls or a West Coast sunset our minds are certainly engaged, but as a reflex so is our spirit. It is with joy and delight that we experience these emotions. To quote C.S. Lewis: "I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation. It is not out of compliment that lovers keep telling one another how beautiful they are; the delight is incomplete till it is expressed."

We cannot prevent the sense of awe that wells up within us as we stand before these magnificent creations of God. How much more then should we be overwhelmed by their Creator. The response of our spirit to something speaks directly to what we believe about that thing. It tells more about that thing than it does us. Everyone experiences amazement. What differs is the source of that amazement. When we become Christians God quickens our spirit to desire that which is most desirable, Himself! When we are granted the ability to look upon the glory of God, to have a relationship with the most desirable being in the universe, what can our response be but broken, humble, overwhelming worship? We must worship God in spirit and truth. Once our minds are engaged our emotions follow.

As I read back over this attempt to capture the heart of worship in such a short space I realize its inadequacy. I close echoing the prayer of John Owen:

*I pray that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has, by the riches of his grace, brought us from a state of enmity into this glorious fellowship with himself, may give you such a taste of his sweetness and excellence in this communion as to be stirred up to a greater longing for that eternal enjoyment of Him in eternal glory.*



# Food for thought

—Wayne Nygard  
Grace Free Lutheran  
Edinburg, North Dakota

**D**o you like to eat? If you're like me, you may feel like you live to eat more than you eat to live. When giving thought to the ways our basic foods can be used, we can create a host of appetizing, unique dishes that are appealing to our taste buds and eyes and satisfying to our digestive systems and feel good, whether crunchy, smooth, or chewy. We really need to eat, as food is the fuel that keeps our bodies working. How wonderful when we have the opportunity to eat food that is not only good tasting but nutritious as well.

We need to eat spiritually also in order to keep alive and growing in a spiritual sense. Deuteronomy 6:4-7 says, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise."

We have in this portion of Scripture, a firm command to be adept enough in the Word to be able to teach our children and speak with others knowledgeably. Would you choose to be stupid? Solomon says much in Proverbs about wisdom, advising that we should seek it and not hate the discipline that brings knowledge. Please refer to Proverbs chapters 1, 2, and 8, plus chapter 12:1.

Ah, but there's the rub! Discipline is the word that turns so many away from Bible study. Yet, it need not be such an intimidating word.

We implement discipline into our lives in so many ways each day, why let it be such a big obstacle when it comes to God's Word? As with work, food, money, medicine, etc., we cope. If we break down Bible study into mouth-size pieces, it need not be a hard thing to get into our daily lives. Not all Bible study needs to be deep-thinking, heavy stuff. The Bible can be fun to read. The Psalms were written for singing. Also, there are many stories in the Bible that are entertaining as well as having significance spiritually.

So let's enjoy what we eat. Enjoy God's Word.

Often we are overwhelmed with the enormity of the Bible. Begin by reading portions that are understandable. We eat a mouthful of food rather than pour a whole meal into our mouths at one time.

God makes us each unique. As we each have preferences in food, find the way to study God's Word that most suits you individually. Perhaps a start might be with a devotional book as an aid that has thoughts written concerning a particular portion of the Bible. Dwell on the concept of what is relayed in this mouthful. Think about even one point from the pastor's sermon throughout the

week. Bring your Bible to church and read the Scripture portions along with the pastor. Read a Psalm or a chapter from Proverbs each day. Study Jesus' parables one at a time and see how each can relate to our situations. Jesus taught much through this method.

God's Word is to be broken down and integrated in our daily lives. Read through the Gospels and try to envision how Christ's example would fit into

how we live our lives. Highlight favorite or special verses while reading the Bible. Take along with you during the day what you learned from your Bible reading. Think about God's teachings while traveling or doing daily chores. If you are just starting out and don't know the books of the Bible, memorize them first in groups, before attempting the whole. I have had so much fun teaching Sunday school kids how to memorize the books of the Bible.

Remember to keep the reading enjoyable, yet deep enough to satisfy. We don't just eat Jell-O and desserts, but meat and potatoes to have a well-balanced diet. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). Jesus says in John 6:35, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst." Come, believe in Jesus as your Lord and Savior. Receive from Him the complete assurance of the forgiveness of your sins. Learn of Him, of His Word, that you may rejoice in His teachings and be kept safe within His will.



**"If we break down Bible study into mouth size pieces, it need not be a hard thing to get into our daily lives."**





## A sabbatical for your shepherd

**“M**inistry hazards are choking the hope out of pastors’ souls. They feel disenchanting, discouraged, and often even outraged. They question why they should be expected to squander energy on trivial matters when evil threatens the human race. Fatigue shows in their eyes. Worry slows their stride. And vagueness dulls their preaching.”

These words, written by the authors of a book entitled *Pastors At Risk*, clearly describe the clergy crisis that the church of the 21st century must confront. Studies indicate that there is a crying need for intervention, to provide the pastor with a periodic opportunity for rest and renewal. How can we help our pastors?

The answer may be a sabbatical. The AFLC is offering a special financial subsidy, through a grant from AAL, to pastors whose congregations are willing to offer them a three-month leave of absence during the coming year. Here is a simple definition of a pastor’s sabbatical:

The sabbatical is an extended leave of absence from the pastorate for the purpose of renewing the pastor (and family) physically, mentally and spiritually.

A sabbatical should be considered when the pastor has served at least six years in the same church. Some congregations in other denominations include it in their letter of call, and save a specified amount of money each year in order to provide the needed financing. Often a retired pastor will fill the pulpit in the regular pastor’s absence; some congregations use qualified lay leaders.

A sabbatical is not an extended vacation. It is a structured program that allows the pastor to take a leave of absence from his pastoral duties for a specified period of time after which he returns to his parish. He should have a detailed plan for the use of his time during the sabbatical, and upon his return he shall present to the congregation and/or church council a detailed report of his experience. Also, he usually will agree to serve a minimum of two years following his return.

What could a pastor’s sabbatical include? For some it might mean additional studies, perhaps in a special area of ministry. Others may seek different ministry experiences, such as helping with the planting of a new congregation or serving on the mission field. A pastor with a heart for worship or youth ministry might offer his services to another congregation with a need in this specific area. One pastor found personal refreshment in a church building project where he labored as a volunteer construction worker.

Sabbaticals are good for the pastor, good for the congregation, and good for the church. The experience of other denominations suggests that pastors who are granted a leave of absence will usually stay longer and serve with greater zeal and enthusiasm. An informational packet on pastoral sabbaticals, containing additional details for the pastor or congregation considering this opportunity, is available from my office to all who request it. Let’s do all that we can to minister to those who minister to us.

— **Pastor Robert L. Lee**  
**AFLC President**

“What does God want me to be like? How can I apply what the Bible says to my life today?” These are questions the women of today ask themselves. In this year’s *Ambassador* women’s page, we will explore the lives of six Bible women and how they sought to become “godly women,” or a woman of excellence who is described in Proverbs 31.

A woman of excellence seeks God’s truth and finds wisdom — Queen of Sheba.

A woman of excellence uses her gifts and pleases God with them — Priscilla.

A woman of excellence cares for others and sows generously — Shunammite woman.

A woman of excellence is bold yet wise and her deeds are done with wisdom — Queen Esther.

A woman of excellence trusts God in the unknown and knows that He guides the humble — Ruth.

A woman of excellence gives God the glory and knows that “we are God’s workmanship” — Mary, mother of Jesus.

**Paul John Hinrichs** was born to missionaries Tim and Renata Hinrichs on January 4. He passed away after approximately one hour of life. The Hinrichs, missionaries to the Czech Republic, had been in the United States to receive medical care after complications had developed with the pregnancy. They say, “We were blessed to have that short time with him and we give thanks to God that he is now with Him in paradise.” A small family funeral was held on January 7 in Ortonville, Minnesota, where Tim’s father, Pastor David Hinrichs serves Abiding Faith Lutheran.

## A woman of excellence seeks God’s truth

— **Helen Knapp**  
*Maranatha Free Lutheran*  
*Willmar, Minnesota*

**H**ow many miles would you travel to see one you have heard has wisdom and great wealth? I know of a woman who had great curiosity to meet such a man. She had to travel across difficult terrain, and it wasn’t in a four-wheel drive van with bucket seats, built-in kitchenette and bathroom. It was by camel.

She was a queen and very rich. Her traveling entourage no doubt included her maids to bath her and oil her with precious spiced and perfumed herbs so her skin would not dry out and freckle. And of course the coiffure of her hair had to be perfect. There was no rag-tag Annie in this queen. She took along gold to give this already wealthy man. Great numbers of jars of spices hung in the saddlebags of the camels and skins filled with precious stones bounced along. This lady was not to be outdone in her gifts in spite of the twelve hundred-mile journey across the desert, mountains and plains.

The Queen of Sheba is the one who made this long trip to assuage her desire to behold wealth and wisdom. We read about it in I Kings 10:1-13. She was full of questions. The famous man she sought was King Solomon. She must have asked him where his wisdom came from. He would have told her of the time when God offered him an opportuni-

ty to ask for what he desired most. What he chose, we read in Proverbs — that practical, wise book to guide us in our daily living.

The queen likely asked where Solomon’s God lived. She knew only of gods of stone and clay. Where and how did he worship his God? She saw his wealth in the provision of his table — how his servants were seated, their dress and the attendance given him by his servants and cupbearers. Solomon’s wealth extended in lands, provinces, and included massive amounts of soldiers, horses, stables, camels, chariots, and least of all concubines. The Queen of Sheba told Solomon she had heard of his abundance in her land far away but really didn’t believe it. Now with her own eyes, she saw that she had only been told about a half of his wealth.

I believe it is the same with us. We do not realize the great wealth that we have available to us in our Bible. If one has enough curiosity it can take you far and wide in travels. We need to travel into God’s Word and dig out its treasures to receive blessings of joy, peace, assurance, comfort, strength, and many more. Ask God for more curiosity about the wealth in Genesis through Revelation. Our Lord has provision for us beyond our

wildest imagination. He has riches untold to bestow on us. We need only ask. We have not because we ask not! We too, can give wise answers to others who ask of our God.

The Queen of Sheba came with many questions and Solomon had answers to all of them. Her sense of need to know more about this wise God who had blessed Solomon was piqued. That empty spot God created within each of us (God’s abode), was being sensed and she seemed to have realized her differences judging by the questions she asked. The queen exclaimed Solomon’s great riches and told him that the Lord God is delighted in him and his throne. It is because the Lord loves Israel that He made Solomon king to judge and do justice. Perhaps the queen returned home praising God in her own soul for salvation.

I praise God for my salvation and the One in whom I have assurance. He is my comforter in troubled times. He leads and guides me with His Word. I pray to Him in the big and small things. There are treasures in His storehouse that I daily seek. They adorn my soul and salve my wounds with healing. His Word assures me of his everlasting love and enduring care in all things. I can draw on His wealth and wisdom in my daily walk. For this I praise Him evermore. I desire to be a “woman of excellence” in my Lord’s eyes.



## Mission contacts increase in Sri Lanka and Africa

**Pastor Eugene Enderlein**, AFLC World Missions Director, traveled to the island of Sri Lanka (Ceylon) with Dr. Francis Monseth and AFLBS senior, Chad Jankord. The men had been ministering in nearby India with our AFLC sister church, before going to work with

the Sri Lanka Lutheran Church on January 22, 2001. The president of the small Lankan church group invited the AFLC to come over to help. "Our major need is training," he told Pastor Enderlein.

The seven congregations which make up the Lanka Lutheran Church are in the southern mountains where the British at one time brought ethnic Indians to work on the tea plantations. Years ago, Lutheran missionaries worked among them. The AFLC mission team taught classes during the last ten days of January before leaving on February 1.

Pastor Enderlein is making plans

to visit Uganda and Kenya in Africa's Lake's Region. He and AFLC President Robert Lee request prayer for their possible visit in mid-April. Previous attempts to visit that area have been cancelled three times due to civil turmoil. The president of the Uganda Lutheran Church visited the AFLC campus last fall and invited the AFLC representatives to come. Pastor Zacharias of the Lutheran Church of Kenya, a former student at the Free Lutheran Seminary in Minneapolis, is serving as the interim bishop of the Kenyan church. Other contacts with the AFLC have come from Lutheran groups in Tanzania and the Republic of Congo, nations also in the region around Lake Victoria.

**Adeline Rundhaug**, 63, passed away on November 20, 2000 in Michigan, North Dakota. She was a long-time member of Aadalen Free Lutheran in Fairdale, North Dakota. She and her late husband, Tilford, raised her sister's five children when they were left motherless. One of those five children, is Linda (Mrs. Henry) Mohagen, a missionary in Naknek, Alaska.

## New home mission church

### Mineral Point, Wisconsin —

Faith Lutheran of Mineral Point is in the process of organizing and has been accepted as an AFLC Home Mission congregation. A group began meeting in mid-2000 and is currently renting two rooms in an old high school building. Pastor Brian Davidson travels five and a half hours each Friday to the southwestern Wisconsin community to serve as their interim pastor. During the week, Pastor Davidson is the computer specialist at the AFLC campus and headquarters in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

## Home mission congregation receives help in building project

A work/mission trip to Faith Lutheran in Durant, Oklahoma took place the week of November 26-December 2, 2000. This trip was sponsored jointly by FLAPS (Free Lutheran Association of Pilot Supporters, Inc.) and PIMO (Partners In Mission Outreach) and was the first-ever joint effort between the two organizations.

Faith Lutheran is served by Pastor Gary Jorgenson. The primary objective of the trip was to help the congregation with the construction of their new worship facility.

Eldwyn Van Bruggen (of the AFLC Home Missions and FLAPS boards) and his wife Bonnie, drove a rental truck from Mesa, Arizona loaded with room dividers and steel folding chairs which had been donated to Faith Lutheran. They also delivered an organ for the church which had been donated by Allen Gerber who has a music store in the Phoenix area.

Earlier this year, Faith Lutheran had poured a concrete floor and erected an insulated steel structure (continued on next page)



Pastor Gary Jorgenson has served Faith Lutheran since 1999.



The congregation is now meeting in their building.

## BUILDING PROJECT

which is 64' x 124' in size. During the work/mission trip walls were framed in for Sunday school rooms, nursery, office, kitchen, bathrooms, fellowship hall, storage room, and sanctuary. In addition, wood trusses were installed to span the width of the sanctuary and to provide a "cathedral" type ceiling.

In addition to the visiting group, eleven men and a number of women from Faith Lutheran in Durant helped with the project. It was a blessing to have several skilled and experienced construction carpenters in the combined work group which helped the project move efficiently and quickly.

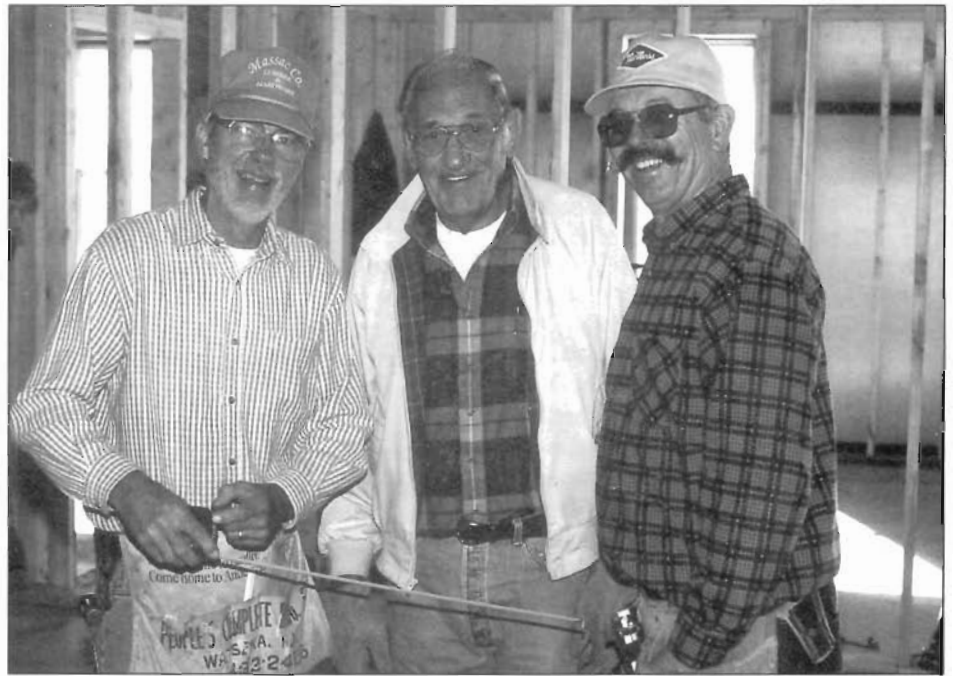
Workers were housed in members' homes and meals were provided. Faith Lutheran did an excellent job of having materials and equipment on hand so work could continue at a steady pace.

Each day started with devotions at the construction site. During the week all inside walls were framed, the ceiling trusses were installed above the sanctuary, the sanctuary walls were insulated and about one-half of the sanctuary walls were dry-walled. Local electricians installed wiring in the sanctuary in advance of the insulation and dry-wall insulation.

One day, Ruth Temple and Eleanor Schulz, who are charter members of Faith Lutheran, visited the work site and paid for the luncheon which was served. These ladies have served as missionaries for the World Mission Prayer League in South America and now reside in a local nursing home.

A local radio station did interviews and broadcast a news item on the work project several times in one day. The local newspaper also came out for interviews and photos.

The hand of God was definitely on the project. There were approximately 20 people working in various parts of the building throughout the week. Some of the power equipment used was operated for the first time by some of the workers. In spite of the rapid pace of the work and all the activity going on, there were no



**Warren Butzow, Jr., Woodland, Illinois; Jack Hart, Durant, Oklahoma; and Ken Lehman, Onarga, Illinois, worked on the project.**

injuries other than a small sliver or two in someone's finger.

The atmosphere was one of cooperation, congeniality, and good Christian fellowship. During the week some friendships were established which likely will be long lasting. It was a spiritual experience for the workers. People were moved to tears when it came time for farewells to be said at the end of the week. Excitement from the experience continued on after everyone returned home.

On the last workday, members of Faith Lutheran presented the visiting workers with an "Okkie Bubba" walking stick. These are treasured items for the workers as they remember the events of this very special week.

This project was done as part of the emphasis on "matching needs with resources" and was the first of its kind for FLAPS and PIMO. Discussions are already taking place on future projects as needs are determined by the AFLC Missions Department.

Heartfelt thanks go to the mem-

bers of Faith Lutheran and Pastor Jorgenson. Their Christian hospitality was overwhelming. May the Lord continue to richly bless them as they minister to the Durant area through this new worship facility.

Visiting volunteers on the mission trip were:

Eldwyn & Bonnie Van Bruggen, Mesa, Arizona

Lavon Bohling, Hebron, Nebraska  
John Presteng, Grafton, North Dakota

Vernon Russum, Grafton, North Dakota

Roland Meyer, Paxton, Illinois  
Ken Lehman, Onarga, Illinois  
Warren Butzow, Jr., Woodland, Illinois

Harvey & Deloris Hoops, Byron, Nebraska

Willis & Marilyn Kettelhut, Deshler, Nebraska

Pastor Jerome Nikunen, Deshler, Nebraska

Don Kaecker, Dixon, Illinois (he and his wife were visiting friends who are members of Faith Lutheran)

— **Lavon Bohling**  
**FLAPS Director**

**To learn more about how you can serve, call FLAPS at  
402-768-7286 or 763-545-5631.**

# Vision 2004 is about soul care

Caring for one's health and well being is a hot topic today. Never before has there been so much money and time spent on preparing our bodies to be fit and in good health. Why do we spend so much time and emphasis on the physical side of our well being? Because being healthy is important to us, and we should take care of our bodies. The danger is that we may get so concerned with our physical health care, that we overlook the soul care of our lives.

The Gospel of Mark tells us that the scribes and seemingly the Pharisees were more concerned about status and physical position in life rather than for true soul care, which should have been their main concern. "And when the scribes and the Pharisees saw that He was eating with the sinners and tax-gatherers, they began saying to His disciples, 'why is He eating and drinking with tax-gatherers and sinners?' And hearing this, Jesus said to them, 'it is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners'" (Mark 2:16-17).

Christ places the proper perspective on what should be the foremost concern in life for believers: the caring for those in need, both spiritually and physically. If we are willing to be honest with ourselves we all fall into one of these areas of need. As we wait for Christ's return or His taking us home, we are still in need

of care, especially soul care. So while we wait let us follow Christ's leading and not that of the scribes and Pharisees and care for souls.

Soul care is what's happening here at your schools; the caring for souls that need help and healing and the equipping of souls to go out prepared to give care to other souls in a world filled with people who are hurting and in need of Jesus.

Here is a glimpse of what God is doing at your Bible school and seminary. More and more students want to come and there is absolutely no room for them. Besides there being no room in the dorms, there is no room in the classrooms and there is a shortage of instructors to teach those who are coming with a hunger to learn.

Why are they coming to your schools? Because your schools stand on the inspired, inerrant Word of God as the only source of truth and offer the soul care that is needed.

They come from all backgrounds and from many foreign countries. They come to get a deeper and better understanding of God's Word. Some come unsaved and here at your school find Jesus Christ for the first time. Some come with problems, struggles, heartaches, or from broken homes, and here at your school they find healing, comfort, joy, and peace that can only come from God. They come and make new life-long friends. They come lacking confidence in sharing Christ and develop at school the desire to share

with others the solutions for soul care that Jesus has to offer.

First semester the seminary classroom was full with 15 full-time and nine part-time students while the Bible school had 148 students. Second semester the seminary will have 17 full-time and three part-time students while the Bible school is packed out at 150 students. Praise the Lord for His answers to our prayers over the years for more men in seminary and students at Bible school. God is at work here in your schools.

What a picture of God's work at our Bible school and seminary right now as we see souls hungering for the Word and more students coming to both schools than ever before. These are exciting times as we see the prayers and visions for more students at Bible school and seminary being answered and met.

Every day at about 3:05 p.m. our Bible school staff and faculty meet for a time of prayer for the needs of our schools and special prayer requests. Will you take up the challenge and join the staff in your own prayer time for meeting the soul care needs of these students through Vision 2004? Prayerfully consider responding to the needs and work we see the Lord doing!

"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. ... let us encourage one another and all the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:24).

— **Pastor Tonnes Pollestad**  
*Vision 2004 director*



**Pastor Paul Nash taught the junior AFLBS class of more than 80 students in the school's cafeteria during the January missions class.**



# Ministry Training Institute students learn survival techniques

Last December 4-8, the four Ministry Training Institute students had to pass one more survival test — this one in the snowy and frigid northern Wisconsin woods. To prepare students to cope in difficult conditions far from modern conveniences, MTI Director Todd Schierkolk and counselor Ellen Erdman, AFLBS registrar, and her husband Hans served as guides and instructors.

One of the assignments was to build a protective shelter out of snow. Pictured are Tom Lumppio, Carla Mattson, Lidia Herrera, and Alex Yambrick in front of their "igloo." Tom and Alex spent one night in the shelter.

Hans Erdman, a former park ranger, is now an EMT in Minneapolis. He taught several classes on remote area medicine which the students found helpful, along with his instruction on cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. Some of the students have been on short-term trips to Russia or Alaska and this experience introduced them to some of the skills needed in ministering in cold weather climates. The group shared in devotional times and



talked about God's heart for the lost. They also reflected on how God was working and changing their lives.

During the AFLC Missions Conference on January 9, 2001, the four students were commissioned for their mission service to Brazil. They will conclude their year's training through their internship experience working with AFLC missionaries in South America. Pastor Todd Schierkolk and his family have returned to Mexico where they have begun their second term.



Tom Lumppio entered the snow shelter for the night.



Pictured are the MTI students with (back row) Hans and Ellen Erdman and Missionary Todd Schierkolk.

**Missionaries Todd and Barb Schierkolk and family** returned to Mexico on January 31, 2001. They will join the new church planting ministry of Missionaries Dan and Debbie Giles in Jerez. They request prayer as they enter this new phase of team ministry together in this city, about two hours northwest of Aguascalientes, where Springs of Living Water church was planted.

The Schierkolks will be looking for a home in Jerez and request prayer concerning that need. Later in March, Medicine Lake Academy of Minneapolis, is planning to send a group on a missions trip to Jerez.

The new mailing address of the Schierkolks' will be the same as the Giles' address:

Apartado Postal 535-C  
Jerez, Zacateas  
Mexico.



Rev. Stanislav Pietak, Trinec, Czech Republic, joined the seminarians in prayer before a class. Pastor Pietak and his wife Anna, arrived on campus on January 6, and spent about two weeks during which he was a guest lecturer at the schools. He is Missionary Tim Hinrich's mentor and the pastor of the church where Tim serves. The Trinec congregation has one student attending AFLBS this year along with one seminarian at FLS.



Pastor Jim Ritter of Parker, Colorado, was the evening speaker for the missions week. Throughout the week, numerous students responded to God's leading in their lives.

## Annual missions conference



The men's quartet sang at one of the morning chapel sessions during missions conference. Pictured are Andrew Coyle, Nicollet, Minnesota; Joshua Holwell, Roseau, Minnesota; Michael Borg, Cokato, Minnesota, and Caleb Berge, Fargo, North Dakota.



Missionary Connely Dyrud of Brazil, was one of the speakers at the 2001 AFLC Schools' Missions Conference held January 7-10 at the schools' chapel.



Home Missions Director Paul Nash and administrative assistant, Larry Walker, set up a Power Point presentation for one of the morning missions classes. The first three weeks of January provided the students with their missions credits. The regular second semester classes began on January 22.

# Introducing the Free Lutheran Seminary seniors

In the next issue,  
meet Steven Carlson,  
Todd Erickson and Peter Ward



## Phillip Hooper

Born on July 22, 1975 in Salinas, California.  
Son of Steve and Claudia Hooper. Home congregation is St. Ansgar's Lutheran Church in Salinas. Married to Joy Bartelt.  
Graduated from Lutheran Bible Institute of Seattle with a degree in Biblical Studies. Graduated from Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota, 2000.

### Personal testimony

My parents are both strongly rooted in their faith in Jesus, and I was brought up in a home that modeled this faith. I cannot testify to a time when I "suddenly came to faith," because I simply was brought up in the faith that was taught to me by my parents, the pastor, and Sunday school teachers at St. Ansgar's. On the other hand, faith has always been a personal matter as well — a basic part of my own daily life, as I continue to work to daily walk with Jesus Christ.

Through the youth program at my home church, I went on several short-term mission outreaches to Mexico. Through these and some other experiences, God put into my heart and head His call for me to prepare for service as a pastor. While studying at Luther Seminary, I reached a hard decision. I had felt called to be a voice for change in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, but I realized that there was simply no longer any room for me to do this. I felt that to remain in the ELCA would require too many



## Jon Bylkus

Son of Ernest Bylkas, Jr. and Judy Bylkas.  
Born March 12, 1970 and grew up near Grand Rapids, Minnesota. Home congregation was St. Andrew's Lutheran Church (ELCA). Graduated from Itasca Community College, Grand Rapids, Minnesota; AFLBS; Northwestern Bible College, Roseville, Minnesota, '95.

### Personal testimony:

I was raised in a Christian family who taught me by their example that the Word of God is to be revered and obeyed. From my earli-

basic compromises of my conscience.

After much prayer (and not a few sleepless nights!) I contacted AFLC President Robert Lee for information about serving within the AFLC. Whereas I had previously felt deep concerns over how the ELCA treated Scripture, the sanctity of life issue, the homosexuality issue, and numerous others, my encounter with the AFLC was the exact opposite: I was (and am) in complete agreement with them over these issues. It is a good fit. As my "transferring process" began, I was told that I would need to spend some time studying at the AFLC seminary, and that I would also have to serve an internship — both of which were completed December 31, 2000. Both experiences have been refreshing and broadening. I look forward to seeing where our Lord calls me to serve next.



est recollections I remember believing in God and loving to go to church, especially when our family traveled to my cousin's home and worshipped with them at the Esko Apostolic Lutheran Church. The pastor of my cousins' and grandparents' church was Wayne Juntunen, who pleaded that we should repent of our sins and believe in Christ. He spoke plainly concerning heaven and hell and the reality of Christ's life, His death on the cross for our sins and His rising from the dead for our salvation. Perhaps that is why I, as a child, told my family that "when we die and go to heaven, it will be a lot like going to Esko."

Of course, there have been many temptations along the way to try to turn me away from the Lord. There was a time during high school that I went along with whatever my friends were doing in order to be accepted. I remember the good teaching of my pastor, George Gilbertson, who described our salvation as a courtroom scene where all our sins are condemning us. He said that our sentence was death, but at the time of judgment, Jesus stands in our way, paying the penalty for all our sins — and we go free. Knowing then, that salvation was by grace alone and not by works, I was comforted. I began to twist this teaching, however, to mean that I could live how I want, and automatically Christ would forgive me.

But then I read the verse in Hebrews which says, "But if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there remains no sacrifice for sins, only a fearful expectation of judgment." The Holy Spirit used this verse to help "awaken" me to what I was doing, though there was not a lot of change in my life immediately.

In college, I attended a home Bible study where I grew in love for the Bible. When I heard about AFLBS, there was no doubt in my mind that Bible school was just what I needed. In a matter of one

## Seminary Receives Matching Funds

Aid Association for Lutherans (AAL) recently presented \$1100 to the Free Lutheran Seminary in Minneapolis. The total reflects AAL's matched portion of contributions received from members during the third quarter of 2000. Annual gifts of \$25 to \$100 made by AAL members to participating Lutheran schools are matched dollar-for-dollar by AAL.

Lutheran Brotherhood gave \$2,790 to the seminary through the society's member matching gift program. This amount matches 35 gifts from Lutheran Brotherhood members made during the fourth quarter of 2000.

month, I began a new course in my life — AFLBS, college and then on to seminary. While at AFLBS, I found the answers I had been looking for. In addition, I received again for myself assurance of sins forgiven, the most important thing a person can have.

In the last ten years, I have not outgrown my need for Jesus. I believe I am always "re-learning" the gospel message and what it means for me. During seminary, I have enjoyed the fellowship of teachers and other students. I appreciate that our seminary is one, which, in the words of my late friend and classmate Kenny White, "loves Jesus." Two things I have learned at AFLTS are expressed in the words of a familiar hymn — "The wonders of His glorious love and my own worthlessness."

God has other plans for me beyond saving me. He has called me to serve Him, and I know I will be able to, by His grace and in the light of His mercy. Currently I am the intern at Trondhjem Lutheran in Volin, South Dakota with Pastor Mike Klenner as my advisor. My future plans are uncertain, but several recent trips to Russia lead me to believe that perhaps God will eventually open a door for me to serve there.



## Two AFLC-Canada members elected to parliament

Art Hanger, a member of Bethlehem Lutheran in Calgary, Alberta, was elected to his third term in the

301-member Canadian Parliament. Dave Anderson of Bethel Lutheran in Frontier, Saskatchewan, won his first seat in the parliament in the November 27, 2000 elections. A large majority elected both men.

**Pastor Collin Hauch**, Camrose, Alberta, suffered a serious snowmobile accident on December 26, 2000. He was riding alone around midnight when the accident occurred. In spite of two major breaks in his leg, he managed to get back on the snowmobile and return to his yard where he passed out and his wife found him. He is now recovering at home. Pastor Hauch serves Solid Rock Lutheran in Camrose.

**Pastor James Westgate**, Seattle, Washington, has accepted a call from St. John's Lutheran of Lovi, Cranberry Township, Pennsylvania. Pastor Westgate has served St. Matthias Lutheran since 1992. The Seattle-area congregation was organized in 1983 as part of the Lutherans Alert movement and affiliated with the AFLC in 1998. The congregation has voted to disband.

**Mesa, Arizona** — The Annual Winter Arizona Picnic is scheduled for 11 a.m. on February 27, 2001 in the community room at Luby's Cafeteria in Superstition Mall. Everyone is welcome. For more information call 480-854-0617 or 480-325-0364.

**Kenneth O. Eggen**, 72, died on November 24, 2000 in Roseau, Minnesota. Son of the late AFLC Pastor and Mrs. Morris Eggen, he served as a lay pastor in several northern Minnesota congregations, including Bethlehem of rural Greenbush. Among his survivors are sisters Ardys (Mrs. Merle) Knutson, Hawley, Minnesota, and Ida Marie (Mrs. Robert) Benson, Wanamingo, Minnesota. Blessed be his memory.

## The 2001 Free Lutheran Youth Convention

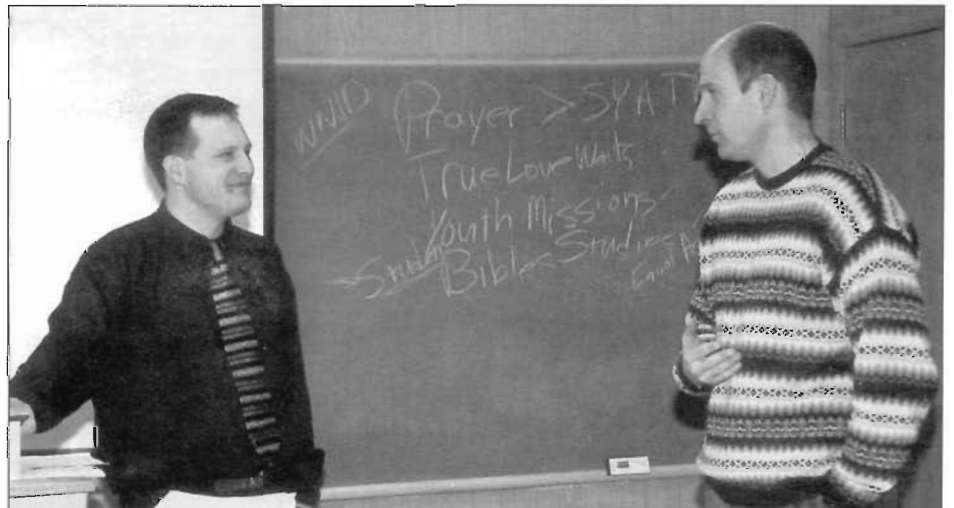
July 16-21

Estes Park, Colorado

\$50 registration due March 1, 2001

Write to: FLY 2001, 3110 East Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441

[www.aflc.org/youth](http://www.aflc.org/youth)



AFLC Youth Director Kevin Olson chatted with seminarian Brent Logeman during the seminary's January inter-term class on youth ministry.

**Lake Bronson, Minnesota** — Galilee Bible Camp was the site for the Northwest Minnesota District Fall Youth Retreat, November 17-18. The theme was "Shine for Him: Being a Light in a Darkened World." Seventy-four youth heard Pastors Richard Gunderson and Ken Thoreson share on the theme from Ephesians 5:8-9. The district youth are planning another retreat in Thief River Falls, February 18-19.

## Theological Round Table Discussion Scheduled

Proverbs 27:17 says, "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another." In that spirit, a Lutheran theological round table discussion will be held at Trinity Free Lutheran Church in Grand Forks, North Dakota on February 17, 2001. It will begin with breakfast (free-will offering) at the church at 8 a. m. The lunch break will be at a local restaurant. This discussion is open to laymen and pastors who have questions, a learning spirit, and a desire to be sharpened. Please bring a Bible and a question.

Sample questions might be:

In I Corinthians 13:13 it says, "But now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love." Why is love the greatest?

Hebrew 4:15b says, "but one (Christ) who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin." Since our temptations come from the devil, the world, and the flesh, how is it that Jesus could be tempted "in all things as we are" since His nature was not fallen?

Genesis 32:28 says, "And he said, 'Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel; for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed.'" What does it mean that he has prevailed?

What was the work of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament?

Trinity Lutheran is located at 3426 Chestnut St. in Grand Forks. For more information call Jon Dryburgh at 701-795-7971.



Pictured are the AFLC business office staff: Deb Nelson who has served five years as assistant bookkeeper; Andrew Anderson, AFLC bookkeeper since last spring; and Tara Cherney Hill, now in her second year as AFLC receptionist.

## Need evangelism tools for reaching people in cults or world religions?

### "Christianity, Cults & Religions"

This handy pamphlet compares the beliefs of 18 world religions and cults at a glance. \$3.95

### "How to Respond Series" equips

Christians with detailed information on contemporary non-Christian religious movements. Each booklet compares the teachings of these movements with Scripture and shows how to respond with a clear gospel presentation. The booklets are \$3.95 each and include titles on the topics of: The Cults, Jehovah's Witnesses, Judaism, The Latter Day Saints,

The Lodge, Muslims, The New Age Movement, and Satanism.

### "Christianity, Cults and World Religions"

This twelve-lesson Word-centered study with discussion questions gives an introduction to other beliefs, emphasizing the uniqueness of the Christian faith. Appropriate for high school and adult groups or personal study. \$6.50

Additional books, pamphlets, wall charts, and resources are also available from AFLC Parish Education at 763-545-5631.

## Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

### AFLC Benevolences (12 months) – January 1 - December 31, 2000

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN DECEMBER	TOTAL REC'D	% TOTAL
General Fund . . . . .	\$252,865.00	\$23,248.21	\$257,304.86	102
Seminary . . . . .	118,291.00	17,515.06	108,997.06	92
Bible School . . . . .	164,270.00	22,037.52	153,322.76	93
Home Missions . . . . .	262,125.00	19,474.26	237,365.16	91
World Missions . . . . .	239,968.00	36,108.77	186,876.65	78
Capital Investment . . . . .	15,226.00	1,043.89	10,931.53	72
Parish Education . . . . .	69,480.00	8,483.52	67,122.49	97
Church Extension . . . . .	25,285.00	958.45	21,577.54	85
<b>TOTALS . . . . .</b>	<b>\$1,147,510.00</b>	<b>128,869.68</b>	<b>1,043,498.05</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>TOTALS 1999 . . . . .</b>	<b>1,013,386.00</b>	<b>186,156.93</b>	<b>1,064,285.67</b>	<b>105</b>
<b>Goal 100%</b>				

The Evangelism department received \$9,423.51 in December.



## Having a healthy appetite

**S**ometimes people who are not feeling well do not have much interest in eating. Nothing seems to taste good. But they know they need to take in some nourishment. They eat because it is the right thing to do.

At times we feel that way spiritually. We may not have a great appetite for prayer, Bible reading or worship. It may not feel good at the moment. Other things may interest us more. Nevertheless, we need to do it. Our souls need to be fed.

A lack of appetite for physical food indicates some kind of problem exists that should be investigated. While attempts are made to determine the nature of the problem, nourishment still needs to be taken in.

It is similar when it comes to the issue of spiritual food. When a person who professes to know Jesus as Lord and Savior has no interest in talking with Him in prayer, reading from His Word or worshiping Him, some problem exists. The person needs to go to Jesus, the Great Physician, and ask for help. In the meantime, though, they still must take in spiritual nourishment even if they have little appetite to do so. At times we pray, we read the Bible, we worship, not because our feelings are driving us to do so, but because we know it is the right and necessary thing to do.

A lack of appetite is something that arises at times, both physically and spiritually. Even the strong and healthy must occasionally face it. While it is not totally strange and can be dealt with, it is not a desired permanent state of affairs.

Sadly, some pray regularly, read their Bible daily, attend worship services faithfully, but they have no real appetite. They have heard the instruction about what they should do. They have developed habits they wouldn't think of changing. But they are simply keeping traditions, going through the motions.

Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled" (Matthew 5:6, NIV). The Psalmist had that kind of hunger and thirst. He said, "O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water" (Psalm 63:1, NIV). He described his appetite for God: "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and

meet with God?" (Psalm 42:1, NIV).

Do you have an appetite, a thirst, a hunger for God? Do you have a sincere desire to talk with Him, learn from Him, be with Him and worship Him? Or are you doing all the right things, but not from the heart; simply doing them because you know it's the right thing to do?

Often our lack of appetite is related to a lack of confidence in what God will do when we read His Word, pray and worship. A person will not have a great interest in taking a certain kind of medicine if they have little hope that it will help them with their problem. Sometimes we treat the basics of soul care — Bible reading, prayer, daily repentance and worship — like some kind of medicine that we know the doctor has prescribed but we question its effectiveness. When that doubt exists it is likely we will take only minimal doses of the medicine, if we remember to take any at all.

God's Word is "useful," through it we are "thoroughly equipped for every good work" (II Timothy 3:16, 17, NIV). Jesus has promised, "I will do whatever you ask in my name" (John 14:13, NIV). The Bible says, "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective" (James 5:16, NIV).

We keep doing the basics of Bible reading, prayer and worship because we have been told to do so, and also because it works, it makes a difference.

One Easter season, in the congregation I was a part of, we began to pray for someone to come to know Jesus on Easter Sunday. I had to stop and ask myself one day, though, if I was praying for this because I knew it was the right thing to do, or did I really believe on a rapidly approaching Sunday our congregation would see someone begin a relationship with the Savior? I was convicted by James 1:6: "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." God wanted me to pray, not just out of habit, but with an expectation that He would work.

I want to do the right things with a healthy appetite for God and a confidence that He will keep His promises. I can develop a great appetite for the things I know taste good. Nothing tastes better than knowing Jesus. "Taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34:8, NIV).

—Pastor Craig Johnson

**"Nothing  
tastes  
better  
than  
knowing  
Jesus."**

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## BUILDING THE BASE

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# Revealing a secret

Consider what it would be like if God decided to hide everything about Himself from our view. If God did decide to hide Himself we poor creatures would not be able to discern even one thing about Him. In fact we must be clear, the reason we do know anything about the Almighty One, has to do precisely with His desire to make Himself known and not our ability to discover Him.

Scriptures teach two basic ways in which God reveals Himself to us. The Bible says that God uses His own creation to say some very profound things about Himself. King David comments on this when he writes: "The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge" (Psalm 19:1-2).

God uses not just the things which are around us which declare truth about Himself. He also has planted some very important knowledge about Himself deep within each one of us. Paul writes in his letter to the Romans, "... that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse" (Romans 1:18-20). God has made it clear within

each of us that He both exists, and has certain attributes.

This is an important point for all to understand. We should always approach people with an understanding that they already know that God is, and that He contains certain attributes. Make no mistake about it, even atheists and agnostics know down deep that God is!

Most theologians call what has been written about up to this point "general revelation." They call it this because the information that can be gleaned through the media of nature as well as directly from ourselves is "general" in its content, and it comes to this grand "general" audience known as humanity.

But our God did not stop there, rather He went on to give more specific information regarding just who He is, and what it is that He is doing. Thankfully the theologians don't attempt to confuse us here, and they simply call this second form of revelation "specific" or "special revelation."

This "special revelation" comes to us in the Word of God. God has sent it to us in the form of important historical events, divinely inspired prophetic utterances, and then finally He gives us the clearest picture of Himself when He sends us His own Son, Jesus. When Isaiah tells God's people that a child will be born whose name shall be Immanuel, (meaning, God with us) we begin to recognize how wonderful this special revelation becomes.

The writer of Hebrews tells us

about how God's revealing of Himself to man became clearer and clearer. "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power" (Hebrews 1:1-3).

People today often are looking to expand on God's declaration of Himself. They often wish to give new information which they believe God has released directly to, or through them. Looking for some new information about God is a fool's quest. Has God not spoken what He wished to speak when He sent forth His own Word in the flesh? God's revelation of Himself, "general" and "specific" is sufficient to make men and women wise unto salvation. Let us give thanks for His glorious secret revealed!



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