

# The Lutheran AMBASSADOR

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If I Be Lifted Up,  
I Will Draw All Men  
to Myself

# THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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## AN ENCOURAGING WORD

### Riding out the storm

Mark 4:35-41

#### The only game in town?

Discouragement is common to man. Winston Churchill said, "Depression has followed me like a black dog." The patriarch Job said, "Man is born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upward" (Job 5:7).

We saw a cartoon once of a young executive standing and gazing out the window of a high-rise office building, obviously very distressed. Standing alongside is a jovial, older man trying to cheer up his young friend by saying, "Sure I get tired of the rat race once in a while but it's the only game in town."

#### God has His game going, too!

Christians are not exempt from trouble. But God is with them through the trials, even using the trial for good.

Job's greatest struggle was not being able to see and understand what God was after in His testing. Job's friends did not see it either, but they gave lots of pat answers anyway!

Without trying to give any simple answers, here are a few thoughts from our text that might help you ride out the storms in your life today.

#### The storm was real (v. 37).

The disciples were fearful, exhausted and discouraged. "If we deny the pain we also deny the comfort God has for us." Whatever the storm in your life today, it is painful and pain hurts.

#### Safe in God's will (v. 35).

Jesus had said, "Let us go over to the other side." When we are in God's plan we are in His keeping. In a very real sense that ship couldn't sink. To be in God's will is a tolerably safe place to be!

#### Not alone (v. 36).

"They took Jesus, just as He

(already) was, in the boat." Job's testing must be felt to be real. There is something about the storm of discouragement that makes us feel alone. Jesus said, "Surely I am with you always."

#### Cared for in the storm.

The disciples did not think so. They asked Him, "Don't you care if we drown?" We are all apt to feel that way in the storm. The fact is, Jesus cares most then. He is "near to the brokenhearted" (Psalm 34:18 KJV).

#### He is always in control (v. 39),

So often our little ship seems out of control. "Peace, be still," Jesus said. When the disciples quit struggling and submitted to His control, there was peace. We too often are like the disciples and forget who Jesus is and what He can do!

#### He brought them through the storm (v. 39).

A young lawyer once became so depressed his friends feared for his life. During that time he wrote, "I am now the most miserable man alive. I am much afraid I will never get better." But he was wrong. He lived to go on and become one of America's greatest and best-loved presidents. His name was Abraham Lincoln.

Friend, take heart; you are not forsaken. The disciples were safely brought through the storm "and there was a great calm." The sun will shine again. In the meantime, the Lord will keep using you while "shaping" you right in the midst of the storm.



— by Pastor  
Martin Christensen  
Elbow,  
Saskatchewan



# Effective evangelism of youth: You can do it!

Seekers have little respect for weak Christians. Deep down they're looking for somebody—anybody—to step up and proclaim the truth and then to live it boldly. And I've just got to ask, why can't that be us?

— by Bill Hybels & Mark Mittelberg in  
*Becoming a Contagious Christian* (Zondervan, 1994)

In the light of statistics which show that the vast majority of people who come to a personal relationship with Christ do so by the age of twenty, evangelizing and discipling our youth is perhaps the most important ministry that any Christian could ever be involved in. This work can also be a very frustrating, frightening and difficult one for many believers who genuinely want to make an eternal impact on the lives of young people around them but just are not sure how to be most effective in this area of ministry.

It is important to understand no perfect program or approach exists for winning youth for Christ. God works in many ways through many different kinds of believers and approaches to capture the hearts of young people. Generally, my experience has been that the most effective way to influence youth for Christ is to invest time in the lives of these precious souls, demonstrating with words and actions that Jesus loves them and wants them to know His forgiveness and salvation. I have found this to be a most blessed, exciting and rewarding ministry as God has touched the hearts of many young people I have had the privilege of being with.

Effective evangelism of youth by a Christian individually or as a congregation requires three things:

## **I. Praying people.**

We must be quick to acknowledge that the work of transforming the hearts of youth and bringing them to a personal relationship with Jesus is the work of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God. Therefore we, as God's people, must commit ourselves to praying for the salvation of our youth as well as for the ministry of evangelism among them. Souls cannot be won to Christ except by God Himself. Prayer must be the foundation of any evangelistic effort we hope will be effective. The Apostle Paul, one of the most effective evangelists the world has ever known, recognized this truth and that is why he told the believers at Rome, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is for their (his countrymen) salvation" (Romans 10:1).

Dear believing friends, do we really want to see the youth of our homes, churches and communities reached for

Christ? Do we really want them to experience the blessing of being forgiven and having the assurance of salvation? Then the place to begin in our evangelistic effort is to commit ourselves to praying for their salvation and the ministry of God's Word in their lives. Without prayer, evangelistic programs are in vain because programs cannot change the hearts of our youth.

## II. Patient people.

One mistake Christians often make is to fail to wait for God to do the work of convicting and converting the hearts. So often in our sincere desire to spare our youth from a miserable life on this earth and a Christ-less eternity of suffering in hell, we rush them through the words of a prayer before God has been allowed to complete His work of showing them their sin and need of a Savior. The result is that for many youth, this "salvation experience" is meaningless and empty. Their hearts really have not been changed on the inside.

Christian friends, we need to remember that souls cannot be won to the Lord until God has broken through the hard heart of unbelief and created a new heart of faith. We must be patient as we recognize that God needs to work through His Word and by His Spirit to convert and capture their hearts.

## III. Proclaiming people.

If the youth in our homes, churches and communities are going to be reached with the saving gospel of the Lord Jesus they must first hear the Word of God proclaimed clearly. They need to hear about their sin, its condemning consequences and their need for a Savior. They need to hear about God's love for them and His gracious provision of forgiveness and eternal life through the finished work of Christ on the cross of Calvary. They also need to hear how this

gift of salvation can be personally experienced in their own lives. Paul recognized this need for the clear proclamation of the Word of God by believers in any effective work of evangelism when he wrote in Romans 10:13-15,17: "For whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. How then shall they call upon 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? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things.' So faith comes from hearing and hearing by the word of Christ."

I believe that along with prayer this is the biggest factor in determining whether our own personal or congregational evangelistic efforts to our youth will be effective. It is simply not enough for us just to want our young people to be reached with the gospel of Christ. We also need to speak to the youth within our circle of influence about their souls and their need for Jesus.

Let's encourage our young people to attend the regular services and special evangelistic services of the congregation. Let's help provide a way for them to attend the many camps, conferences, Bible studies and other outreaches where pastors and other Christian leaders will proclaim the Word and talk to them about their souls. But the truth is every Christian parent, grandparent and friend who is concerned about the salvation of the youth around them should lovingly and faithfully proclaim the law and the gospel so that these young people will be led to the place where they are certain about their relationship to Jesus and know their sins are forgiven. We must simply proclaim His Word in our homes, churches, school campuses, workplaces and neighborhoods.

One might ask, "Is it possible for me to be used? Can our congregation effectively evangelize youth?" Yes! Praying, patient and Word-proclaiming people will be used and blessed by God and will see Him win the hearts of countless young people in these final days of opportunity.



— by Rev. Brian Pearson  
St. Olaf Lutheran  
Montgomery, Illinois

## EVANGELISM BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aldrich, Joseph. *Life-Style Evangelism*. Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1981.

Good counsel provided on how to reach an unbelieving world by living the Christian life and earning the right to be heard.

Coleman, Robert E. *The Master Plan of Evangelism*. Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1980.

A classic treatment of evangelism and discipleship noting the methods Jesus used with His own disciples.

Eims, Leroy. *The Lost Art of Disciple Making*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978.

Practical, helpful material is presented concerning the basics of discipleship and the making of biblical disciples.

Green, Michael. *Evangelism Through the Local Church*. Nashville, TN: Oliver Nelson, 1992.

The cover says, "A comprehensive guide to all aspects of evangelism," and it is that, indeed. Over five hundred pages of material for both pastor and lay person. You won't always agree with the author but you will be encouraged for evangelistic ministry through the church.

Knock, A.W. *Personal Evangelism*. (Now out of print)

If you can find a copy of this book, first published in 1934, buy it and digest it! A wealth of excellent material is provided by the author, who formerly taught at The Lutheran Bible Institute, Minneapolis. This classic has gone through several editions — would that someone would reprint it today!

McCloskey, Mark. *Tell It Often — Tell It Well*. San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life Publishers, Inc., 1986.

McCloskey presents, in the words of Bill Bright, founder and president of Campus Crusade for Christ, "A well-reasoned, biblically based, rationale for sowing the seed of the gospel broadly and for initiative-taking evangelism." This is certainly one of the best books on evangelism available today.

Morgan, G. Campbell. *Evangelism*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976.

This reprint of a classic work by "the prince of Bible expositors" will stretch and challenge believers to make known the claims of Christ. Morgan writes, "There seems to be a prevalent idea that it is possible for a church to be evangelical and not evangelistic. It is not possible." Enough said!

Pippert, Rebecca M. *Out of the Saltshaker*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979.

The author points to evangelism as a lifestyle using the ministry of Christ as the model for evangelism. Much common sense encouragement is given for sharing the gospel.

Wisloff, Carl F. *Do The Work of an Evangelist*. Minneapolis, MN: AFLC Seminary Press, 1990.

This work, edited by Pastor Robert L. Lee and Dr. Francis Monseth, presents evangelism from the perspective of evangelical Lutheran Pietism. Wisloff's concerns for "experienced salvation" need to be considered by those who fervently desire spiritual life in their congregations. Highly recommended!

— by Dr. Steven C. Lombardo,  
Professor at AFLTS/AFLBS  
Minneapolis, Minnesota

**W**e are cognizant that the work of evangelization is God's work. We may plant, we may water, but it is God who gives the increase. Yet those who would plant and water must first have a desire to do so no matter what obstacles present themselves and no matter how enticing the temptation may be to sit back and do nothing.

**W**hile it is true that in baptism God adopts us as His children and, in one sense, we are always His children because He never turns His back on us, nevertheless, we can turn our backs on Him and renounce our adoption. ... In so doing we renounce the blessings inherent in our baptismal covenant and declare them null and void. Such a person is in need of having the evangel break in upon his/her life so that the covenant relationship with God initiated in baptism may be restored once again. It is not whether I was born again through baptismal regeneration when I was baptized, but whether I am living in that born-again relationship with Christ today.

Quotes from *The Evangelization of the Baptized* by Dr. Trygve R. Skarsten



# Cross-Cultural Evangelism

A Lutheran church in Minneapolis has hired a full-time Southeast Asian pastor to minister especially to his people in the city. Across the river in St. Paul, Minnesota, a Lutheran congregation has an English-Second Language School operated by volunteers who work with over one hundred students. In Atlanta, a congregation has started a fifteen minute worship service in the Cambodian language just prior to their regular Sunday worship service in English. That same Lutheran church provides Laotian Scripture readings and sermons and offers Bible studies throughout the week in three languages. I believe God desires for every person to be able to hear the Word in their primary language.

**Jesus's stories in Luke 15 tell us that you have never looked eyes with another human being who isn't valuable to God.**

— by Bill Hybels & Mark Mittelberg in  
*Becoming a Contagious Christian*  
(Zondervan, 1994)

## Reaching out to international students

Opportunities for evangelistic contacts abound! Most universities and community colleges throughout our nation have an international student organization or an inter-cultural activity program in which the public may participate. These afford many natural opportunities to befriend people from other countries or minorities. Invite an international student over for dinner or for a holiday. Your invitation will likely be eagerly accepted even though the individual may not know you that well! Our family has experienced this!

Countless high schools offer foreign exchange student programs in which you can be a one-time host family. What a way to live out your Christian testimony to that student!

## Reaching out to refugees and minorities

Over 100,000 refugees arrive in the U.S. annually. According to the 1993

## The story of God at work giving a small congregation a big vision

We had it good. We worship in a church building nestled among the wheat fields 12 miles north of Brockton, Montana. We finally had a pastor after a long time without one. Our sister congregation is 32 miles away and our pastor capably serves us.

We averaged forty at our worship services and were quite content within our little group of believers. Our church building had just been remodeled and it was time to just relax and enjoy our surroundings.

Then we prayed.

We asked God to give us a challenge to revive us. We never expected the answer He gave us.

We saw people around us hurting. A wife and mother sought to

statistics, 28,737 came to California; 5,172 to Washington State; 1,657 to Oregon; 2,645 to Minnesota; 3,800 to Illinois; 4,614 to Texas; and over 500 to the Dakotas and Montana. Countless first generation immigrants are everywhere! They do not all settle in the cities, but are scattered throughout the land. These statistics do not include the illegal immigrants who also need to hear the gospel! Contact your state offices or the Immigration and Refugee Resettlement Bureau, World Relief, or other similar groups and offer your help. These organizations are crying for volunteer help, regardless of denomination. The Immigration Service itself is not allowed to evangelize, but the sponsoring church can!

If you desire an outreach to blacks, then call a nearby Black church. They will give you many ideas on how to get involved and are often thrilled to be asked. The Lutheran churches I knew in Chicago were integrated or else the majority were black. Pastor Tim Hurley in

# Gathering Lost Sheep

have her husband killed; a husband kidnapped his estranged wife at gun point; a young father committed suicide; the list became endless.

God gave a burden. Have these people heard about the saving grace of Jesus Christ? Do they know that Jesus died for their sins? Had anyone witnessed to them?

What about the bachelor down the road? He occasionally comes to church but does he know God's Son died for him? Many people may go to a church but do not hear God's Word preached in its fullness. How about the neighbors who live closer to another church; do we need to witness to them?

Jesus was asked, "And who is our neighbor?" In Luke 10, Jesus answers by telling of the man going from Jerusalem to Jericho

who fell among robbers. Finally a Samaritan stopped to mercifully give aid. Jesus admonishes us today, "Go and do likewise."

We got involved. The mother who sought to have her husband killed was arrested and put in jail. She had reached the bottom. And now what do we do?

After much prayer, many tears, telephone calls, visits, hugs and many Bible verses shared; the Holy Spirit was doing His work. Myna Brooks' "The Touch of the Master's Hand" describes what happened. "And the Master comes and the foolish crowd never can quite understand the worth of a soul and the change that's wrought by the touch of the Master's hand."

A sinner was forgiven and a marriage restored! Oh what joy!

This new Christian witnessed patiently and gently to her hus-

band. How we rejoiced together as another lost sheep was brought into the fold! Together as a couple they reached out to a brother and brother-in-law and both accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior.

They are so enthusiastic in their new-found faith that they are witnessing everywhere they go. They have put us older Christians to shame in their endeavor to reach their lost friends, neighbors and relatives who are hurting so without the Lord.

Our little congregation has changed in these last months. God has brought revival.

Pray with us. Then let us be up and doing. We have today. Tomorrow may not come.

— by Mrs. Gladys Qualley  
Faith Lutheran  
Brockton, Montana

Bruce, South Dakota and Pastor Dale Finstrom in Glyndon, Minnesota are seeking ways to minister to the Hispanic people in their rural midwestern communities. Effective evangelistic outreach can be made to all these peoples in all parts of the U.S. It is a proven fact!

Start by targeting just one additional people group and read such books as *Building Bridges of Love* by Frank Obien of Campus Crusade for Christ and Frank Tillapaugh's *Unleashing the Church*. These will show how to target one group at a time for efficient evangelism.

## Resources are available

For a demographic analysis of your entire community to help you understand the people you may target, (including population by race within a three zip code or three census tract area) write Fuller Institute, PO Box 91990, Pasadena, CA 91109-1990 or call 1-800-423-4844. An additional three district area costs more. Ask for a "Data-Mirror" which comes with a computer-generated color map of your

area with a five-year population growth projection.

For these who speak little or no English, offer a Bible study in introductory English with 700 word New Testaments published by Campus Crusade for Christ. God gave me the privilege of evangelizing six Japanese students in this way. It works great! There are videos, evangelistic tracts and Bibles you may give free to contacts in your own community. Concordia Gospel Outreach, for example, offers tracts in 24 languages. International Lutheran Hour offers more evangelistic material. Write Sharon Poel-let, 753 Buckley Road, St. Louis, MO 63125 or ask for the Evangel-Gram, vol. 9, no. 4 (June, 1988) from the Board of Evangelism Services, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295 or call 1-314-965-9000.

— by Rev. Doug Wagley  
New Vision Lutheran  
Spokane, Washington

# Witnessing with Works

***Thou shalt love the Lord thy God  
with all thy heart,  
with all thy soul,  
and with all thy strength....  
Thou shalt love thy  
neighbor as thyself.***

Mark 12:23



Which is more important; spreading the news that Jesus died and rose again for the sins of the world or service to those in need? The answer is yes!

After working at an inner city mission and now on an Indian Reservation, I am still not sure I understand the relationship between the two completely. Through the maze of triumphs and failures in this type of ministry, I have stumbled toward the goal of evangelizing the needy.

## Two schools of thought

Initially it helps to understand the two schools of thought concerning ministry to the needy. In *Issues of Theological Conflict*, Richard J. Coleman comments, "The evangelical expects to find Jesus in a personal relationship, in an atmosphere of solitude and meditation, while the liberal looks for Christ in a social context of worldly involvement." Both liberals and evangelicals minister to the needy, but their starting point is different.

Evangelicals see faith as moving from the vertical to the horizontal. God reveals Himself to people through His Word and His Son. A personal relationship with God takes priority and results in outward good works. Ephesians 2:8-10 reminds us, "For by grace are ye saved through faith ... not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created unto good works." Society will change as people are changed. Love of God is the starting point for love of man.

Liberals see faith as moving from the horizontal to the vertical. People reach out to understand God and in selfless deeds for others and meet Jesus in other people. Yes, the Bible says, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these ... ye have done it unto me (Jesus)" (Matthew 25:40). This view sees a relationship with our neighbor as all important. The belief is people will change as society is changed. Therefore, Richard Coleman concludes, "reconciliation between man and man, group and group, race and race is the answer to society's problems and that can be accomplished without God." Being there for people is seen as the starting point of love for God.

Admittedly this oversimplifies both the evangelical and the liberal view for the sake of brevity in this article.



# Sharing the gospel with the needy

## Building bridges

It helps to understand that ministering to those in need is a process of breaking down barriers and building bridges. One who has been set free by Christ has an overwhelming love for the Savior and for the world for which the Savior died. It becomes the wish of God's child to paint a large and splendid picture of God. One is compelled to "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

Jesus Himself met the physical needs of those who heard Him preach (Matthew 14-15; John 6:12-14). He focused His ministry on the needy and they flocked to Him. He really cared.

Then comes the real challenge. Go beyond your comfort level when reaching out to the needy. Jesus' love presses us forward! God's power enables and protects us!

It is hard to speak God's message of salvation to someone you have just been unwilling to help. In extreme cases you may zip up the filthy pants of a drunk who cannot do it himself. You may clean a rest room so that the homeless will have a clean place to "rest." You may witness to an addict desperate for help, only to be told at the conclusion of your lengthy, sincere pleading, "I don't want to get that radical! I'll settle for a sandwich." Some requests you cannot meet and will be cursed.

There are a few practical guidelines in ministering to those in desperate need:

1. Almost never give cash to those in distress. Be assertive. Ask where you can pay the bill. Take a "fellowship trip" to the grocery store, gas station or auto parts store.

2. Always be wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove. Check out hard luck stories. More money than you will ever know goes to pay rent on vacant lots, to buy another bottle, or to attend a living relative's funeral.

3. Do not be afraid to say a kind but firm, "I'm sorry, but I cannot help." Pastors and Christian workers will benefit from clear guidelines from their boards or



organizations. It is helpful to be able to say, "Our organization will not allow me to ...." One can always use personal funds in a pinch.

4. Always give a gospel tract or a personal witness.

Yes, in our efforts to evangelize and help those in need we will often fail. However, Scripture encourages us to press on, though we may stumble, toward the goal of evangelizing the needy. Forgetting those things which are behind; I press on.



— by Pastor Michael Nelson  
Elbow Lake, Minnesota

*Michael Nelson grew up in Eden Prairie, Minnesota and attended King of Glory Lutheran Church. He graduated from Bob Jones University before attending the AFLC seminary. He worked at the Marie Sandvik Center in downtown Minneapolis before serving as the licensed pastor of Bethel Lutheran Mission, an outreach on the White Earth Indian Reservation in northern Minnesota. He and his wife, Carol, are awaiting the arrival of their first child.*

# Witness while you work

Being an  
evangelist  
in the  
workplace

**T**here was a young woman I will call Mary, who shared my office space. We talked and worked together over a period of time. Finally one night she asked, "How can I know the will of God for my life?" For forty-five minutes after work that night, I shared with her the gospel of Jesus Christ and God's plan of salvation for her.

There was another co-worker I will call Steve. His father was an evangelist in North Dakota. Steve was three years old when his father died, leaving the family to try to make ends meet. Steve became bitter against the Lord because the body of Christ did not help the family as they could have during their difficult loss. Consequently all the children were separated and sent to foster homes. Steve often called me before 6:00 A. M. to set up breakfast meetings to share the Word with him and talk about the struggles in his heart.

Another day one of my supervisors came into my office and shut the door and said, "Curt, I have a problem. I need some counsel because I am being tempted to have an affair." We talked and I shared from the Word of God and he left encouraged.

By now you may be wondering how a pastor can write an article on evangelism in the workplace? Early in 1994, I resigned from my parish in St. Cloud, Minnesota. Rather than taking a call to another parish, I had asked God for a break from that type of ministry. God gave me the opportunity to work for eight months as a Structural Damage Adjuster. I worked twelve-hour days writing damage estimates for residential homes in the San Fernando Valley following the January 17, California earthquake.

## Seeing the mission field at work

Although God allowed me to take a break from serving a congregation, He taught me lessons in evangelizing in the workplace. I experienced a refresher

course in what most lay people go through everyday. The worldly language, the crude behavior and the politics of getting ahead gave me a renewed awareness of the difficulty many face in seeking to live the Christian life and to share their faith with co-workers on the job. I saw the "fields white unto harvest" as I experienced the mission field in the office or work site.

As a pastor, I saw the needs of the people in a new way. Ministering to people was not just numbers, programs and buildings. Rather most people today simply are looking for someone to listen, to care, to accept them and to love them with a Christ-like love.

## Listening with love

Effective evangelism in the workplace requires being a good listener. Give co-workers your undivided attention and show them that you care. Too often Christians talk too quickly and freely give what is thought to be solutions without carefully listening and letting others talk and ask questions.

Care and acceptance are desperately needed. The last thing people want is to be judged or rejected for who or what they are. When we as believers accept others, it allows God to convict or change their hearts. It is not our job to change people's hearts. We are called to accept them and to care for them (Romans 15:7). When the opportunity comes to share the gospel, the Holy Spirit will have already prepared their hearts to receive our witness.

Genuine love for people can only come from the Lord. If others do not see our love, it will be impossible for us to be an effective witness. I John 4:11 states, "Since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." Romans 5:8 says, "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Yes, it is not always easy. It takes a commitment of time and energy to love.

Serving as a pastor is indeed a blessed calling, but I greatly enjoyed ministering as a layman in the workplace. The opportunities that God gave me to share my faith were unlimited! They are for **you** too! When Jesus said that the "fields are white unto harvest," He was speaking of the places where you and I live and work!



— by Rev. Curt Emerson  
Shepherd's Church of the Valley  
Murrieta, California

# God is at work

**A testimony of what God has done through people  
who have gone out sharing the good news.**

**T**here were ten to twelve people who began training in the Evangelism Explosion program in October, 1993. Pastor John Abel spent a few days training us in our congregation here at Living Word Lutheran in Vernon, British Columbia.

We enthusiastically began our visitations then winter arrived and we stopped. In the spring we decided to change the format and go door-to-door asking people if they would answer the assurance questionnaire.

We discovered that people in less affluent areas were more open to the gospel. All people have the same spiritual need by God's standard, but it seemed the ones who knew they didn't have it together were more open to hear what we had to say.

Michelle Thiel returned home last summer from college and joined our team. She was excited! "I enjoy witnessing and the opportunity to do it in my home town is wonderful. The first few times I went on visitation, I stayed in the vehicle and prayed. Then finally I was able to go to the trailers for door-to-door evangelism. Acts 5:42 says the apostles 'Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.'"

Our experiences vary with each home we visit. After introducing ourselves and making conversation about their family and activities, we would ask them if they had a church background. According to their response we would either continue in asking about their spiritual life or simply say, "Thank you, have a nice evening." We followed the guidance of the Holy

Spirit (John 3:8).

One lady we talked to had a sick husband. When we returned to her home a couple weeks later, she told us he had passed away. In the course of our visits, we noticed that her flower gardens were full of weeds. She mentioned that it was her husband who had gardened and she didn't care to weed. We asked her if she would like us to weed her garden and we did. This was the beginning of an idea to meet not only people's spiritual needs but also some of their physical needs as well.

Now when we visit people, we ask them if they have anything they would like us to pray about. We have received good responses. The Lord is giving us many people to pray for and we give Him all the glory for the work He is doing.

It is interesting to note that at this time, God is bringing new visitors into our congregation but not the ones we have specifically met while on Evangelism Explosion visits. We believe God is rewarding our faithfulness in reaching out to others in need.

What an opportunity it is to share hope with these people. Christ is the answer! He alone can mend broken hearts. He restores those who have wandered away from the Church. He binds the enemy and sets the captives free. He is our Healer. He is our Father. Join us in praying that He will open peoples hearts to the Good News! God is faithful. People will see our good works and glorify the Lord who is in heaven.

— by Guy McGunigal and  
Michelle Thiel  
Living Word Lutheran

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God built diversity into the fabric of His body of believers. And until we realize that, we'll find ourselves needlessly imitating each other's outreach efforts, wastefully duplicating some approaches while harmfully squelching others.

— by Bill Hybels & Mark Mittelberg in  
*Becoming a Contagious Christian* (Zondervan, 1994)

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## Rev. Jerry Holmaas

I am a native of Newfolden, Minnesota, the son of Stan and Ruby Holmaas. My dad was a long-time member of the AFLC Schools' Board of Trustees. My spiritual formation took place primarily in my home as my parents gave me a wonderful example of living Christianity. They were diligent to involve me in my congregation (Westaker Free Lutheran) as well as Galilee Bible Camp and other Christian activities. I thank God for the many Christians He used to guide me in my formative years. I thank Him, too, that I early came to conscious awareness of my sin and His grace and that He has been faithful to keep me in fellowship with Him to this day.

After graduation from high school in 1970, I attended AFLBS for two years. During the second year, a girl from our parish youth group came to AFLBS as well. Her name was Ruth Gunderson from Strandquist, Minnesota. She became my wife in 1974. In 1986, God blessed us with our son Luke. I am deeply grateful for the incredible gifts God has given me in my wife and son.

My wife earned her Ph. T. (putting husband through) degree as she worked as an L.P.N. while I furthered my education at Moorhead State University (B.A. in

## CAMPUS

### Meet the new AFLC Schools faculty members

History); Association Free Lutheran Seminary, Wheaton College Graduate School (M.A. in Theological Studies - Old Testament); and Lutheran Brethren Seminary (M. Div.).

Following seminary graduation, I taught New Testament Greek for one year. Since then, I have served congregations in Minnesota, South Dakota and Illinois. Since 1989, I have served as pastor of Maranatha Free Lutheran in Chassell, Michigan.

My family and I ask for the prayers of the AFLC as we prepare for a change in the ministry to which God has called us. As a pastor, my delight has been to study and teach God's Word. In accepting the call of the Board of Trustees to serve as teacher in our Schools, I keenly sense the joyous privilege and sober responsibility that is mine! In my ministry as a teacher, it is my earnest

desire that God will enable me to communicate the truths of His Word in such a way that the Old Testament may become more loved by each of my students.

## Rev. Jerry Moan

When I was in the fourth grade in McIntosh, Minnesota, my teacher, Mrs. Thompson, gave the class a writing assignment. She asked us to write about what we planned to do after graduating from high school. I completely forgot about the assignment and what I had written.

On our graduation day, Mrs. Thompson congratulated each one of us with a piece of paper. She was now finally returning that writing assignment! I have saved that precious memento to this day. **As a fourth grader, I had written about my desire to go to Bible School.** How I thank God that is just what I did!

Why? Because it was at Bible School that I was grounded in the faith which I had seen modeled by my parents, Morris and Audrey Moan. I was nurtured in the same truth which I had been taught by faithful pastors and Sunday school teachers at Trinity Lutheran church. At AFLBS we were equipped to share our faith in Jesus Christ and given practical opportunities to do it! I thank God that it was at Bible School I met the woman who would become my wife, Rebecca Wall. We traveled together on the 1980 Ambassador Gospel team.

My preparations at AFLTS followed my graduation from St. Paul Bible College (now Crown College). How thankful I am, too, for the godly instruction I received during my seminary years, beginning in 1984. Seminary studies developed within me a heart for the ministry to which the Lord has called me. The work for my master's degree was completed in the early part of 1993.



Rev. Jerry Holmaas, Ruth and eight year-old Luke. The Holmaas family expects to move to the Twin Cities area by the first of May.

Amazingly, it has been almost seven years since I began serving Bethel Free Lutheran in Minot, North Dakota. What loving and supportive friends these people have been to us! During our years here God has also blessed our home with three sons: Jesse, Jonathan and Seth. Lord willing, they represent the AFLBS class of 2010, 2012 and 2015 respectively!

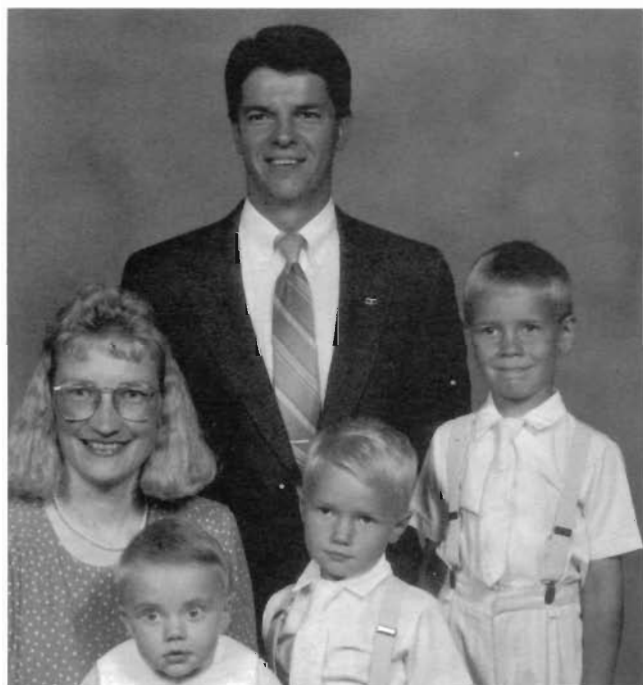
I count it a privilege both to have attended and to promote our Bible School and Seminary. Now it is an honor to be coming back. I look forward to teaching courses in the New Testament at our Schools. As I shared with my con-

gregation here in Minot the challenge and opportunity God has set before me, it was a joy (in spite of the tears) to meet our young people at the door and tell them, **"I hope I can be your teacher at Bible School one day!"**

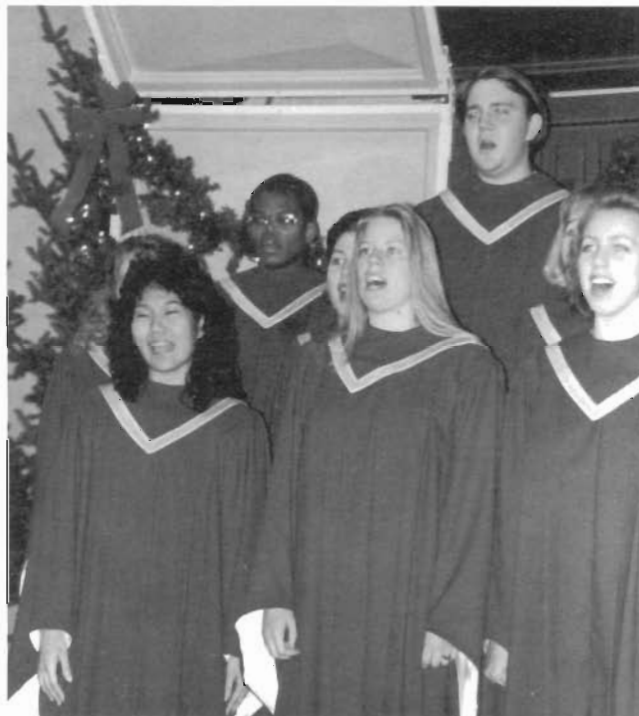
I pray that by God's grace our Schools will remain committed to the unchanging truth of the Word of God. The Scripture which has been a special comfort to me these days is found in Hosea 14:8, where our Lord reminds us, "Your fruitfulness comes from Me." Apart from Christ, I can do nothing! Please pray for me that I might be faithful.



Rachel Fugleberg played for the offertory.



Rev. Jerry Moan, Rebecca and sons, Jesse, Jonathan and Seth. The Moans expect to move the Twin City area this summer.



The Choral Club was directed by Mrs. Marian Christopherson.



AFLBS Dean Donald Greven.



Nicole Clemens, one of the percussionists.

## 1994 AFLC Schools Christmas Concert

continued on next page





The choirs gathered for prayer before the concert.



Mr. Jerry Nelson directed the Concert Choir.



Rev. Jim Johnson, Osseo, Minnesota, was the narrator.



More than forty people from the congregation joined with the AFLBS choirs in singing Handel's Hallelujah Chorus. A standing-room-only crowd once again filled the campus chapel for the annual Christmas concert on December 11, 1994.

**High School students  
come be our guest  
at Campus Days,  
March 3-5, 1995!**

Call us at (612) 544-9501



The audience joined in singing several Christmas hymns.



The Seminary Chorus along with AFLBS Instrumental Ensembles completed this year's concert under the theme, "Go Tell It on the Mountain."

# **I Enjoy Being a Woman**

Once a woman has acknowledged her true nature and has personally admitted her need, she recognizes that her only basis for acceptance is in Christ. She spends concentrated time in the Word of God, eagerly seeks to obey Him, and genuinely enjoys being God's child. As her desire to please God increases, her purpose in life and individual goals become molded according to God's Word.

## **I Enjoy Being God's Creation**

### **I. A specific creation for a specific purpose.**

1. "In the beginning..." The logical starting point in our discovery must be creation. Why did God create woman?

Genesis 1:26-27 \_\_\_\_\_

Isaiah 64:8 \_\_\_\_\_

2. Genesis 2:18-22 examines the creation in more detail.  
For what purpose was woman created? I Corinthians 11:7-9

**\* True personal fulfillment begins here.**

It is an awesome thought that man was not complete in himself. God saw that man needed woman. The Amplified Bible gives clarification to "a help meet" (note these are two words, not one noun) by explaining that the woman was suited for, adapted to - completing the man.

3. Because of the Fall, this perfect design did not last. Consequently, fulfilling our role does not come naturally. God gave specific instructions for Christian women in Titus 2:3b-5.

Is seeking God's will as Christian women a serious responsibility?

4. God created male and female with different roles, responses and responsibilities. List and discuss some obvious differences of which you are casually aware: physically, mentally, emotionally or spiritually.

## II. Universal purposes.

※ Reasons for women's creation are clearly defined in Scripture. They apply to all women and they help us visualize God's total plan for us. Concurring with His "perfectly fitted together" plan enables us to trustingly accept His specific instructions.

5. What was God's main purpose in creating us? Revelation 4:11 (KJV)
6. Sin made it impossible for us to fulfill our created purpose. No longer could we bring God pleasure in our fallen state. Through Christ God had one theme in mind for our existence.

II Thessalonians 1:10-12 \_\_\_\_\_

7. What truly brings glory to God?

Ephesians 2:10 \_\_\_\_\_

8. How can I do this?

Romans 6:13 \_\_\_\_\_

## III. Me - an individual.

※ In order to thoroughly enjoy being God's creation, I must wholeheartedly enjoy being me - a unique creation.

9. God is glorified when I am content and happy with the person He made me. Find two facts to support this.

Matthew 22:37-39 \_\_\_\_\_

II Corinthians 10:12 \_\_\_\_\_

10. Our Creator is not a selfish Sovereign who pushes us around for His entertainment. Rather, what does Jeremiah 29:11 say?

11. It may be easier to accept myself when I realize that God is still doing a creative work within me. What is that work?

II Corinthians 3:18 \_\_\_\_\_

12. We enjoy hearing someone say about our child: "She looks just like her mother." So it pleases God when we take on the characteristics of His Son. How can this be done?

Ephesians 4:22-24 \_\_\_\_\_

Romans 12:2 \_\_\_\_\_

13. Real beauty starts on the inside. What I think determines what I am and what I do. Notice the feminine qualities precious in God's sight in I Peter 3:4-5.

14. How are you encouraged by God's creative work in you as you read how God works in Isaiah 28:9-10?

15. We do not wait for perfect maturity to be effective servants for the Lord. I Corinthians 7:7 and I Timothy 4:14.

✱ We will enjoy being His creation if we are in harmony with His original plan and purpose for us; then God is glorified!

Close the lesson by singing, "Oh, To Be Like Thee."

Next month: I Enjoy Being a Single Woman.

# I enjoy being God's child

I have always known that I was loved by my parents. My family accepted me and loved me as I was; weak or strong.

While very young, I was ill and bedfast for a period of eight months. I required much work and effort to care for my daily needs during that difficult time. Yet my mother, father and sister did this with a loving and caring spirit. As they prayed with me daily for my healing, I grew stronger in body and in spirit. Oh how I valued their love and care!

My parents also cared for me spiritually. They taught me that Christ died for my sins. They read and taught God's Word to me and took me to church. Through their example, I learned to trust in God for daily needs. When my father became ill and later died, I learned from my mother how the Holy Spirit provides strength and comfort to continue in hard times.

We all have access to a family called the family of God who loves and cares for us, whether we are weak or strong. Jesus Christ is the center of that family and He is able to give all that we daily need.

When we are a part of God's family, we have a responsibility to

## FOR WOMEN

nurture the members. Just as my family taught me, we in Christ's family need to encourage one another to be in the Word, to pray, to rely on the Holy Spirit for guidance and to reach out to others who need Jesus as Savior.

Colossians 3:1 says, "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God" (RSV). As I continue to grow as God's child, I need to increase my "seeking the things that are above." I cannot learn of God's will from human sources, but from His Holy Word! I need to allow Jesus Christ to be my wisdom in making daily decisions. Pray for me! I will also pray for you as we together continue in our growth as God's children.

— by Jeanette Larson

*Jeanette is a member of Christ the King Lutheran Church in Pipestone, Minnesota. She is a past president of her congregation's WMF and is currently teaching a children's class on Wednesday evenings and a Christian parenting class for adults on Sundays with her husband, Bob. She is a special education teacher at Pipestone Elementary School.*

# Where does our money go?

As women of the AFLC we have a desire and a responsibility to contribute to the financial needs of our church body. In order to do this systematically, a budget is approved annually at the Women's Missionary Federation (WMF) National Convention. The budget is broken into 12 monthly challenges that are called WMF Projects.

The emphasis for January is Home Missions. We pledged \$12,000 annually toward the development of new AFLC congregations.

Home Missions is an exciting part of the AFLC. Currently we are happy to help support one of the newest Home Mission congregations in Loveland, Colorado. The Lutheran Church of Hope meets weekly in the chapel of a funeral home. They are in the process of calling a pastor. Funds to help pay salary and church expenses will be provided by Home Missions. We look forward to having women of the Lutheran Church of Hope be a part of our national WMF!

Contributions made to the WMF in February are for AFLC Capital Investments which aids in the maintenance of the buildings and grounds at the AFLC headquarters in Minneapolis. WMFs together pledge \$5,000 annually toward those expenses.

Each WMF is encouraged to contribute to the work of our AFLC by sending monthly offerings to the National Treasurer, Jan Preitauer, Route 1, Box 245, Fergus Falls, MN 56537.

"When we see ourselves as women linked together by purpose, we catch a glimpse of strength greater than that when we stand alone.

— President's Report  
1994 Annual Convention

## 1994-95 WMF National officers

(Row 1) Bonnie West; Dee Berkas, president; Cheryl Skordahl.

(Row 2) Helen Knapp; Karen Knudsvig, executive director; and Jan Preitauer.





# AFLC Directory

January 1995

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## Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

### AFLC Benevolences - January 1 - November 30, 1994

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN NOVEMBER	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund . . . . .	\$256,591.00	\$22,754.83	\$195,166.35	76
Seminary . . . . .	148,000.00	7,246.14	101,799.16	69
Bible School . . . . .	232,562.00	14,867.16	134,172.21	58
Home Missions. . . . .	319,086.00	21,712.61	203,883.91	64
World Missions. . . . .	342,788.00	28,514.1	267,374.75	78
Capital Investment . . .	37,395.00	933.84	21,048.09	56
Parish Education . . .	67,868.00	2,765.85	35,587.32	52
ARC . . . . .	8,600.00	398.75	6,428.57	75
Church Extension . . .	10,000.00	815.72	9,459.72	95
<b>TOTALS . . . . .</b>	<b>\$1,422,890.00</b>	<b>\$100,008.00</b>	<b>\$974,912.06</b>	<b>69</b>
1993 Goal 100% . . . . .	\$1,347,747.00	\$244,639.48	\$1,120,593.47	91
1994 Goal 92%				

**Weslaco, Texas** - Faith Lutheran goes to a two-service schedule of Sunday mornings during December through March. Faith Lutheran is the U.S.A.-AFLC's most southern congregation. Weslaco is located between Brownsville and McAllen, Texas.

**Bill and Rachel (Mundfrom) Chesley**, are in Deerfield, Illinois where Bill is studying at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in preparation for Bible translation among the Migaami People in Chad, Africa. The Chesleys are with Wycliffe Bible Translators.

## A note from the editor

*The Lutheran Ambassador* would like to thank those who have faithfully served as column writers for the past six months. Devotional meditations in the "Light on the Way" column have been shared by Odell Kittleson and instruction and encouragement in living the Christian life has been shared in the "Last Word" column by Rev. Todd Olson. Thank you men for sharing with us from God's Word!

You most likely already have noticed this issue looks a little different from the last one. With this issue we are introducing a change in the cover style as well as the column headlines. The column titles are changed as well. The inside front cover will now be called "An Encouraging Word." The writer who will, for the first half of the year, bring us encouragement from God's Word in that space will be Pastor Martin Christensen of Elbow, Saskatchewan. The column on the back page of

the magazine will alternate between "Building the Base," instruction in the basics of the Christian faith, and "Something to Share," encouragement and training in being a witness for Jesus. The first writers for those columns will be Pastors Don Voorhees of Dannebrog, Nebraska for "Building the Base" and Jerry Moan of Minot, North Dakota but soon to be of the AFLC Schools for "Something to Share." We look forward to what God will teach us through these men.

Another regular column will be "News You Can Use," news items related to church life which are gathered from the Evangelical Press News Service.

With this issue we begin our larger but not as frequent issues. The magazine will be published 16 times a year with ten of the issues being 24 pages in length.

We also wish to remind our readers of the recent introduction of a group rate subscription. A subscription that is sent in as part of a congregational group is \$15 a year. Those that are sent in individually are \$16 a year.

We hope these changes can help us to better serve God and His Church as we share His unchanging and powerful Word. Any input readers might have regarding the magazine is always welcome.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

To the Editor:

I want to express my thanks and appreciation to the Editor, Pastor Craig Johnson for the article "A Calling from God" in *The Lutheran Ambassador*, October 18, 1994.

I found no peace in any other work until I was back at Augsburg preparing for the ministry.

We are sorry whenever we hear of friction existing in our Association and are praying for a **oneness of spirit**.

I am 92 years of age and do not know some of the younger pastors of our Association, but I do know Pastor and President Bob Lee and Pastor and Editor Craig

Johnson, whom I look upon as fine Christian men and very capable of the positions they hold.

I have known Bob Lee since his college days when he helped to fill in at the three-point Hatton, North Dakota parish which we came to serve.

I had the privilege of baptizing Craig Johnson as a baby while I was serving here in Astoria as Pastor of Bethany Lutheran Church. I believe Craig has done a very good job as Editor of the *Ambassador* and am happy to speak a good word for both of these men.

Rev. Hans Tollefson  
Astoria, Oregon

**Matt Greven**, now of Lake Stevens, Washington, has completed his training with Tentmakers and is serving as pastoral assistant at Elim Lutheran. Matt was trained under the leadership of AFLC pastor, Richard Anderson, Lakeville, Minnesota, who works full-time with the ministry of Tentmakers.

**Grand Forks, North Dakota** — thirteen new members were recently received into membership at Trinity Lutheran.

**Upper Midwest Area Mid-Winter Conference** will be February 3-4, 1995, at Faith Free Lutheran in Detroit Lakes, Minnesota. The featured speaker is Rev. Don Richman, director of East European Missions Network based in Bloomington, Minnesota. The sessions begin on Friday evening and continue through Saturday afternoon.

**Western North Dakota-Eastern Montana Mid-Winter Bible Conference** will be February 3-5, at Emmanuel Free Lutheran in Williston. The evening speaker is Rev. Bruce Dalager, Grand Forks, North Dakota and the Bible teacher is Rev. Rodney Johnson of Stanley, North Dakota. The WMF Luncheon is at noon on Saturday and the Men's Fellowship Supper is Saturday evening.

**Laveen, Arizona** — On January 8, Rev. Robert D. Giles

## PEOPLE AND PLACES

began adult Bible study classes at his home for anyone interested. He will also meet for Bible studies or to share information on starting a new AFLC congregation with any interested group in the central Arizona area. Write to Pastor Giles at 4735 West Olney Ave., Laveen, AZ 85339 or call (602) 237-3916.

**Rev. Charles and Joyce Knapp**, Karlstad, Minnesota, are giving concerts on their Paraguayan harps, a rare instrument in the United States. The Knapps, former AFLC missionaries to Paraguay, learned to play the instruments while in that South American country. The unique challenge in playing the harps is that there is no printed music and the Paraguayan songs are learned from careful watching and listening to a native artist perform, each of whom has his/her own style. Pastor Knapp is serving Hegland Free Lutheran congregation.

## Two deaths noted

**Diane Moland**, St. Paul, Minnesota and a 1974 AFLBS graduate, passed away on December 23, 1994 after a lengthy battle with cancer. She is the sister of AFLC vice president, Rev. Kenneth Moland, Kirkland, Washington.

**Truman Rolf**, 70, died suddenly at his home on December 27, 1994. Funeral services were held on December 31, at Trinity Lutheran Church in McIntosh, Minnesota where he had been a long-time faithful member. Mr. Rolf had served on the AFLC's Mission Corporation until his term expired in 1994.

## AFLC World Missions news

**Missions Director, Eugene Enderlein and President Robert Lee**, left Minneapolis on January 7, 1995 to attend the 30th Anniversary services of Triumph Lutheran Church in Nogales, Arizona. They then traveled into Mexico where they visited the **Gabriel Mercados** and their work in Obregon. They returned to Nogales on January 12, where they met with **Missionaries Dick and Clara Gunderson**. The Gundersons are soon to depart for Puebla, a city southeast of Mexico City, where they will begin work through the World Mission Prayer League. Pastors Lee and Enderlein are tentatively scheduled to leave for India on January 31, for a 2-3 week mission trip.

**The ARCA** outside of Curitiba, Brazil is the new home for short-term mission work for **Becky Monseth**, Rogers, Minnesota. She left Minneapolis on December 26, 1994 for three months of ministry with **Missionaries Paul and Becky Abel**. Also at the end of December, **Terry and Karey (Torkelson) Hoff**, of Landstad Lutheran near Perley, Minnesota left their farm for 6-8 weeks of work with the missionaries in Brazil. Retired missionaries, **George and Helen Knapp**, Willmar, Minnesota are in Brazil this month where they will attend the 25th Annual WMF Convention along with the 29th Brazil Annual Conference at Campo Mourao on January 20-22.



**Lake Stevens, Washington** - Sixty-five youth from seven area AFLC congregations took part in "One Awesome Night" at Elim Lutheran Church on November 10-11, 1994. Pictured are the teens who were challenged to choose and live for the Lord. The lock-in included swimming, basketball, pizza, a 20-foot banana split and a birthday cake for Martin Luther's 511th birthday.

## New Lutheran sexuality statement more acceptable to conservatives

**Minneapolis, Minn.** — Leaders of the Twin Cities-based Great Commission Network, a voice for conservative reform within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), say the new "working draft statement" on human sexuality issued by the church is a great improvement. The earlier statement was condemned by critics who said it condoned homosexuality and downplayed the significance of marriage.

"The greatest thing that came out of that is the fact that the church stood up and refused to buy into the teachings of a radical minority," said the Rev. Roland Wells, vice president of the Great Commission Network. He explained, "The great silent center of the ELCA—and there are faithful Christians in every Lutheran congregation—stood up and said, 'This is not what my Bible says.'"

The new 21-page statement says, "Marriage is the context for mature sexual involvement, prior to which this church affirms and encourages sexual abstinence." The statement says the church teaches that relationships involving "sexual activity outside of marriage are sinful" and says that such activity "belongs within the mature and committed relationship of marriage."

The new statement acknowledges that the church traditionally regards homosexual activity as sinful, and cites Scriptural support for this position. But it also blames opposition to homosexuals in the church on "fear," "ignorance," "prejudice and hatred," and presents arguments for abandoning the church's traditional teaching.

The section on homosexuality closes by rejecting the idea that the church should make a deci-

## NEWS YOU CAN USE

sion at this time, since such a decision would be "divisive." The deadline for comment on the statement is June 30, 1995, making consideration of the statement at the August, 1995 ELCA Assembly very unlikely.

"It's not a perfect statement," concedes Wells. "Ultimately at the end it says, 'but not everybody sees things this way, and we need to keep dialoguing.' My concern is that we'll be like a sick family system where we're going to stuff this inside and pretend there's no problem until it festers and causes deeper problems."

Liberal Lutherans attending a "Call to Faithfulness" conference at Central Lutheran Church in Minneapolis last week bemoaned the conservative direction taken by the church. "They seem to feel they've lost the momentum in the ELCA," said a conservative pastor who attended.

"They feel frustrated with the course of action the church has chosen, which is basically to do nothing for the next five years," continued the pastor. "No action is basically a victory for the conservatives, but the conservatives aren't satisfied with that either. The two groups are polar opposites, and are equally frustrated. One or the other of us is destined to be very disappointed, and as our church tries to run down the middle of the road, both sides are going to be very frustrated. One way or the other the ELCA has to make up its mind which way it's going to go, so those of us who find ourselves in disagreement can take a different path."

**Lake Charles, La.** — The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) is going to court in an effort to stop City Court Judge Thomas Quirk from offering church attendance as an alternative sentence for small offenses.

The ACLU, which says the alternative sentence violates separation of church and state, is intervening in the case of Gregory Thompson, who pleaded no-contest to drunken driving and was sentenced to attend church once a week for a year. The Lake Charles, Louisiana judge says he's probably given 350 such sentences during the past three years. "I'm not going to stop until the courts tell me," says Quirk, who notes that unlike jail, sending a criminal to church costs the taxpayers nothing, and keeps minor offenders from mixing with more serious criminals.

**Washington, D.C.** — Churchgoing has declined slightly among all age groups except senior citizens, according to Roper Starch Worldwide. The polling agency found that 28 percent of those who said they attended a religious service in the previous week were age 60 or older, up five percent from 1976. Despite media predictions of an upsurge in baby boomer church attendance, only 38 percent of Americans between ages 30 and 44 said they attended church during the previous week, down from 42 percent in 1976. Churchgoing among younger adults, ages 18 to 29, fell from 35 percent in 1976 to 27 percent in 1994. The study also found that women are more likely to be churchgoers than men. Also professionals, managers and other white-collar workers are more likely to attend church than blue-collar workers.

(The above stories are used with the permission of the Evangelical Press News Service)

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## What kind of friends do you have?

## EDITORIALS

The student was in his home church, being asked about his experiences while away at college. "Do you have some good Christian friends?" the questioner wondered. That was most certainly an important issue. The student would not grow as a Christian if he did not have regular contact with other Christians. Another question, however, which was also important but was not asked was, "Do you have any non-Christian friends?"

The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association estimates that 80 percent of the unchurched who respond to an invitation at a crusade were brought personally by someone else. Advertising campaigns can have some effectiveness but it is no comparison to the power of invitations coming out of personal relationships. Yet, the sad truth is, according to Joe Aldrich in his book *Lifestyle Evangelism*, "after knowing the Lord two years, the average Christian has no significant relationships with non-Christians."

If we are going to lead people into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ we need to first of all develop a relationship with them ourselves. This involves spending time with them, listening to them, getting to know them and letting them get to know us. It means working on communicating not just in "church talk," but in ways that the unchurched people can understand. It requires, as any relationship does, a commitment of time and energy.

One of the most persistent complaints against Jesus we find in the Gospels is the claim that He was friends with the wrong kind of people. He spent time with those who were not known as being very upright nor religious. He went to parties with "sinners and tax collectors." The religious leaders of the day were disgusted with that type of behavior. Their attitude was that those who did not follow their rules should be ignored, lest some "dirt" would tarnish the image they had worked so hard to construct. They were more interested in keeping the illusion of holiness, than in reaching souls for God.

We must search our hearts and ask what is most important to us: maintaining a reputation of righteousness or reaching a lost and dying world for Christ. Does seeing people come to know Jesus matter enough to us that we are willing to give of our time and energy to develop a relationship with them? Are we willing to open up our lives and let them in? And if they come in, what will they see—a faith that is real and genuine or only a facade?

People are desperately in need of true friends. May we be true friends to the non-Christians God will bring across our paths if we are open and will-

ing. May our friendship with them lead to them meeting the best friend they will ever find—Jesus Christ.

## Real Evangelism

The political landscape has recently been filled with talk of "family values." People with very different belief systems have agreed on the need for raising the standards of morality and ethics in our nation. We who know Christ applaud this concern and welcome the rejection of the often too prevalent "anything goes" philosophy. We must not be fooled, however, by what could be a crafty attempt of the evil one to get us off the track of doing true evangelism.

It is not enough to simply have good family values. A person can have high moral standards, and still be far from God. Someone can be extremely ethical, and extremely lost. Many false religious groups are very upright and sadly put Christians to shame with their high moral and ethical standards. They are still, however, not right with God.

Keeping the law, even if it is a good law and it is kept well, does not save a person. "Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, 'The righteous will live by faith'" (Galatians 3:10).

People need more than instruction in holding good family values. If we have simply encouraged people to be more ethical while on their way to hell, we have done very little. The world needs to hear the good news of what Jesus has done and can do. They need to hear that He died on the cross and paid the penalty in full for all of our sins. They need to hear that He rose again and because He lives each of us can truly live as well. They need to hear that God loves them and wants to have a relationship with them.

God's people are given the privilege of sharing more than just good advice on how to be ethical. We proclaim good news. We share not just a message about morality. We share the message of life.

## Just Do It

In their advertisements the Nike athletic shoe company would tell people to "Just Do It." We may need to hear a similar message in regards to evangelism.

Much time and effort often is spent arguing about who is evangelistic and who isn't, who is doing it right and who is doing it wrong. Discussion for the purpose of encouraging and learning from one another is good. Time, however, is too short and the cause is too important to let minor details deter us from just doing it—telling the world the good news of what Jesus has done and inviting people to know Him as Savior and Lord.



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**BUILDING THE BASE**

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## Who is God?

Our society like all others asks the eternal questions: "Is there a god? What is He like? What does He want? Who is God?" In Romans 1:18-20, Paul tells us that everyone can clearly see that there **is** a God. He says we can see this from the world around us. Someone had to create it! Every culture that has ever existed has believed there is a God that is as Paul described, "invisible, eternal and powerful." But this is about all the knowledge of God we can get from just looking at creation.

To this very limited knowledge is added the inborn, intuitive knowledge of God we call our conscience. Our conscience tells us that God is also moral. Again we find that most societies agree on what is right and wrong. I say *most*, because the conscience can become warped and perverted. As Paul says in Romans 1:21-32, people often get way off track in their understanding of who God is.

The fact is if we only had creation and our conscience (*natural knowledge*) to guide us, we would not know much at all about God. We would not know whether

He loved us, hated us or even cared that we existed. This is why God has given us his Holy Word. The Bible is God's revelation of Himself to mankind (*revealed knowledge*).

### **He caused the Scriptures to be written because He wants us to know Him.**

From the Bible we learn details concerning the character of God. These "attributes" are far beyond our ability to fully understand, but as far as we can understand they tell us who God is. We learn of His triune nature; that He is spirit, eternal, all-knowing, all-powerful, present everywhere and not bound by time.

Our God is perfect and does not change. He is life and love and truth and knowledge and wisdom. Our Father is loving and gracious, holy and just, patient and good. He is interested in and intimately involved in the lives of all people!

But above all, the Bible unfolds His wonderful plan we call the gospel: the good news that God loved us enough to come into our world as Jesus, the Christ and saves us by shedding His own blood as a payment for our sins, so we might know Him in the

deepest sense and live in fellowship with Him forever.

It is difficult to understand how God's attributes work together in complete harmony. God is not segmented. God is not holy and just on one occasion, and loving and gracious the next. He is always purely just and totally loving at all times.

In our minds we see God's justice as a condemning enemy, and His infinite love as our ally; yet it was His justice as much as His love that sent Jesus to the cross to pay the righteous demands of His law. When the holiness of God causes His anger to flare with a demand for justice, His heart is at the same time breaking because of His infinite love for the accused. His gracious nature at the same time offers to bind up the vary wounds He is righteously inflicting at the slightest manifestation of repentance.

This is the one true God; so much more glorious and awesome than we can ever fathom! Yet He directs all that He is to reach out to these tiny insignificant specks in the universe which are you and me. And He calls us, "My beloved."

— by Rev. Don Voorhees  
Dannebrog, Nebraska