

The Lutheran **AMBASSADOR**

January 7, 1997

Making
disciples

Secular work
is important

He sees God
change lives

Ernest Miedema
retires

Meet the new
Parish Education
Director

**JESUS
SAID:**



**I WILL
MAKE
YOU
FISHERS
OF MEN**

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

January 7, 1996
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AN ENCOURAGING WORD

A sweet smelling fragrance

Like many people, I am attracted to pleasant aromas — such as freshly baked bread, fried chicken, and even lutefisk. Oh, then there's the smell of roses. They have such a sweet fragrance. Not everything that has a wonderful aroma is necessarily pleasant to look at, meaning that the fragrance comes from within and emanates to the outside.

The Scripture says that Christians are an aroma. It comes not from ourselves, but we have only what is given to us by the Holy Spirit. The kind of aroma we give off is vitally important in the area of evangelism. Jesus carried a fragrance that drew all kinds of people to Him. Although there were some who found His aroma rather offensive (mainly the religious leaders), many couldn't help but draw near to check Him out. The ways Jesus loved people and ministered to their many needs was indeed a sweet smelling fragrance to all who were touched by Him. We too, are called to be that same kind of fragrance in how we love people, minister to their needs, and draw them to Jesus.

A research study reported in "Church Growth: American Magazine," identified 240 new Christians who were actively involved in their churches. A second group of 240 people were identified as "drop-outs" (they had made a recent response to a call to follow Jesus but had since lapsed into inactivity). A third group of 240 individuals were identified as those who had chosen not to make a positive response to follow Jesus. In 720 individual interviews, each was asked to classify the person who had presented the gospel into one of three categories: friend, salesman and teacher.

The results provide us with startling conclusions: 94% of the

people who saw the church member as a "friend" were now Christians and active in their churches. On the other hand, 71% of those who saw the church member who presented the gospel as a "salesman" made an initial response, but soon dropped out. Finally, those who saw the church member as a "teacher" generally tended to not respond at all — 84% said "no thanks."

The implications of such a study seem clear. The non-Christian who perceives our relationship as a friend is far more likely to eventually respond to Christ's love than the one who sees us other than a friend. This is not to conclude that we don't need teachers and evangelists in the church, but the evidence clearly reveals the need for all of us to be involved in evangelism — drawing people one by one to Jesus by giving off the fragrance of love and genuine concern.

But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of Him. For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life.

— II Corinthians 2:14-16

Are individuals drawn to Jesus by the beautiful sweet smelling fragrance which emanates from you?



— Pastor
David Skordahl
Dalton,
Minnesota

SOUND BITES

"When we rightly understand evangelism, we recognize that it is both a miracle and a mystery how any of us come to know Christ."

—Steve Sjogren



"Small things done with great love will change the world."

—Vineyard Community Church of Springdale, Ohio



"Unconventional approaches that strategically mix the spiritual haves and have-nots are not merely acceptable, they are essential to God's redemptive efforts."

—Bill Hybels



In a survey of twenty-two congregations in three major cities, newcomers were asked, "What brought you to this church?" Roy Oswald of the Alban Institute reports the following responses:

2% — an advertisement
6% — an invitation by the pastor
6% — an organized evangelistic outreach program

86% — an invitation by a friend or family member



"I knew how offended I had been as a non-Christian when someone tried to push religion on me, without even discovering who I was or what I believed. That was a proper response, I see now, for I should be offended when I'm being treated as someone's evangelistic project instead of as a person."

—Rebecca Manley Pippert



"There must be more to life than having everything."

—Maurice Sendak

Making disciples

— Gene Quist
member of the Commission of Evangelism
Bloomington, Minnesota

When Jesus met with His disciples on the mountain in Galilee, as recorded in Matthew 28:16-20, He gave them a mission, which has become known as the "Great Commission." That command has become the purpose statement or mission of the Church of Jesus Christ today.

The primary thrust of this command is to **make disciples**. How can this be done? What does this have to do with evangelism? Who is a disciple? What does a new Christian need to be taught so that he can live a victorious life and overcome all of the bad habits and practices of his previous life?

Therefore
go and make
disciples ... baptiz-
ing ... and teaching ...
And surely I am with
you always, to
the very
end.

Assurance

A new believer must have assurance of salvation. We must learn what happened to us when the truth of salvation was accepted by faith through grace (John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8,9).

Christ forgave your sin — Ephesians 1:7.

Christ made you a child of God — John 1:12,13.

Christ came into your life and He will never leave you — Revelation 3:20; John 6:37.

Christ gave you new life — II Corinthians 5:17.

Christ gave you eternal life — I John 5:11-13.

Christians live by faith in the trustworthiness of God and His Word, not by feelings. Luther said, "I'm thankful that I'm a Christian not because I feel like one, but because of what Jesus Christ has done for me."

Experiencing God's love and forgiveness

The new believer needs to understand that before one becomes a Christian, sin prevents a relationship with God. After conversion, sin inhibits fellowship with God. Christ's death on the cross is the basis for forgiveness and brings us into a proper relationship with God. His death is also the basis for forgiveness in our daily fellowship with God. The new believer must learn the wonderful promise of I John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." It's important to keep short accounts with God by agreeing with God that you have sinned, thanking God that He has already forgiven you and trusting God to change your wrong attitudes and actions (repentance).

The Holy Spirit – the power source

New believers need to be trained to appropriate the power of the Holy Spirit. He is God (I Corinthians 2:11,12). He

came to dwell in believers in Christ (Romans 8:9), to convict the world of sin and justice (John 16:8), to lead one into the truth (John 16:13) and to glorify Christ (John 16:14). The Holy Spirit plays a crucial role in one's relationship with God (Romans 8) and with other people (Galatians 5:22,23; John 15:4,5 and Acts 1:8).

The new Christian needs to grow in understanding how one is filled with, directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit-filled life is the Christ-directed life by which Christ lives His life in and through the believer by the power of the Holy Spirit. To be filled, confess all known sin (Psalm 66:18), yield every area of your life to Christ (Romans 6:12,13; 12:1,2) and trust the Holy Spirit to fill you. God has commanded us to be filled (Ephesians 5:18) and He has promised to answer our requests when they are asked in accord with His will (I John 5:14,15).

Growing in Christ

It is clear from the New Testament that God wants all of us to grow in Christ. His desire is for us to increase in the knowledge of Christ, love for Him and obedience to Him. When Jesus was asked which of the commandments was most important, Jesus replied, "The most important one is this: 'Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:28-31).

How does a new believer grow in Christ? He must learn to communicate with God and people.

Four aspects of communication will help new believers grow in their relationship with Christ and their walk in the power of the Holy Spirit:

Bible — God communicates with you through the Bible, revealing His character and His will. A disciple of Christ needs to know how to use the Bible to guide his Christian walk (II Timothy 3:16,17).

Prayer — You communicate with God through prayer. Share your thoughts, your needs and your desires to do His will (Philippians 4:6,7; I John 5:14,15; I Thessalonians 5:18 and Ephesians 5:20).

Fellowship — Communicate with Christians through fellowship. Encourage and build up one another (Hebrews 10:24,25 and Acts 2:42-47). It is critical that a new Christian be involved in a supportive, loving relationship with other Christians.

Witnessing — Communicate with non-Christians by witnessing, that is, sharing your relationship with Christ. New Christians have many more non-Christian friends than those who have been Christians for a long time, so they need to quickly learn how to share the good news.

Methods of follow-up

The most effective way to help a new Christian become grounded in the Christian faith is one-to-one — man to man and woman to woman. A mature Christian meeting regularly with the new Christian over a period of time sharing the basics of the Christian life is by far the most effective. Begin with the Gospel of John and Ephesians. Talk of how the Word of God applies to life and pray together and for each other. Be accountable. Find opportunities to be involved in fellowship with other Christians and encourage witnessing to his friends about what Jesus is doing in his life. Materials are available to help this process.

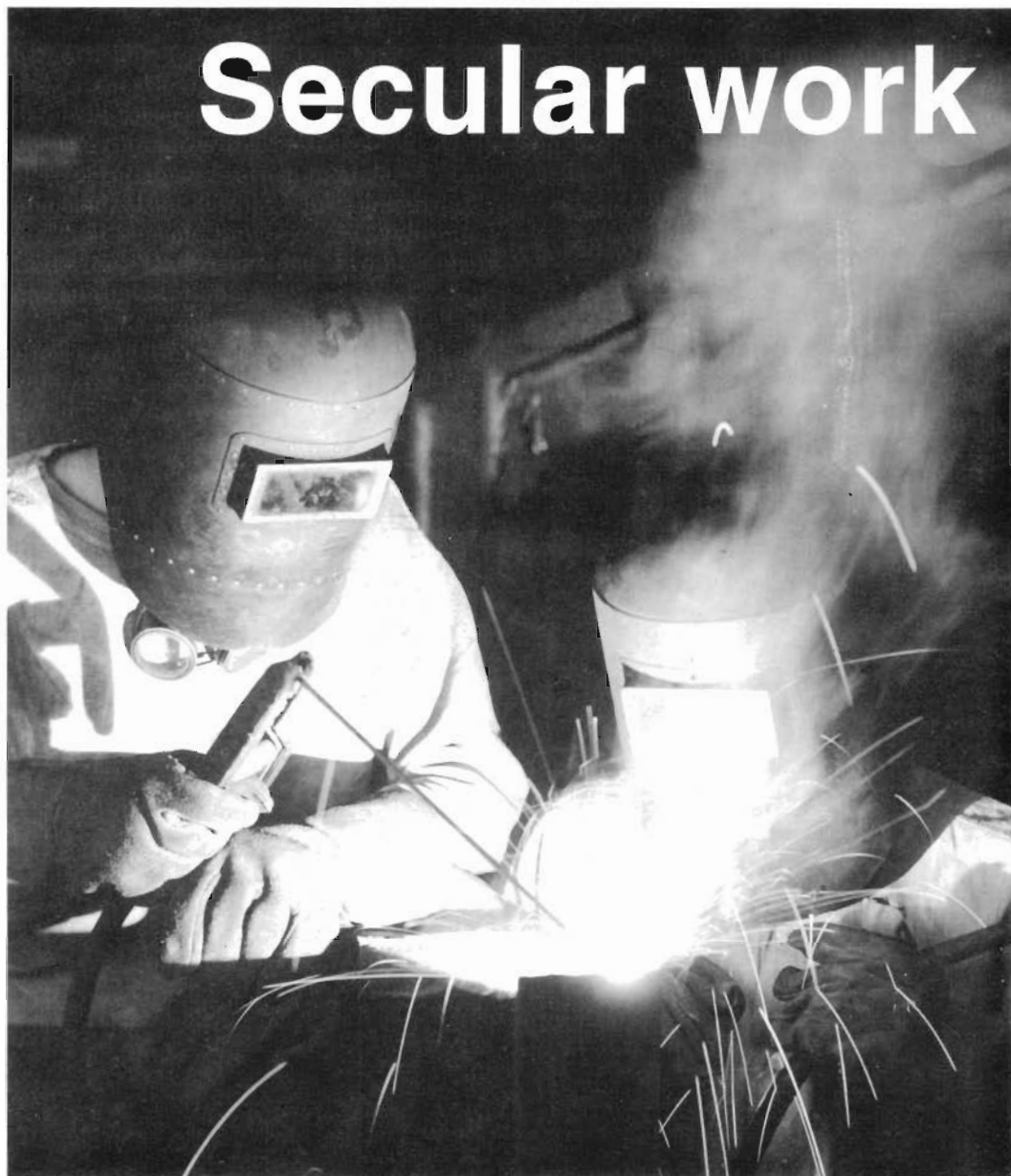
Another way to follow-up a new believer is in a small group setting. This works well when there is more than one person who needs follow-up. The more people in the group, the harder it is to get them together at the same time and hold them accountable. Again, valuable materials are available.

Jesus said, "I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent" (Luke 15:7). The new believer may very well have been chosen by God to play a significant role in the building up of His Body. We do a great injustice if we don't equip them with the basics needed to live the Christian life. Ephesians 4:11-13 teaches that one of the most important ministries in the local church should be a trained group of lay people who are available to train new people in the basics of the Christian faith.



Secular work

Luoma Photos



It was May, 1970. I had been home from Vietnam for two weeks, and now I was leaving for Columbus, Georgia, to join a ministry of the Navigators. The night before I left, I played a taped message of one of the Navigator leaders challenging listeners to serve the Lord. I don't remember the content of the message, but at the close of the tape, I turned to Mom and Dad and said, "That is what I am going to do."

"That is something I've always wanted to do," my Dad responded. I've never forgotten that statement.

Dad was a quiet man, who devoted his life trying to carve a livelihood for his wife and six children out of a small farm in northwestern Minnesota. He was a bit

shy, and his shyness kept him from speaking much about his faith, but incidents in my memory of him speak volumes. I've wondered what he really meant? Did he feel inadequate in his service to the Lord? Was there a guilt because he did not or could not accomplish the visible things others did?

There is a wall plaque which reads:

*Only one Life, twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ shall last.*

Over the years I've received the teaching on life's priorities: God first, family second, and ministry or career third. I've also heard people testify how focusing on the temporal nature of this life's accomplishments has caused them to enter the

is important too!

— Rodney A. Kjersten
Rose Lutheran
Roseau, Minnesota

full-time ministry. It all causes me to wonder, is it only our spiritual thoughts, words, and actions that please God?

Bible reading, devotional time, prayer, worship, fellowship and witnessing are pleasing to God! They are vital to my spiritual life yet occupy only a small portion of my time. In the discussion of life's priorities, the things which are least important to God are the very things which occupy the majority of my time — my work. If God views our lives as segmented: the important and the unimportant, the sacred and the secular, then most of us are in trouble.

I could understand the guilt Dad was experiencing. Perhaps others possess the same sense of guilt. Often without that call to full-time ministry, guilt, unworthiness, and the sense of not being a part of the first string on God's team is experienced.

Of course we wouldn't deliberately teach that, but sometimes what is not taught is caught. Think about it. One who enter full-time ministry is "called" while one who enters a secular field is simply "hired." The heroes of the faith are usually those who are or have been full-time servants of God. Rarely do we hear teaching from the pulpit on how one can make an impact while working a full-time job. The effect then, may be two-fold. For some, hoping to make a real impact, they seek to enter the ministry for all the wrong reasons. Others stay behind and feel guilty.

What do the Scriptures teach?

You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light: for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. — I Peter 2:9-10

As believers we are all described as Christ-followers, *a royal priesthood*. The segments of our lives are congruent, God calls all professions and careers. Luther taught that there were just three careers

a Christian could not enter: prostitution (for obvious reasons); banking (because of the scriptural injunctions against usury); and the priesthood (because of his strong belief in the priesthood of all believers). We are all authorized to stand between God and people: in society (I Peter 2:12); in human institutions (2:13); in employee/employer relationships (2:18); in our marriages (3:1-7); and in our Christian fellowship (3:8-12).

As a first-year student at Columbus College in Georgia, I was a grounds equipment operator. It has been fun to return to the campus and see the landscaping work that I did twenty years ago. Despite my pride of accomplishment, it will be burned and destroyed in eternity. Was that work second rate and unimportant? No! All of our work and accomplishments are important to God! All of God's work in creation was temporal. He knew it would burn in eternity, yet He made it perfect and then put man in charge of it. Our witness for the Lord is found in our work and in our relationships with our co-workers.

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. — Ephesians 2:10

Each of us can stand tall before God, thankful for His calling, and present to Him our work. The value, the dignity provided for us in our chosen professions, are a gift from the One who has called us and it's indeed a witness for Him. We use that call to reach out, to minister to those about us. We must not withdraw to the church or to para-church subcultures, for that insulates and isolates us from the hurting world around us. As we serve, then, in our calling, His promise is:

And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto myself.

— John 12:32



He sees God change lives



Photo: Religious News Service

Do I really care?

They fought and screamed. The neighbors couldn't help but hear it. "I could never forgive him!" she shouted. They separated and she was left to try to survive with four children.

This was nothing new. It happens all the time. The neighbors in this South Aurora, Illinois community went on their way struggling too, to make it month to month. But two doors down was a neighbor who couldn't ignore the agonizing cries of a family being ripped apart.

He got involved. He took her to get groceries and the kids to the doctor. He told her, "You need forgiveness first then seek reconciliation." He counseled her in his yard or in his house at the kitchen table together with his wife. Jesus came into this young mother's heart. Seven years later the family is back together and now they can joke about the way things used to be.

Meet Stan Berkland, 75, an evangelist.

"I love to talk to people on a one-to-one basis. Strange things happen in a Christian's walk. I never thought I'd be in a position to be used of the Lord to help

"Is this story true?" asked young Amy sitting among a group of children. I stopped my story of Noah and looked at her a little surprised. How could anyone not know this Bible story? But I gently replied that it was most certainly true: that it was from God's Word which is all Truth.

Amy knew almost nothing about Jesus Christ or His Word. I praise God that I had the opportunity to teach her for a week and to also pray with her to receive Jesus as her personal Lord and Savior. What a blessing to see her face, especially her eyes, light up.

Jesus is real! So many people have yet to know His total grace, forgiveness, and joy! Who will tell them? Who will be a part of God's work to bring more souls into the kingdom of heaven?

Matthew 24:32,44b says, "Therefore, keep watch, because you do not know on

families get together!"

"You know the Bible has the answer for every problem of mankind," Stan said. And his life declares it.

Once when Stan visited a man in prison. "If you're coming at me with that Bible stuff, I don't want anything!"

Stan said he came just as a friend. He visited the prison every Monday for more than a year. "We became great friends. He opened up and I shared the Word with him. After he got out of prison he would visit in my home."

The Aurora neighborhood has changed now. It's predominately Hispanic and Black. Stan used to sit in the local restaurant for breakfast every morning and at the gas station simply to look for opportunities to talk about the Lord. But his declining health keeps him closer to home. Now he sits in his yard in the summer and the neighbors often stop to visit. If the weather isn't so nice, he sits in his car. "Number one, I want to be a friend to all. Jesus loves all people. He loves sinners, not the sin. I'm not one to "button-hole" people about their salvation. I

always have an open ear and when they open the door, I jump in. I answer questions in light of God's Word and the broader knowledge I have of His Word, the greater help it is!"

Stan and his wife Wynne have been married for 53 years and have four children of their own. They were farming in north central Illinois, when God called him to Bible school. "I never dreamed I would end up spending eleven years working at Aurora's Wayside Cross Rescue Mission. Then we knew the Lord opened the door for me to work in a factory. God knew what He was doing because I could earn a pension and insurance. We didn't know it until later how much we would need both."

The Berklands have been active members at St. Olaf Lutheran in nearby Montgomery, since they moved to their home in 1961. Stan continues to serve as a deacon. He no longer teaches the adult Bible class at church but his neighborhood classroom continues to fill with lonely, hurting, and seeking students.



— Rebecca Welsch
AFLBS Junior
Amery, Wisconsin

what day you, Lord will come ... the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect Him." When I read these verses, I thought, "Am I ready? Do I have a burden to reach out to those who are not ready?" Praise God that because of Jesus Christ I am ready to meet him and can't wait to do so!

But what about the burden for the lost? God has been working on this in my life especially here at AFLBS. I argue and fight with it sometimes. Here at school, I don't have many encounters with people other than Christians, but I think about my relatives and friends back home who are still seeking. Do I want to just pray once in a while for them or do I really care about their eternal destination? My heart aches as I realize my neglect in earnestly praying for these people.

I believe God is calling me into missions. So often, though, I think too much

about the future and what I will be doing instead of now and what God wants me to do today. Who does He want me to pray for or talk to today? May God give me a burden and willingness to lay my life and will down to serve on Jesus' harvesting team. People are dying and are eternally separated from God, cast into that horrible lake of fire with Satan and his demons. Christ is coming soon. This causes me to fall before Jesus in prayer, beg forgiveness for my lukewarmness and ask for His guidance, strength, and willingness to be that prayer warrior, that seed planter, that waterer, or that harvester.

*A burden, dear Lord, I pray
To point others to heaven's way.
A way of joy, and hope, and peace,
A way of comfort, rest, release.
Guide me, dear Lord, in Your way,
How may I be used today?*



People think I'm joking when I tell them God called me **not** to be a pastor.

It happened while I was in my teens, somewhere between confirmation and high school graduation. I'd spent a week at Pastor E. Edward Tornow's Bible camp in North Dakota, as I did every summer. While there I met a young pastor who had a lot of interesting stories to tell, and for the first time I thought of the ordained ministry as a career. So I prayed, "Lord, if You want me to be a pastor, I'm willing."

At camp I'd gotten into a new habit of intensive Bible study, taking a passage of Scripture and reading it over and over again until I was bored and past the boredom until I experienced the Holy Spirit's "light." (My life's history would have been very different, I'm sure, if I'd kept that discipline up!)

One day I was alone in my room, wrestling with I Corinthians 12:

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord ... But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good ... For even as the body is one and yet has many members, all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ ... For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body ... there should be no division in the body, but ... the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored all the members rejoice with it (NASB).

Called to be a layman

Suddenly I began to see what the Church is. Jesus took His earthly body back to heaven with Him when He ascended, but He didn't intend for His personal ministry on earth to end with that. The Church is intended to be His body, doing what He would do. Whatever I would ask Christ for if I could meet Him and touch Him physically, I should be able to go to the Church for. But if the Body of Christ is to go about its business without limping and falling over things, it needs each member — each part, each organ and limb — to be working and working in harmony. I'm one of those members, and so are you.

And that was when I heard, perhaps for the first time in my life, that quiet inner voice so many people have described, the voice that you just know is the voice of God, partly because it "feels" right but mostly because it agrees with His Word.

The voice said, "I have many servants who are willing to give their lives to My Church as pastors. I don't have so many who are willing to give their lives to My Church as committed laymen. I want you to be a layman."

One of the many reasons I'm delighted to be part of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations (AFLC) is our strong tradition of lay leadership. Giving a vote to every congregation member at the annual conference and loading our

Are we called to a generic witness?

Recently the local Ministerial Alliance announced that in the spirit of "ecumenism and inclusiveness" non-Christian clergy would be invited to become members, and that "any holidays where an Alliance-sponsored event was to take place would not be religious holy days such as Good Friday." Presumably in a pious spirit of political correctness our community will now be able to gather together (believers and non-believers alike) to worship that Great Someone up there in the Great Somewhere — to celebrate such non-divisive festivities as Arbor Day and Fire Prevention Week.

A word for it is syncretism, and it is a problem as old as the Church. Christianity is exclusive by nature. Our Lord Jesus Christ said, "No man comes to the Father but by Me." All other ways that claim to save are false, and there is no collaborating with them in worship or witness, for there is no common ground. To pretend there is, leads only to a pernicious watering down of the gospel.

It is common to hear, "But we all believe in God!" James countered that argument in his day by answering, "You believe there is one God; thou doest well: the devils (demons) also believe and tremble." Even the devil believes there is a God, for it's a fact he cannot deny. But by that would you call the devil a believer? What we believe **about** God separates

fact from fallacy, and belief from unbelief.

So how are we to live? The old advice still stands. We are to be in the world but not of the world. We must live side by side with unbelief and unbelievers. But we are not to give credence to false and non-evangelical doctrines by joining with them in so-called worship experiences. There may be much to learn about false religions, but there is nothing for the Christian to learn from them. To think otherwise is to leave oneself open to grave temptations.

As unpopular as it may be, we are called to be witnesses to our Lord Christ where we are. We're to be salt and light. Salt may at times have a sharp edge to it and light may illuminate problems that would otherwise go unheeded. We know the opposition of those who would rather live in blissful ignorance to the dangers facing their souls.

The Christian's life is more than a meandering along an aimless route. Jesus tells us there is a definite way to follow, and in fact names Himself as the Way — the only Way to the Father's house and heart. Pray to God that we never lose the urgency of that message, or deny its truth for the sake of expediency — or political correctness.



— Pastor Norman Dornquist
from 11/12/96 FAITH NEWSLETTER
Weslaco, Texas

corporations and boards with lay people isn't just a peculiar tradition; it's a bold statement to the world that we believe we are one Body — and every member of the Body has special value.

Too often we laymen look to our pastors as medieval Catholics looked to the monks: "I'll pay this guy to be holy for me, then I can go about my own business." Mainline churches find ways to limp along with that kind of thinking, but it's death to a free association. The AFLC can't "clergy" every problem or job that comes up, and we'd be unfaithful to our principles if we did. **We** are the church, and our pastors are there to coordinate **our work**, not to do it for us.

I don't think it's strange to say I have a call to be a layman. I'm not a pastor, but I'm a minister. I wasn't created by God primarily for a career, or even for a family. I was created for a ministry as a member of the Body of Christ, and no matter what success I might have in either of those other areas, I'll never be fulfilled until I find and exercise my ministry in coordination with my brothers and sisters who are exercising theirs. I don't completely understand my personal ministry description yet, but I can't think of a better place than the AFLC to discover it.



We are ready and waiting

We are ready to start interviewing candidates for the new full-time AFLC evangelist. We believe he will be a "banner-bearer" for evangelism in the AFLC. He will preach and witness so that many pagans will be converted to Christ, and he will multiply his efforts by raising up an army of associate evangelists and trained witnesses for Christ, people like you!

We cannot send the call until at least \$37,000 has been pledged for support of his salary and expenses. Sixty-eight of those who attended the 1996 Annual Conference pledged support of over \$24,000. We believe the rest of the 30,000 members of the AFLC can pledge the remaining amount. Then we can issue the call and commission the evangelist at the 1997 Annual Conference, if the Lord so wills.

Will you pray about your part in this? First of all, we need people to begin sending in their pledged support. Secondly, will you talk to others about pledging support?

This whole call process has been "bathed in prayer." We as an evangelism commission are giving priority to prayer in our meetings. We feel we need a continual foundation of prayer to support our new evangelist and the evangelistic team that will surround him.

Will you commit yourself to personal prayer for this call process? Will you also commit to finding two other people you can pray with as a "prayer triplet" for at least one hour each month, faithfully? If you sign up as a prayer triplet team, we will try to send you updates on AFLC evangelism and the work of our new evangelist. Your prayer support will thrust this work forward and result in a mighty harvest of souls.



— AFLC Commission
on Evangelism

Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

— I Corinthians 15:58

Prayer preparation

Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not lose heart. — Luke 18:1

Prayer is the most neglected part of many Christian lives and sadly it often is the most neglected part of the work of the local congregation.

The Commission on Evangelism has been working toward calling a full-time Evangelist/Director of Evangelism for the AFLC. It is a very exciting time for our church. People who have a vision for the work of the kingdom are encouraging us as we wait for finances for this mission.

I believe the area that needs the most work for evangelism is the prayer preparation for evangelistic services. The Commission has realized this is an area to encourage growth in our congregations. The very minimum time a congregation and the guest speaker should prepare and pray for is nine to twelve months! For some that sounds too long. But when we pray, prepare and plan God uses this time to open hearts and starts working within the people who will attend.

We are planning to gather materials and offer workshops on preparation and prayer — cottage prayer meetings, prayer vigils, and bulletin reminders to be used months in advance. This will help to ensure Christ-honoring evangelistic meetings and souls that are reached for Christ.

The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association goes into an area a year in advance. They organize, plan and stress prayer for a crusade. With such preparation God will honor the messages regardless of the speaker. The success does not depend on any man but on God. He brings forth the harvest. The prayer and preparation is to make people ready to respond to the call. God is always ready to receive a lost sinner (I Timothy 2:4). We need to learn from organizations that have bountiful harvests at crusade time.

Prayer is the secret of souls being won for Christ at evangelistic services. Pastor Herb Franz wrote: "God's alternatives are very clear: either we pray or we faint (Luke 18:1); either we seek God's face and are forgiven and healed or else we turn aside from Him, only to be cast out (II Chronicles 7:14-22). Paul often pleaded with Christians to pray for him (Ephesians 6:19; II Thessalonians 3:1, for example)."

Prayer in the pews translates into power in the pulpit. You are the most important part of the preparation. Everyone needs to pray so that your evangelistic services will be all that the Lord wants them to be.



— Pastor Jim Rasmussen
Commission on Evangelism
Park River, North Dakota

Ernest Miedema retires as AFLC Director of Development

Should a Christian have a will or a trust? And if so, how does a person go about setting one up? What are ways that people can legally and effectively remember their congregation and church body in their estate? In an effort to provide assistance and answer questions like this the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations (AFLC) in 1979 called Ernest Miedema to serve as director of development, a position he has held until his recent retirement.

Mr. Miedema had been a part of the AFLC from its earliest days as a member of Grace Free Lutheran Church in Valley City, North Dakota. After accepting the call as director of development, Ernest remained in Valley City with his wife Darlene, continuing to operate a furniture business while doing much traveling on behalf of the AFLC. In 1986 the Miedemas moved to the Minneapolis area to be closer to the AFLC headquarters office when not on the road. Upon his move his work was expanded to also include for a time overseeing the maintenance of the headquarters' building and property.

"On the road" is an appropriate phrase to describe what Ernie has been doing during these 17 years as director. He estimates he has averaged 50,000 miles a year, driving throughout the AFLC, making contacts, building relationships and providing assistance. He has done this in an effort to fulfill the original call he was given to "provide spiritual motivation to our congregations for financial support of our benevolences and guidance to individuals in the area of annuities and wills."

A typical visit for Ernie would include a brief presentation during a congregation's Sunday

"Thankful that God could use me"



Darlene and Ernest Miedema.

morning worship service in which he would introduce himself and describe the ways in which he was willing and able to help. Later, often with assistance from the pastor, contacts would come and home visits would be made.

The work for Ernie was part of "a process of building a bridge." Relationships needed to be established, friendships cultivated, Scripture shared and time spent together in prayer. The work was not about telling people what to do, but providing assistance in a variety of ways.

"The work has changed a great deal over the years," according to Ernie. "People are now educated

on investments much more." The need still exists, however, for assistance to be provided and encouragement for people to be good stewards in planning regarding their finances.

It may have been 17 years but Ernie says, "I don't know where the time has gone." He looks forward to being on the road less and being able to be with his wife Darlene more. As he looks back he is thankful and "marvels that God used me." The church body as well is thankful for servants willing to be used and the work God does through them.



— Pastor Craig Johnson

Meet the new Parish Education Director



Marian Christopherson

Parents: Charlotte Quanbeck and the late Marvin Quanbeck

Age: 31

Background: Raised on a farm near McVile, ND. Baptized and attended New Luther Valley Free Lutheran Church, McVile.

Family: Married to Kevin Christopherson

Address: New Hope, MN

Church: Solid Rock Free Lutheran, Osseo, MN

Education: McVile High School; Association Free Lutheran Bible School; Concordia College, Moorhead, MN, Music Education studies; St. Paul Bible College, St. Bonifacius, MN, Church Music and Ministries, B.S., Office Management minor.

Tell us about your ministry at AFLBS and your response to the call to be Parish Education Director.

My ministry at AFLBS began in 1986 with teaching piano, organ, and voice while continuing to complete my college education. In 1989, I was called to also direct the Choral Club; then in 1994, to teach the Christian Education classes. I have always considered it an undeserved priv-

ilege to teach AFLBS students. I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service (I Timothy 1:12). I believe God accomplishes His work in spite of me, not because of me. He chooses to accomplish His work and manifest His power through the weakness of human vessels.

Through several changes over the past few years, I have seen God's authority and mystery, wisdom and strength. God has taught me that obedience precedes understanding, and His

ways are far above my ways. These verses have been impressed upon my heart: "By faith, Abraham, when he was called, obeyed ... and he went out, not knowing where he was going" (Hebrews 11:8). "And the Lord is the One Who goes ahead of you; He will be with you. He will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed" (Deuteronomy 31:8).

How does this affect your ministry at AFLBS?

I began part-time in Parish Education in November. Hours

Where we are going

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.

— II Timothy 3:16

The Association of Free Lutheran Congregations (AFLC) believes the Lutheran confessions to be the correct summary of biblical teachings. We believe the faithful application of Lutheran theology will result in biblical, personal, living Christianity. Our *Ambassador Publications Catalog* also says: "Therefore, the goal of the Board of Parish Education is to print and produce Bible study material that is biblical, Lutheran, evangelistic, teachable, challenging, and interesting. We seek to provide material for all levels of Sunday school education, for confirmation classes, for adult studies, and personal life and growth."

Presently the Parish Education Board is revising our current Sunday school material. Grades two and four have been completed and printed. The first quarter of kindergarten has been revised and is almost ready to go to print. The second and third quarters of kindergarten will follow soon.

We hope to broaden our base of resource people to make better use of the gifts and abilities of the people of the AFLC. Our dream is to work on more than one revision and printing project at a time. This can be done because many in the AFLC are gifted as writers, artists, editors or are able to help in other ways. The board is establishing specific guidelines and directives to assist those who volunteer their time and talents for various projects. In the weeks and months to come, we hope and pray for more contacts with those of you who are able and willing to help.

Our board also believes a permanent full or part-time secretary is needed to assist our Parish Education Director. This is especially true if we hope to work on several printing projects concurrently. Our financial priority as a board is the publication of AFLC material, but we also believe the hiring of a secretary would allow our director to make better use of her time. We have excellent secre-

will gradually increase until it becomes full time in June. My responsibilities at AFLBS will continue as is with teaching piano and organ, Choral Club and Christian Education through the end of this school year. Beginning in the fall of 1997, I will only teach Christian Education at AFLBS.

What will be your "role-ministry" as the Parish Education Director?

One of the most important roles of Parish Education Director is to continue guiding and managing the production of our Sunday school curriculum revision

with the able assistance of gifted volunteers. I also desire to be a resource person to the local congregation, to be available to provide direction to churches in supplying quality material and to suggest other valuable resources that are biblical. I hope that Ambassador Publications will continue to become better known and more visible. I want to keep our churches informed of our publications and to encourage more and more AFLC churches and other church bodies to use our materials with confidence that God's infallible, inerrant Word is being taught in its truth and purity.

Does the AFLC need a Parish Education Department?

Absolutely! There is a great need for biblical, Lutheran Sunday school curriculum that clearly teaches the Bible as God's inspired Word, sin and grace, law and gospel, daily repentance and faith, and coordinates with the catechetical teaching of the doctrines of our faith.

A "Christian" label does not necessarily mean its content is good or biblical. There is much curriculum that is extremely poor. Some of the humanistic infiltration is so gradual and subtle that churches do not even notice it may not be in accord with God's Word. Biblical concepts are mixed with other ideas which do not come directly from the Word.

The continuing trend of education, including Christian education, is not based on absolute truth, but on how we feel about it. The guide and measurement of faith and spirituality must never be our feelings, but rather always the constancy and dependability of God's unchanging Word.

Much curriculum is intended to be non-denominational. It does not teach doctrinal foundations including the means of grace: baptism, the Lord's Sup-

per, and the Word of God. Churches need to become better educated in how to evaluate teaching materials so that they are not tossed about by every wind of doctrine, but rather have their senses trained to discern good and evil (Hebrews 5:14).

We also need a Parish Education Department to continue to make available quality literature and resources. Many valuable books have been laid aside in "Christian culture" in favor of entertaining or candy-coated reading or books that emphasize motivational Christian living that seeks power from within self to live the Christian life. We need literature that is devotional and practical and recognizes the power of God's Word to transform lives from the inside out, not the other way around. The power to live a godly life comes as much through the Word of God as does the power to bring salvation to the believer.

Will your emphasis in the Parish Education Department be to "stay the course" in its ministry of the Word as former Chairman Wes Langaas wrote in the 1993 Annual Report?

Yes, definitely! Pastor Langaas defined it this way: "Since God's Word is settled, the 'textbook' for Christian education will not change. There will be no new teachings tomorrow, and no old truths to discard. We can teach God's Word with confidence for there we find Christ who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life."

The Word alone. We will not add to or take from the Word what is not clearly there. We firmly believe the faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ (Romans 10:17). God speaks and applies His saving and sanctifying grace through His Word.



per, but this help has been hired on a temporary basis. We respectfully request that the people of the AFLC consider making financial provision for permanent secretarial help.

Please continue to pray for us.

— *Pastor Phil Haugen, Chairman
Board of Parish Education
Culbertson, Montana*

Volunteer resource people needed

- Writers for Sunday school lessons.
- Artists to illustrate each lesson.
- Artists to develop cover pages.
- People to develop ideas for activities for each lesson.
- Artists to illustrate the activities for each lesson.
- People to write teachers' manuals for the lessons.
- People to write the Bible background for each lesson.
- People to do editorial work on the lessons and teachers' manuals.

If you are willing to use your gifts in any of these areas, please contact Marian Christopherson, (612) 545-5632 or Phil Haugen, (406) 787-9930.

Co-missioned

Leaving the church that Sunday morning, thirty years ago, our pastor gripped our hands firmly as only Evald Conrad could do, and with excitement in his voice told us how he was looking forward to having our commissioning service at Trinity Lutheran in Minneapolis, my home congregation since childhood.

I had long dreamed of this myself. Sensing God's call to serve Him in world missions, I had attended several commissioning services over the years and was always impressed by their solemnity, dignity and emotional context. Soon it would be our turn to be the recipients of this spiritual blessing.

After long, hard years of school and work for Dick, graduation and ordination were realities. My husband and I began packing barrels with a four years' supply of personal and household items — many of which were gifts given by family and church family. Yes, the church's support began long before we left the United States. After the necessary shots what remained to be done was to plan the commissioning service.

Commission — What an interesting word! The Christian community is not the only one to use it. The military promotes individuals to a special status, kings commission subjects, and actually anyone may commission another to perform a task — granting the commissioned one the authority and power to act on his behalf. It does not always have a positive meaning. In Acts 26, Paul relates that he was commissioned by the chief priests to pursue and persecute the Christians in an attempt to stop the spread of Christianity.

The extending of authority and power is what the word means,

but for me it has another side, and it is this breakdown of the word commission (admittedly my own) that I want to emphasize because it speaks of all that I have found to be important in my years as a missionary.

Co-mission: a mission effort done cooperatively.

In planning our commissioning service we thought of who we would have involved. The service would be at our home church, with pastor and deacons taking part. The church choir would sing. We had joined with the AFLC so we wanted then President John Strand along with other AFLC leaders and the AFLBS choir to participate. We were going out to Bolivia under the World Mission Prayer League, so there would be representatives from that board along with the director, Paul Lindell, .

Just as important to us would be those sitting in the pews — our

three children, other family, lifelong friends and those of recent years, fellow seminary students, missionaries home on furlough, and missionaries with whom we would be working.

And so the day of commissioning arrived. After all these years I write of it with strong emotion! Though I don't remember all of the Scripture read, surely Jesus' very own words of Matthew 28:18-20 referring to His own commission from His Father — All authority has been given to Me — and then His commissioning of His disciples — Go therefore ... make disciples ... baptizing, teaching — remains as all important.

The Lord had given us a special portion of Scripture at a time when we needed absolute guidance regarding His will for us, and it was important for us to have this shared also. "Let your character be free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, 'I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you'" (Hebrews 13:5).

The new 1997 WMF Bible Study

It's a new year and we begin a new WMF Bible study. "Come to Jesus — Share with Others," is written by Barb Hubner. This issue of The Lutheran Ambassador focuses on evangelism and that is what our January lesson is about. First, we come to Jesus to ask Him to be our Savior and Lord of our lives. Then we go to find others, sharing with them that Jesus forgives sin.

In her foreword to the studies, author Barb Hubner says that God's blessings are not meant to be hoarded but rather

to be shared. I wonder what the response would be if each woman were asked to report at the February meeting, before the next lesson, the results of sharing lesson one? Can we be accountable to one another? Application of the first part of each study will be what makes this year an exciting one.

Additional copies of the study are available through the Women's Missionary Federation (WMF) Executive Secretary Karen Knudsvig, RR 2, Box 11, Buxton, ND 58218.

— Clara Gunderson
Puebla, Mexico

Oh, the service itself was so meaningful, but probably the effect of it over the next several years was even more profound. Though we left the U.S. as a family, still the first year away from all those others I loved and all the familiarity of life in Minnesota was very traumatic. Only the Lord knew how often I cried myself to sleep!

In times when I was afraid I couldn't make it, that I couldn't learn the language, or that there wouldn't be enough money, or that those at home were getting along without me, or, worse yet, that the children wouldn't be all right without me in boarding school; then God's very special promises came again to mind and I could put my trust in them. Knowing that there were many praying for us, receiving God's monthly financial provision supplied by our church and other individuals, reading letters of encouragement — these all let us know that this was a cooperative mission. We were not alone! Many times over those years our commissioning service came to mind. It sustained us!

Just realizing the definition of the word "commission" made us serious in our task. It behooved us to handle rightly God's Word; to live our personal lives above reproach; to disciple, teach and baptize as the Spirit led; and to cooperate with our fellow missionaries and national brethren in the work. We did not look upon it as power, but as a trust from God and from everyone who had been a part of our commissioning.

Our missionary service was interrupted for several years as



Borup, Minnesota — Pictured is Missionary Sonja Dahl and World Missions Director Eugene Enderlein at Sonja's Commissioning Service at Jevnaker Lutheran on November 10, 1996. Sonja left for Brazil on November 25. Her address is Caixa Postal 44, 87300-970 Campo Mourão, PR, Brazil, South America.

we felt God's call that Dick would serve in the parish ministry in the states. During those years it was our privilege to be on the sending end, participating in prayer, giving financially and encouraging missionaries from our local congregation as well as those from the AFLC church body, and receiving them in fellowship as they returned on furlough. We were co-workers, cooperating in the mission effort.

One of the definitions Webster gives of the word commission is when used in a nautical sense, when a ship has been out of service for a time, to equip and man it, and send it on its way again. We'd known that the time would come again to be sent on our way into world missions once more. A couple of years ago the Lord opened

the way for this to happen and it was our delight to be officially returned to service through a commissioning service at Elim Lutheran in Lake Stevens, Washington.

Participating in the service were pastors of the AFLC and the local ministerial, deacons of the church, representatives of the AFLC and the World Mission Prayer League. And sitting in the pews were all those dear to us, people young and old who had come to assure us of their prayer support, their emotional and moral support, and, their financial support. Together we were commissioned and it is our testimony today that we know through the Holy Spirit's presence with us, through letters of encouragement and declared prayer support, and through the monthly financial statement that the Lord's promise in Matthew 28:20, "I am with you always," is still worthy to trust. We are sustained!

"Just realizing the definition of the word
'commission' made us serious in our task."



With an early registration deadline only two months away, youth groups and Luther Leagues planning on attending the 1997 Free Lutheran Youth (FLY) Convention in Estes Park, Colorado, August 4-9, have been making preparations for the national event.

"In the past, about 90 percent of the registrations have come before March," said Pastor James L. Johnson, president of Free Lutheran Youth. "January and February have been big planning months, so the train is in motion. Keep praying!"

The early registration deadline (and \$25 discount) has been moved back to March 15 this year. Youth groups and individuals should send \$50 deposits for each registrant by March 15 in order to get the \$250 rate for the convention. Those registrations should be addressed to: Pastor Brian Davidson, FLY Treasurer, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441.

Registrations made after March 15 will be \$275.

"Our AFLC youth and their friends have always supported the convention, and we're really excited about that," said Pastor Johnson. "We'd also like to see more pastors and adults share this experience." In an effort to draw more pastors, adults and parents, the FLY Executive Board has lowered the rate for those attending. Pastors registering before March 15 (and their wives) are eligible for

It's coming soon

Free Lutheran Youth Convention Estes Park Center Estes Park, Colorado August 4-9

a \$150 rate. Adults registering will receive a \$200 rate.

Pastor Kevin Olson, the national director for AFLC Youth Ministries, agrees. He would love to see whole families coming out to enjoy the event. Children ages 3 to 11 can join their parents for

only \$60 each. "The value of coming out as a family for physical and spiritual refreshment is great," said Pastor Olson, who expects more than 1,300 to attend the convention. "We have so many things pulling families apart. Here's one to help families to be growing together. We need pastors too. We want them to get a picture into the youth's lives outside of what their normal school week is about — to be set apart with the youth in an atmosphere where the youth are asking spiritual questions. We want to get the pastors involved in the youth's spiritual growth."



Pastor Dennis Gray, FLY Counseling Supervisor, has also announced that he is in need of at least 100 more counselors for the convention. This year the FLY Board is committed to have "a counselor in every room" and that means a need for a total of 200 counselors. Adults — especially those over 21 — can contact Pastor Gray at (218) 782-2249 in Greenbush, MN. Counselors are eligible for a \$100 rate.

"I'm just really looking forward to this convention," said Pastor Johnson, dean at AFLBS and in his fourth and final year as FLY President. "There's a sense of urgency from our youth groups about the gathering. I'm praying that many young people will receive Jesus as their Savior —

Get your T-shirts now!

and that many Christians will become more deeply committed to the kingdom of Christ."

Pastors in need of brochures for the convention should write to: Pastor Kevin Olson, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN, 55441. More than 5,000 brochures are left! Also, youth groups can order t-shirts (Have This Attitude!) to help promote the convention. The heavyweight tee's are available in gray, white and black for \$10 each. New tie-die Free Lutheran t-shirts (blue-gray; red-yellow) are \$16 each.

So you're interested in missions?

✓ **your opportunities!**

Call Pastor Kevin Olson
(612) 545-5631
e-mail: hqmail@afllc.org.

for youth

Thief River Falls, Minnesota — Our Saviour's Lutheran is hosting their annual youth "Splash" on January 31.

Association Retreat Center, Osceola, Wisconsin is hosting an AFLC youth rally on January 31-February 2. The weekend is called, "SidebySide — bracing yourself with real relationships". Send the \$10 registration to the ARC by January 16 to avoid a \$5 late fee.

Forest City, Iowa — Trinity Lutheran hosted the Tri-State District Youth Rally on November 8-9. Pastor Jonathan Unverzagt, DeKalb, Illinois, was the guest speaker.

Tioga, North Dakota — Zion Lutheran hosted their district youth rally on November 15-16. Youth Director Kevin Olson, Minneapolis, spoke along with local district people.



Pictured is one of the eight ministry teams at AFLBS this year which shared at the December 7 Parents' Day Ban-

quet. Over 220 people were served at the annual banquet.

Mesa, Arizona — The annual AFLC fellowship dinner will be held on Tuesday, February 11, 1997, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the King's Court (formerly King's Table) 1526 E. Main. Come early and enjoy the fellowship.

Mrs. Karen Palmer, Shakopee, Minnesota, is serving as the interim secretary for the Board of Parish Education.

Grand Forks, North Dakota — The Eastern North Dakota District and the northern and western districts of Minnesota will hold their Mid-Winter Bible Conference at Trinity Lutheran during February 7-8, 1997. Dr. Francis Monseth, AFLTS dean, is the featured speaker. For more information call (701) 772-1218.

Montgomery, Illinois — St. Olaf Lutheran Women's Missionary Federation held their special Thanksgiving Offering program which featured Helen Omodt, in costume, depicting the life of Katherine Luther.

Norway, Illinois — Cup of Cold Water Ministries is opening a retreat center which will be used as an outreach ministry to underprivileged children from the Chicago area. The facilities may also be used by area congregations as a retreat center.

Elbow, Saskatchewan — Bethel Lutheran is in the final steps toward the completion of their new church building. Last fall, men from the congregation raised several thousand dollars by doing custom combining.

In Memoriam

Julia Berkland, 104, passed away on November 12, 1996. Funeral services were held at Bethlehem Lutheran in Morris, Illinois, where she had been a long-time member.

Juline Selliken, 84, Grafton, North Dakota, passed away on July 23, 1996. He helped organize Bethel Free Lutheran in Grafton and attended the early organizational meetings of the AFLC in the 1960s.

Roy Rasmussen, 83, McHenry, North Dakota, passed away on December 1, 1996. Funeral services were held at Bethany Lutheran in Binford on December 5. He was preceded in death by his wife, Beatrice (Dyrud) on December 12, 1992. He is survived by one brother, Lawrence and one sister, Myrtle Dyrud; one daughter, Arlitte, Christine, ND; sons Richard, Monticello, MN; and Pastor James Rasmussen, Park River, ND; and eight grandchildren.

Volunteers needed — Help remodel the World Missions fur-
lough home on Saturdays begin-
ning in February. Call the ARC
at (715) 755-3131.

Memorial Gifts

October/November, 1996

Name	Given by	Department
Roy Mohagen	Pastor Bruce/Karen Dalager Irene Westby Pastor Elden/Faith Nelson Clarence/Edna Quanbeck Pastor Lyle/Mary Aadahl Pastor Raynard Huglen Gerry/Karen Knudsvig Pastor Jim/Jane Rasmussen Erwin/Bethel Cudmore Vernon/Dorothy Russum Robert/Helen Knutson Bonita A. McMartin	AFLTS Home Missions AFLBS World Missions General Fund
Oline Skeie	Aini Myking	AFLBS
William Waterworth	Ruby Holmaas Edgar/Nora Rokke Gordon/Gladys Rugland Donald/Donna Peterson	AFLBS AFLBS World Missions General Fund
Erling Johnson	Mildred Peterson	AFLBS
Norman Peterson	King/Elva Auestad	AFLTS
Constance Grothe	Gordon/Gladys Rugland	AFLTS
Olga Norquist	Medicine Lake WMF	AFLTS
Lily Tjomsland	Pastor Bruce/Karen Dalager	AFLBS
Muriel Christopherson	Gerry/Karen Knudsvig	AFLBS
Wauburn Poissant	Nels/Violet Flom	AFLBS
Carl Rusten	Dorothy Nelson	World Missions
David Ekberg	Judith Wold	AFLBS
Hjalmer Hanson	Alice Hanson Florence Bredeson Leslie/Verna Dahl Larry/Lori Olson	AFLBS AFLTS Home Missions World Missions
E. Liedberg	J. Vedaa and F. Wittmayer	World Missions
Ed Odegaard and	Otto Seidelman	Home Missions
Ruth Kvilhaug	Edna/Helny/Inger Ohnstad	World Missions
S. Enns	Gerry/Karen Knudsvig	AFLBS
Martin Valentinsen	Hazel Holland	AFLTS
Arlene Hennum	St. Paul's Lutheran, Fargo, ND	AFLBS
Alice Gunderson	Donald/Barbara Anderson	Home Missions
Violet Flom	Kenneth/Mary Nash	AFLBS
Erling Skarderud	James/Mary Rolf	AFLTS
Bertha Nelson	Mavis Tenneboe	AFLBS
Myrtle Langemo	Randall/Karen Pederson	AFLBS
Vivian Trumbo	Friends	AFLBS
Richard Blestrud	Gerry/Karen Knudsvig	AFLBS
Janice Koski and	Kenneth/Mary Nash	Home Missions
Sophie Egge	Mavis Tenneboe	AFLTS
Freda Johnson		
Dr. Howard Peterson		

Missionaries Connely and Carolyn Dyrud (center) visited with family at the December 8 AFLC Schools Christmas concert. They had just arrived from Brazil to begin their year of furlough. To arrange a visit to your congregation, contact the Dyruds through the World Mission office at (612) 545-5631.

AFLC Schools' Mission Week — The annual Schools' Mission Week is scheduled for February 2-5, 1997, at the 3120 East Medicine Lake Blvd. campus in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Missionary Connely Dyrud will be the featured speaker. The theme is "The Open Door" from Revelation 3:8. The week's focus is to encourage and challenge individuals to consider a missions career.

Silverhill, Alabama — Zion Lutheran recently had a benefit fish fry and White Elephant Sale for two members, Inez and Fred Langenbach, to help with medical expenses. Aid Association for Lutherans provided matching funds to bring the check to \$5,700. Charles Canning, a Zion member, said, "There was such Christian love and fellowship you could see and feel the Holy Spirit working in our congregation and in the neighboring communities." Silverhill is in the Gulf Coast area. Winter AFLC visitors are welcome.



Minot, North Dakota — Bethel Free Lutheran Women's Missionary Federation presented five ladies with an honorary membership pin. They are: Verna Peterson, Ilene Rohe, Arlene Klosterman, Laverne Johnson, and Martha May.

Dickinson, North Dakota — Our Savior's Lutheran will host the Western North Dakota-Eastern Montana District Mid-Winter Bible Conference on February 7-9. The theme is, "Sow to the Spirit" — Reap from the Spirit" from Galatians 6:7-10. Pastor Robert Lee, AFLC president, and Pastor Les Johnson, Minnewauken, North Dakota, are the guest speakers. For more information and lodging, call (701) 227-1652.

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences — January 1 - November 30, 1996

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN OCTOBER	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$241,472.00	\$17,259.33	\$179,132.84	74
Seminary	122,626.00	9,499.81	77,982.90	64
Bible School	184,696.00	14,824.09	136,539.82	74
Home Missions.	253,270.00	19,533.57	172,885.04	68
World Missions.	341,257.00	36,944.56	345,783.21	1.01
Capital Investment	24,639.00	1,762.26	13,618.85	55
Parish Education	49,289.00	5,060.01	40,003.55	81
Church Extension	15,018.00	4,318.45	11,287.59	75
TOTALS	\$1,232,267.00	\$109,202.08	\$977,233.80	79
TOTALS 1995	1,484,851.00	109,876.29	983,106.70	66
Goal 92%				

PEOPLE AND PLACES



Ottawa, Illinois — Last fall, Faith Lutheran Sunday school brought money each week to buy school supplies for needy children in Brazil. Each week children brought something different: pennies for pencils; nickels for notebooks; dimes for dictionaries; and quarters for crayons. The children's excitement increased as they saw a total of \$340.02 collected.



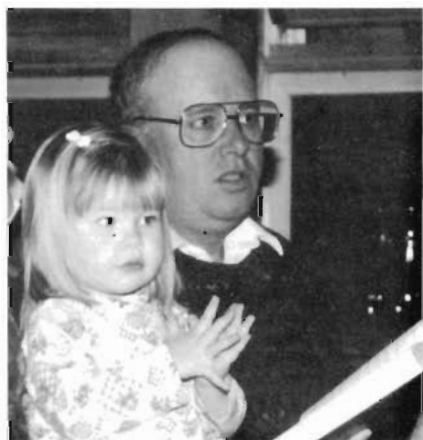
Badger, Minnesota — Pictured are the recent new members at Badger Creek Lutheran. The pastor of the Badger Creek and Oiland Parish is (front left) Alan Arneson. Oiland also accepted two new members after concluding the membership class.



AFLBS Choir Director Jerry Nelson and his wife relaxed at the Parents' Day service on December 7.



The annual Parents' Day basketball game was won by the AFLBS Conquerors over the AFLBS alumni.



Don Swanson and Meredith, Upsala, Minnesota, were among the 500 people who attended the Christmas concert December 8.



The AFLBS Choral Club at the Christmas concert December 8.

Loving people into the kingdom

Comments are often made regarding sports contests: "That team leads in every statistic except the one that matters the most — the score." A basketball team can have more rebounds, less turnovers and less fouls called against them, and still lose the game. The other statistics matter some but only insofar as they affect the statistic that counts the most — the score.

It is very easy in life to fall prey to the temptation to expend much energy racking up good statistics. We can knock ourselves out serving others. We can have a long record of perfect attendance at all church functions. We can have drawers full of canceled checks showing how much we have given to the Lord's work. We can know a multitude of people who will come to our funeral and say wonderful things about us. The statistics can be impressive. But are those the statistics that count? Are those the things that win the game?

God inspired the Apostle Paul to write: "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing (I Corinthians 13:1-3, NIV). The importance of the other actions and attributes listed pales in comparison to the necessity of love.

Jesus taught that the first and greatest commandment is "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' ... And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (Matthew 22:37-40, NIV). Love for God and for others is the key to "winning the game."

Love leads to evangelism. Witnessing to what God has done and pointing people to Christ is to logically and naturally flow from our lives because of the love in our hearts. If sharing the good news of Jesus Christ and seeing people come to Him isn't of a concern, the question has to be asked if a true love for the Lord and for people exists. And if love is not real and present, attempts at evangelism will be little more than legalistic efforts to avoid

punishment and earn God's favor.

Many evangelism methods exist. Much training through books, courses, videos and other means are available. A lot of them have value and are worthwhile. They cannot take the place, however, of the best means for growing in our effectiveness at reaching people and leading them into a personal relationship with Jesus. The best means is nurturing our love for the Lord and seeking His help in developing greater love for the people around us; the people He loves as much as He loves us; the people He loves so much that He gave His life for them.

Individuals are going to be influenced and won for Christ not by the one who knows the techniques best, but by the one who loves them the most. Someone who loves Jesus deeply and knows Him in a living, personal way will be much more effective at leading people to the Lord than one who simply knows many facts about God and has great skills.

God has left us on the playing field for a reason. It is not for our enjoyment. Heaven would be better by far. It is not that He has no room for us in paradise. He does not keep us here so that we can acquire things nor so that we can impress others with our knowledge and piety. We are here to, out of our love for Christ, witness to the great work God has

done through the cross and resurrection of Jesus and love people into the kingdom of God. Are you busy living out the purpose for why you are still in the game?

What counts in the game of life is, by the grace of God through faith, being in a personal relationship with Jesus and then leading others into that same kind of relationship. Other things, other statistics can have some impact and play a role, but when it comes to the end of it all, they matter little.

If life had a final test many of the questions we would expect to be on it would be missing. We would not be asked for letters of reference or a list of achievements. I believe instead we would be asked, "Do you know Jesus as Lord and Savior? Do you love Him? And have you done your best to love others and help them to know Jesus too?" If we can answer yes to those questions, because of God's great love for us, we pass with flying colors.

— Pastor Craig Johnson

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The Association Retreat Center 1997 Schedule



Association Retreat Center
2372 30th Ave.
Osceola, Wisconsin 54020
(715) 294-2877

We have been busy this winter sprucing up some dorm rooms and getting a good start on Shunem. The windows and doors are in and the interior walls are going up. Our carpenters wanted it insulated, too. Seems it's easier to work when your hands and feet aren't frozen! We are really excited about our retreat schedule this year. We've lined up some great speakers and are planning new retreats.

January 31-February 2

Senior Sno Daze has a new name this year. *SidebySide* will be focusing on the importance of developing relationships with other Christians and celebrating the differences we all have. We'll be skiing at Trollhaugen and relaxing in the new hot tub!

February 21-23

Junior Sno Daze — more cold, wet, snowy fun!

March 7-8

Men's Retreat

April 18-20

A NEW retreat! Singles of all ages are invited to The ARC.

May 2-4

Women's Retreat

May 15-18

Summer Prep Fest has been moved from Memorial Day weekend. Please plan on bringing your muscles, tools, and *appetites* out to The ARC for this weekend and help us prepare for our summer season.

July 5-11

Family Camp is temporarily shifted to the month of July to accommodate those youth and adults who are attending the FLY conference in Colorado. Please take note that camp begins on Saturday and ends on Friday.

July 27-August 2

Youth Camp is for grades 4-8 this year.

October 3-5

Another NEW retreat! Persons who consider themselves *seniors* are welcome to come out and enjoy the beautiful fall colors of the St. Croix Valley. Also in the early planning stages, this retreat will feature a possible dinner cruise on the St. Croix River.

October 24-25

The Fall Family Retreat was great fun last year, so we're going to try it again! Thank you to all who came out to The ARC last year and to all who supported us through prayers and gifts of time and money. The support of our AFLC family helps make our ministry possible. We always welcome your support and suggestions. Call or write us any time!