

# THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

JULY 2005

search  
for  
wisdom

**S**tarting today, I'm officially unemployed. In a little more than a week, my husband and I will be homeless, too. No, it's not as bad as it seems. In fact, it's probably more exciting than anything I can describe. My husband, Andy, and I are leaving for Eastern Europe, where we will teach English and share Christ's love.

Throughout the summer, we will be traveling to Russia, Poland and Latvia with East European Missions Network. Serving as summer staff,

we will help lead five teams and more than 100 short-term missionaries in evangelism and discipleship ministry.

From packing and moving to making last-minute arrangements for our mission trip, there are plenty of preparations to be made. Yet, in spite of the excitement, my mind turns to the unknown that lies before us. I wonder to myself, "Am I really prepared for this? Will I be

safe? What if I fail?"

As Jesus commissioned the 12 apostles in Matthew 10, His message spoke clearly about the necessity of surrender. It wasn't the kind of exciting, motivational pep talk that accompanies the romanticism of missions, but more like a much-needed kick in the pants. I'm convinced that at least one of the apostles was thinking what I was thinking, and desperately in need of a word from Jesus.

For all the questions and fears I had about serving Him, Matthew 10:39 summed up what I needed to hear. "If you cling to your life, you will lose it, but if you give up your life for me, you will find it." Simply put, it's one or the other, take it or leave it.

From somewhere amidst the chaos of cardboard boxes and packing tape, He makes His will clear. It's a much simpler answer than what I was expecting. Summing it up in one word, He says, "Surrender."

Despite how much I love to have control over the future, that bit of comfort cannot compare to the peace of giving it all to the one who gave it all for me. Jesus' example of leaving His Father and the comforts of His heavenly home is a powerful encouragement.

No, it's not the answer I was looking for, but it's the answer I needed. Before I can be ready for what He's calling me to do, my heart has to be fully His. Fully surrendered to His will and all that lies in the coming months, whatever that may be. Trusting in His promise, which is as true for me as it was for the disciples 2,000 years ago, I await His perfect plan.

The lyrics to one of my favorite songs echo in my mind. "Rescue me from hanging on to this life ... I won't give up on giving you the chance to blow my mind." I pray that somehow, in spite of my weaknesses, I will be obedient to His call and souls will be won.

I look forward to writing more in the coming months about our experiences in Eastern Europe. Your prayers are greatly appreciated as we, and many others, seek His Kingdom together.

— Monica Coyle

East European Missions Network



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## THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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“The more truly learned a person is, the humbler he is; for he knows how much he is still lacking, within what narrow boundaries his knowledge is confined, and how much there still remains unexplored.

— C.F.W. Walther  
*Law and Gospel*”

“What you believe at age 13 is pretty much what you’re going to die believing.

— George Barna”

“Students should unceasingly have it impressed upon them that holy life is not of less consequence than diligence and study, indeed that study without piety is worthless. ... whoever grows in learning and declines in morals is on the decrease rather than the increase. ... everything must be directed to the practice of faith and life.

— Philip Spener  
*Pia Desideria*”

“Even if we get the church to pay proper attention to children, there are still 80 percent who don’t walk into a church every week. We need to be concerned about the children outside the church, too.

— Reese Kauffman”




# the beginning of knowledge

*“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.” Proverbs 1:7*

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By Pastor Nathan Hoff

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A recent New York Times best-selling book states that information has been the most important form of capital, and that the Internet is

the grand equalizer of information. Take me for instance. I'm not that adept at fixing cars. I can do an oil change, a wash, and a vacuum, but not much else. If a car repair shop told me I had a bad defibrillator that was going to take a few hours to replace, but it had to be done immediately before that problem turned into something far worse, I would probably respond, "Oh, I'm glad you found that; better fix it now."

Thankfully, I have access to information that equalizes the vast divide between information-poor me and the information-rich car repair shop.

Where do you go when you have a question? Where do you look for information? Where do you look for advice on relationships? Dr. Phil? What about children? "Nanny 911"? What about work? The business section of your paper?

## The right start

King Solomon was one who understood the value of knowledge. When the Lord asked Solomon in a dream what he wanted, Solomon responded, "An understanding mind ... that I may discern between good and evil" (I Kings 3:5-9). God gave Solomon just what he asked for, and it was said, "People of all nations came to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and from all the kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom"

(I Kings 4:34).

The source of Solomon's wisdom was not Solomon, but the Lord. Solomon himself, inspired by the Holy Spirit of God, directs us to the Source — the Beginning. Solomon is clearly saying that to gain knowledge, you have to start at the right place. It's not just in asking the right questions, it's in asking the right Person. Do you have a marriage or family question? Ask the One who wrote the book on relationships, and who instituted marriage (Genesis 2:18). Maybe you have a work-related issue? Seek the Lord, because work was His idea in the first place (Genesis 2:15). The right start is the Lord.

## The right attitude

I've never seen a more sober group of people than the eight who were sitting in the front of the sanctuary looking at peers, parents, and their pastor in the confirmation



exam just a few Sundays ago. They were afraid. They feared forgetting what was memorized. They feared looking foolish in front of everybody. I asked one girl to tell me a certain commandment and to give me the meaning of that commandment, and she started the meaning correctly, "We are to fear and love God so that ..." Luther starts the smaller catechism where, I think, Solomon would tell him to start: The fear of the Lord.

Some might respond, "That was the right way to regard God before Christ, but now there is no place for fear, even fear of God." Let me suggest three reasons why Christians are to fear the Lord.

First, Scripture doesn't change. God's character is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8; Revelation 22:13). When Jesus came, He showed us what God is like (Colossians 1:15), but the nature and character of God did not change. God didn't go from being just and righteous, to being kind and loving. He

has always been righteous and He will always be righteous. He has always been loving and He always will be loving. This God, revealed in Jesus, is to be feared and loved.

Second, the New Testament affirms "the fear of the Lord" as the right attitude for believers. Look up Acts 9:31, an early progress report of the Christian church. How did our early brothers and sisters walk? "In the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit." Paul tells the Corinthian congregation that our lives are to be lived knowing that we will stand before the judgment seat of Christ (II Corinthians 5:10), so he says, "Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others."

Third, the glory of God and the comfort of souls are at stake if God isn't feared. If your god is small, he isn't glorious. If your god isn't much to fear, he probably can't help you much. "In the fear of the Lord, one has strong confidence" (Proverbs 14:26). Listen to what I heard Father Kallistos Ware, an Eastern Orthodox

bishop, say about the fear of the Lord. He said that fear and love of God are not contradictory, but complementary. We are like a child who is thrown into the air by a strong and trustworthy father and experiences in flight a gasp of fear, only to be caught in the arms of a loving father's embrace. We know the love of God more when we understand and experience a right fear of the Lord.

The catechism explained by H.U. Sverdrup asks, "Of how many kinds is the fear of God?" He answers, "Of two kinds: slavish fear and child-like fear." Then, "What is meant by slavish fear?" Answer, "When we fear God because we are afraid of punishment." Finally, "What is meant by child-like fear?" Answer, "When we love God so dearly that we wish to do nothing that is against His will."

Now that's the right attitude.

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Hoff is pastor at Solid Rock Free Lutheran in Anoka, Minn.

# common Ground





# Everyone can be challenged to learn something new

By Stephanie Tallman

**N**ot everyone grew up in a Christian home. Not everyone knows the books of the Bible and the Easter story.

So how do you reach a class full of the spiritual haves and have nots?

At Hope Lutheran Church in North Minneapolis, our Sunday school ministry is full of both children who come on their own from our community and children who have grown up in the church.

This does work — but how?

We have found that it is important to choose curriculum that is focused on God and His Word. Specifically, the focus needs to be on God's attributes and what He has and will do, rather than on topical stories: Noah, Adam and Eve, etc. While these are important stories for children to know, they cannot be the main focus of the class.

## ✧ Do you know?

Nobody — not even those from solid Christian homes — knows all the amazing attributes about God. So that is where we have been able to find that elusive common ground for kids with different upbringings. Here, we have found that there is less friction from the kids because they are on a level playing field. We haven't struggled with, "They don't know that?" because all the kids are learning new things.

There are times when unchurched kids get frustrated and might ask lots of questions because we are discussing stories they have not heard. This is a great time to pull in those with more knowledge because they know these stories. They can help make Bible stories

more contemporary and show how they can be applied to life now.

## ✧ Talk to God

Teaching the attributes of God brings us to the logical place where we discuss and practice prayer. We are able to talk about how we see God through prayer and answers to prayers. When God's purpose and plans become evident, children's hearts open up to this amazing God.

We have teachers who send reminder postcards home to encourage kids to be watching for how God is involved in their daily lives, through what they see and how they see God answering their prayers. On Sunday mornings they bring back their postcards to share with the class what they saw God do during the week. Sharing how they see God at work gets everyone, teachers included, more watchful and listening for God.

## ✧ Recalling Scripture

Discussions about prayer naturally move to Bible-memorization. Some students will be better than others. We have found it is often those who are learning it on their own, with no parental backup, who are learning more. This "stuff" is exciting. They have found there is a God who cares for them and has made promises He will keep.

But memorization and reading have to be modeled by the teachers. They need to show the kids how they did during the week with a weekly chart mapping out their reading and memory work. This has been a great

challenge for our teachers!

## ✧ Keeping it fresh

Focusing on God is important for both groups because story telling can get repetitive. Often when children are told about Noah for the hundredth time, they no longer hear anything and pull away. They all, both the believer and unbeliever, need to be challenged with God's exciting Word. They need to understand that God made this happen through His chosen people. Yes, Noah did choose to listen and do what God called him to do, but God did the work and kept His promises.

Each group is challenged to learn and understand in different ways — at the same time each week — when we focus on this amazing God who wants to know us and be known by us. When we spend time actively looking for God's hand in our lives, everybody, whether they have grown up in a Christian home or not, will come to know God in a personal way.

We no longer struggle quite as hard to reach kids from a variety of backgrounds because we are teaching and talking about God who created them, loves them, and has a plan for their lives. This is what each child longs to know and is definitely capable of grasping regardless of what their home life looks like.

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Tallman is the Children's Ministry director at Hope Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, Minn.

# Mentoring Teachers

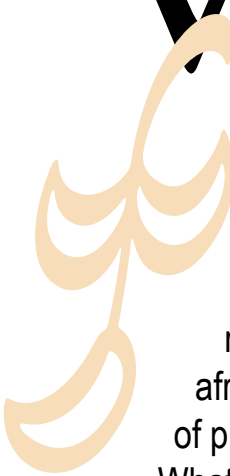
*Finding a way to jump-start your Sunday school resource pool*

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By Marian Christopherson

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We won't have enough Sunday school teachers this year. Mrs. Johnson thinks she's too old to teach. George has already taught for 10 years, so we can't expect him to keep doing it. David wants to teach fifth grade, but he recently transferred from a Baptist church, and I'm not sure he understands how the teachings of our Lutheran church differ.



Mandy loves young children, but she doesn't have any experience and is afraid of a room full of preschoolers.

What can we do?

For many congregations, it has become more and more difficult to find volunteers who are willing and able to teach Sunday school. Some who have the experience and skills want to retire, and

others who are willing may lack the spiritual maturity or the know-how. One solution to this problem could be teacher mentoring.

What if Mrs. Johnson came alongside Mandy, and George came alongside David as mentors to help prepare and equip them to be teachers?

## Mentors in history

The word "mentor" comes from a character in Homer's epic poem, "The Odyssey." Mentor was a faithful friend of the mythical hero Odysseus. When Odysseus went off to fight the Trojan Wars, Mentor served as teacher, guide and protector to Odysseus' son for a number of years.

The Greek word for mentor means *enduring* and gives a picture of a sustained relationship. The dictionary describes a mentor as a "wise and trusted counselor or teacher."

Much learning today takes place through computers and the Internet, eliminating the relational aspect of learning from a human teacher face-to-face. But many biblical examples demonstrate the value of a personal teaching/learning process where an experienced person helps another to gain skills, wisdom and understanding. Jesus mentored His disciples over a period of three years as He daily spent time with them and equipped them for the work He was calling them to do when He would no





longer be with them. Other examples in Scripture of mentoring relationships include Jethro and Moses, Moses and Joshua, Naomi and Ruth, Elijah and Elisha, and Paul and Timothy.

A mentoring relationship can be a very effective way to train Sunday school teachers, Bible study leaders, and youth ministry workers.

## ∞ Ins and outs

Teacher mentoring is an intentional placement of new teachers with experienced teachers so that knowledge and key skills can be gained in hands-on experiences. This process can be especially helpful for younger people, people who are new Christians, and people who are new to the church, but can also benefit experienced teachers as they review the basics of the Christian faith, the teachings of the church, the emphasis of the curriculum, and practical

teaching methods.

Prospective mentors should demonstrate a growing relationship with Christ, have an understanding of Lutheran doctrine, and have a positive attitude about the congregation and its educational ministries. They should also work well with others, understand the teaching-learning process, have good classroom management skills, and come to class well prepared.

Prospective teachers should be willing to learn, have a desire to study the Bible and grow in faith, and be an active member of a congregation.

## ∞ Getting started

How can you find out who may be interested in being mentored as a teacher? One idea is to ask for volunteers to assist in Sunday school classes. Have sign-ups for parents, young adults, and others who might want to be “helpers” in the class-

room. Let them work with children and participate in classroom activities in an informal manner to see if they would be interested in being trained as teachers.

Another way is to conduct a survey once a year, especially for new people whose interests you may not know. Maintain an ongoing record of the gifts and interests of the congregation that relate to educational programs. When you recognize people who may be interested, ask them personally if they would consider being trained to teach. Assure them that there is no obligation to commit to a full-time teaching role after the training process is complete.

Teachers-in-training should be carefully matched with appropriate mentors. Generally, match people who would get along well if they weren't in a mentoring relationship. Anticipate possible conflicts before placing two people together, and be

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See MENTOR, page 14



# Iron Sharpens iron

*Are small group Bible studies the missing key to your church's success?*

By Pastor Steve Carlson

**W**hy should churches care about small group Bible studies? Often they seem so insignificant, poorly attended, difficult to sustain, and sometimes are poorly led and without a clear focus. Perhaps this is why they are so neglected in the majority of churches.

But, there is more to these Bible studies than meets the eye.

They hold the potential to be the “spiritual green-houses” for those who seriously want to be disciples of Jesus.

In September 1989, I was a student at a secular state university that in many aspects had a significant degree of hostility toward Christianity. I was part of a small group of students who decided to begin holding a weekly Bible study in hopes of deepening our own personal spiritual growth and evangelizing the campus. At that time, no organized Christian student group existed there. In the next three years, God grew this fragile little

group into the largest student organization on the campus. Our life-blood and strength was the small group Bible study.

During those years I became convinced of the necessity for spiritual growth in individuals and churches. Now, as a pastor of three churches, I continue to be convinced of the importance of small group Bible studies.

## Expect growth

Dr. Robert Coleman, a specialist on this topic, wrote, “People who are involved in small group Bible studies increase their spiritual growth rate by 700 percent compared to when they only attended Sunday morning church services.” Why is the increase so dramatic? Because they help people come together, get to know each other on a deeper level, focus their attention on God’s Word, and encourage each other to apply what they have learned to their lives. They are

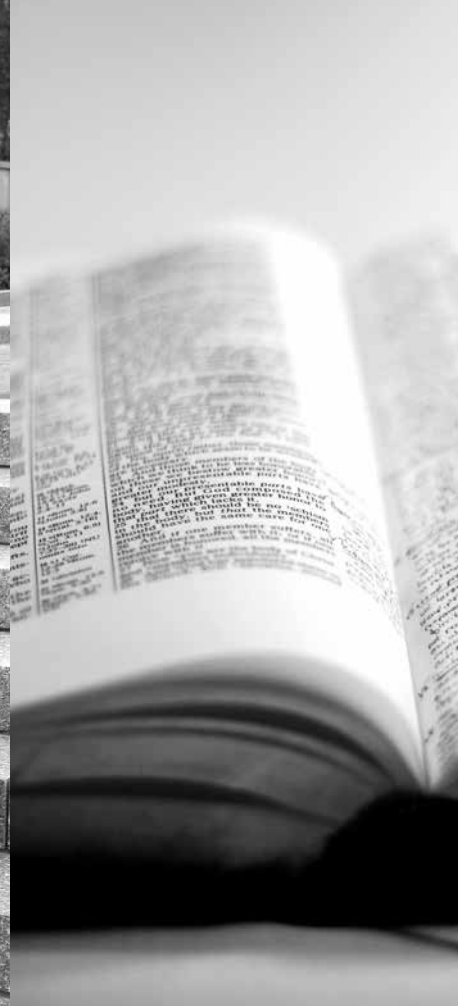
strengthened and held accountable through prayer and weekly follow up.

One hour of teaching on Sunday morning is insufficient in developing Christians who are going to think and live as disciples of Jesus “24-7” in a complex and challenging culture.

In Acts 2, the church grew by 3,000 in one day (v.41). The very next verses reveal components and venues that are required to disciple those kinds of numbers. We read that they met in the “temple courts” and in “their homes” (v.46). They had large groups (Sunday morning worship service) and small groups (mid-week Bible Studies).

Perhaps the largest church in the world is in Seoul, South Korea. Pastored by Dr. Cho, it has more than 155,000 members. The backbone of the church is the 25,000 small group Bible studies (cells). They attribute the dynamic spiritual life and witness of the church to their small group commitment. It is





As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another. As iron sharpens iron, so

in small groups that people are further able (and challenged) to study, learn, discuss, and apply the truths of Scripture.

In Proverbs 27:17, we are reminded, “As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.” We need people in our lives who will challenge us, pray for us, love us, and encourage us to grow. Small group Bible studies are great opportunities for us to safely and courageously allow these friends to help us further develop as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

## Good leadership

Small group Bible studies serve a vital need in our churches, but only if they are led and directed in a healthy, knowledgeable, humble and focused manner. The leader and participants must always love and care

for each other because as we seek to grow we also become more vulnerable. A leader must study diligently and be well prepared (II Timothy 2:15) so that the truths of God are correctly presented. A leader’s job is not necessarily to know all the answers, but to guide the participants in praying through the Scripture passage and letting the text speak for itself.

The leader certainly needs to know the main point of the passage etc., but should make sure to involve the participants in mining the gems from the passage. In the book “Small Group Leaders’ Handbook,” Jimmy Long reminds readers of the Chinese proverb, “Give a man a fish and he will live one day. Teach a man to fish and will live a lifetime.” Long goes on to write, “Therefore, the role of the small group leader is not to teach a lesson but to create an envi-

ronment through the use of questions so that the group as a whole can see what God is trying to say to them, while at the same time learning the process of Bible study.” A leader also needs to humbly serve the larger mission of the congregation and resist the temptations of pride and power that can come with leading a successful small group.

Two concerns many leaders have is silence or too much talking. A quiet group will need the leader to draw individuals out with particular questions. A group that has much to say and that often gets off track on different subjects needs to be gently reigned in. A couple of my favorite ways are to simply ask, “Where in the text did you see that?” or “What verse led you to that conclusion?” I have also found that having a “tangent list” and writing tangent topics on the list (for later discussion), but



one man sharpens another. As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.

refusing to discuss them during the study is helpful. Usually, after the study, the irresistibly tantalizing tangents are of little interest anyway.

## The basics

Today there seems to be an endless supply of resources, guides, studies, and methods for small groups. But three key principles need to always be kept in sight.

First, what does the text say? This involves simple observation of the verses and makes use of good investigative questions.

Second, what does it mean? This is the critical step of discovering what the passage means. What is God communicating to us? The careful observations of step one are crucial for the interpretation of step two to be correct.

Third, how should I respond? In other words, application. How can I apply this to my life? James 1:22-25 details for us the necessity of being doers, and not hearers only of the Word of God. God desires to change our hearts and lives, not just fill our heads with knowledge.

The aged Apostle John wrote three letters near the end of his life (I, II, and III John) in which he expressed his heart's desire that Christians walk in God's truth and in love with each other. Practice. Small group Bible studies do just that. They give us a group of people to know, love and with whom to share life. These individuals study Scripture together and apply it to life with prayerful and loving accountability in the context of Christian fellowship as they grow as followers of Jesus.

Bill Hybels, founder of Willow

Creek Community Church, in his book "Rediscovering Church," wrote that one of his greatest regrets is that he didn't move Willow Creek toward this type of small-group approach years earlier. Today he encourages "all new start-up churches to seriously consider such a program as their starting point for ministry."

Small groups are biblical and effective. They should be part of every congregation that desires to develop mature disciples of Jesus Christ.

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Carlson worked on staff with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship for eight years, where he trained college students to be small group Bible study leaders. He now serves the Dalton Parish, Dalton, Minn.



sure both are comfortable with the arrangement before it begins.

## ∞ The relationship

Early in the mentoring relationship, establish guidelines and expectations. Both parties should agree upon the specific time period and depth of commitment — whether short- or long-term. A short-term mentor may work with someone about 6-8 weeks. Long-term would be a full school year or more. Take time to explain standard classroom procedures, review curriculum being used, describe age level characteristics, tell about incoming students and families, and show where classroom supplies and resources are kept.

As the process begins, potential teachers should first observe different classes to be exposed to a variety of situations and age groups. Then they can discuss their experiences to help them discover what best suits their interests and abilities. Arrange for them to begin serving as student teachers in a specific classroom under the direction of a mentor. At first, the teacher-in-training will mainly serve as a helper. But as he or she becomes more comfortable with the students, assign a specific area of responsibility each week, such as leading prayer time, telling the Bible

story, teaching the memory verse, reviewing the lesson, or leading crafts and music. Offer plenty of affirmation for things done well and carefully offer suggestions where improvement is needed. Gradually increase responsibility and participation until they are ready to teach the entire class session.

Having a weekly planning meeting will be helpful and should include praying together, evaluating the previous class session, sharing insights from personal Bible study done ahead of time, brainstorming creative ideas, writing objectives for the next lesson, planning the teaching session, and deciding responsibilities. Meeting in person is best, but much could also be done over the phone or through email when necessary.

## ∞ Ultimate goal

Teacher mentoring is a relational process that proceeds at various speeds according to each individual situation. Some people will be ready to teach sooner than others. Be patient and allow whatever time is needed. Ultimately, the goal is to equip teachers of the Word for the building up of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-13). Encourage potential teachers in the process, and remind them of the power of the Holy Spirit to equip them and teach their students. As the Holy Spirit guides the process and mentor and mentee study the Word of God, the result will be growth in spir-

itual wisdom and understanding and an enriched teaching ministry for the congregation.

Though the characters in these scenarios are fictitious, consider what could happen through a teacher mentoring process.

*After six months, Mandy is now teaching 10 preschoolers with Mrs. Johnson serving as her helper. Through Mrs. Johnson's encouragement, Mandy has gained the confidence to handle young children and has been challenged to grow in her faith. Mrs. Johnson still feels useful as she continues to help Mandy in the classroom as needed, but she no longer has all the responsibility for teaching. Mandy is amazed at Mrs. Johnson's wisdom, and Mrs. Johnson has experienced great joy in passing on some of her teaching skills gained through years of experience.*

*After one year, George and David decided to continue their teacher-mentoring relationship for another year. As they meet weekly for Bible study and planning sessions, George has been able to help answer David's questions about Lutheran doctrine and give practical help in preparing Bible lessons. The two have also grown to be friends in Christ and have mutually encouraged one another in their Christian walk.*

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Christopherson is the director of the AFLC's Parish Education Department.

# mentoring in steps

**Prepare** — Lead a Bible study with current teachers to talk about the mentoring process and its purpose.

**Identify** — Together with experienced teachers who are willing to be mentors, identify those in your congregation who you think would make good teachers in the Sunday school, adult education program, or youth ministry.

**Ask** — Speak to potential teachers personally to see if they would be willing to be mentored over the next year. Explain the process and invite them to pray about it.

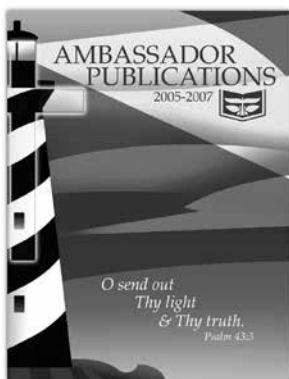
**Begin** — Place a prospective teacher in a classroom with an experienced teacher where one can observe the teaching session, learn how a lesson is prepared, and freely ask questions.

**Rejoice** — When the goals of the mentoring process have been achieved and the new teacher is ready to teach independently, celebrate the new ministry opportunities that this program brings to your Sunday school.

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*From "Mentoring Sunday School Teachers"  
(Teachers Interaction, vol. 45, no. 3) by Dee Christopher*





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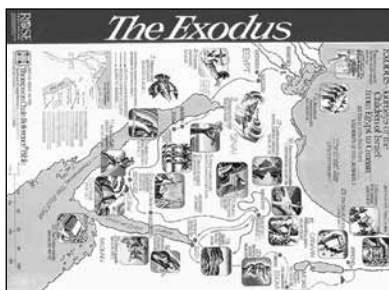
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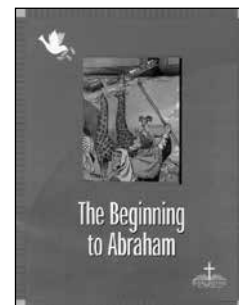
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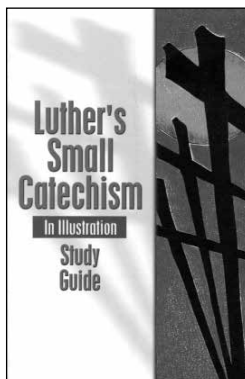
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### Luther's Small Catechism in Illustration

#### STUDY GUIDE

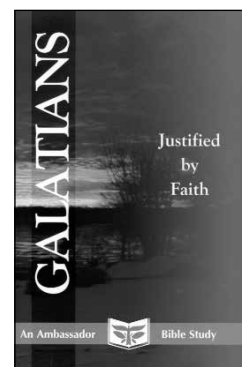
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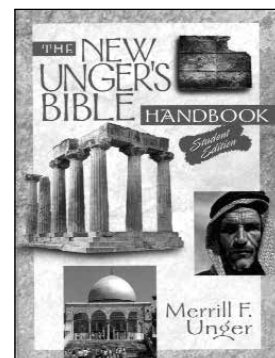
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## Youths of today need you to connect with them

Every person in the local congregation is vitally needed for the ongoing work of Jesus Christ (Romans 12:4,5). Helping one another in our relationship with Christ is the mission of the Church. It is the goal and joy of the Church that all members work together to serve and love the Lord.

Young adults of today face many struggles and uncertainties. Ministry to youths in our churches is of tremendous importance. Young people are called upon to set an example for other believers in what they say and how they live. What does the Word of

God say concerning youths?

✿ **I Timothy 4:12** says, “Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.” Faith and purity are the “watch words” Paul gives to Timothy.

Faith is necessary for youths to know Jesus and make Him known to others. It can be strengthened with teaching tools such as Sunday school, vacation Bible school, youth

Bible studies, and attending a Bible school or Christian college.

Purity involves living a life that is pleasing to Christ in word and deed. Putting purity into practice can be very difficult. Satan’s desire is to soften our conscience by attacking our purity. Take Jesus with you wherever you go.

✿ **I Timothy 2:22** says, “Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord.” Don’t walk away from sin — *run*. Pursue those things you know are right. Ask Christ to help you be sensitive to those things that would bring harm to yourself or others.

✿ **Psalms 119:9-11** says, “How can a young man

keep his way pure? By living according to your word. I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.” Ask often, “What does the Bible say about this?” Make reading the Word of God so much a part of your life that it will become as common a habit as brushing your teeth or combing your hair.

### ✿ You can be an encourager

We can encourage youths in so many ways. As you consider ministry in your congregation, here are a few stewardship suggestions.

Try sending a young adult to Bible camp. Recently I talked to two girls in my hometown and asked what they were doing for the summer. They told me of summer jobs and family events. But both shocked me when they said they wanted to go to Bible camp but did not have the money. These girls do not attend our church, but that does not matter. My prayer is that the way will be made for them to go to Bible camp.

Support AFLC Youth Ministries. Pray for and financially support the work of Director Pastor Kevin Olson and our ministry staff, personally and through your local youth group.

Pray for and financially support Christian education in your church, public and private school settings, and at AFLBS and AFLTS.

Adopt a kid. Invest yourself personally in the life of a young person in your church. Take special interest in their lives by doing things with and for them. If you sense a more in-depth concern, adoption and foster care agencies are in desperate need of placement homes today. Maybe the Lord is calling you to be involved in this way.

Pray for and attend youth events such as district youth rallies, the FLY Convention, Youth Leadership Training Conference, and Campus Days at AFLBS.

May the Lord richly bless our AFLC as we stand together for the cause of Christ. “And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen” (Philippians 4:19, 20).

— Pastor Mark Antal  
Park River/Edinburg, N.D.  
AFLC Stewardship Board







# God's marvelous works

## Olson family returns from nine months in Tanzania

room in their tribal language while I waited and smiled. One of my traveling companions asked me to read some Scriptures about faith for her. I read some familiar verses, not quite sure what was going on, and then she knelt down on the dirt floor of the house and invited Jesus into her life. When I asked why she had been moved to faith, the man who was with me said, "Because she received the cross." It was an example of the Lord's marvelous deeds.

The Lord is at work in the lives of the lay pastors who serve the congregations. There are very few ordained pastors, so they can only visit each church once every three months. The lay pastors faithfully serve their congregations every week and leave their families for days at a time, riding bicycle or walking for two to six hours to get to the church. Confirmation and member visitation are also a part of their responsibilities, as well as the three- to four-hour worship services. Most don't get paid anything, but those who do would get no more than \$15 a month. They say their reward will be in heaven. I say that is a marvelous work of God.

Another work is the recent translation of the Bible into Iraqw, their tribal language. A Norwegian woman had spent 40 years of her life translating the Bible, completing it last summer.

Another work is at the Waama Bible School. Students, ages 25-60, leave home, work, families, and fields to study God's Word and then travel to churches on the weekends. Some of them are bringing the gospel to the unreached people groups of the Rift Valley. Others are doing crusades in the churches. Still others are church planting using mud and stick buildings to begin ministries in new areas.

It is easy to look at the cultural and physical differences around us, but are we seeing the marvelous deeds of the Lord? Let us declare HIS glory among the nations!

— Pastor Kevin Olson  
AFLC Youth Ministries director

**M**ud huts versus model homes, rugged roads versus endless interstate, lost letters versus Internet ease. Yes, there are some differences from life in Tanzania to here in the United States. We could share many stories, but what is far more important than culture or conveniences is what God is doing!

Psalm 96:3 says, "Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples."

The Lord is at work in Tanzania. We saw it in the unity of the body of Christ. Before we were able to speak Swahili, we were worshiping, fellowshiping and working with brothers and sisters in Christ whom we had never met. We met Christians from literally every continent who loved Jesus and had come to Tanzania to declare the glory of the Lord.

The Lord is at work in stirring people to faith. At one home I gave a lady a little white cross. She said, "Thank you," but quickly handed it to her husband. We were in a hurry and late for a showing of the Jesus film, so I just gave her another, which she said her daughter would appreciate. After giving her a third, she started speaking with the others in the



# God *knows*

Be ready to reach people He has prepared

“For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures” (I Corinthians 15:3).

I sat on an old worn-out chair that was covered with a blanket. A dim light lit the corner of the tiny living room in the Melo home. Facing me was Adriano Melo. He quit drinking six months ago after getting in trouble with the law and being sentenced to one year of community service. Though Adriano had

er, sister and little brother; and his mother-in-law.

They were all smiling and laughing, eager to get into the lesson in the Scriptures that we were about to study.

What a joy for me, too. You see, planting a church in Brazil is not much different from planting a church in the U.S. Yet when God sends us to some place, it is because He has a purpose for us to reach people. He knows who are crying out to Him, though they might not know it themselves.

Not much different from Jesus going through Samaria to reach the Samaritan woman, or to Jericho to stay with Zacchaeus, or crossing the stormy Sea of Galilee to minister to the demon-possessed man in the region of the Gerasenes. Jesus knows who is crying out to Him. People lost in the craziness of this world in which we live. People who have made wrong choices and now are living on the brink of despair. People who think that life is hopeless so what's the point. People ripe for the picking.

God knows — and we know — that Jesus is the only answer. How wonderful it is when God brings us in contact with these people, and they so readily give their hearts to Him. I have been blessed in leading this little group to Jesus and seeing them grow as I disciple them. They have already requested baptism, marriage and other good things.

How fun it will be to look back some day and say as Paul did, “For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures” (I Corinthians 15:3). That's the good news!

— Pastor Jonathan Abel  
Maringá, Brazil

been a drunk for some years, he is still a very young man.

Also there in front of me was the rest of Adriano's family: his wife, Edineusa, who was carrying their second child; his 4-year-old daughter; his older deaf brother and wife with their new blond, blue-eyed baby boy; his younger brother and girlfriend (who happens to be Edineusa's sister), his father and moth-



# the challenge

## Sign up for World Class seminar

www.aflcwomen.org

**WMF**

**H**ow do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time. In Acts 1:8, Jesus gave the disciples the Great Commission to "... be my witnesses

both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." What a task! Evangelizing the world can seem as daunting as eating an elephant, but if you take it one person at a time, it can be done.

The Great Commission is still valid today. We are called to be His witnesses. The World Class Christian seminar, offered by the WMF, is a wonderful way to ignite the spark of desire to share the gospel with the world. This seminar is designed to motivate you beyond the ordinary to the extraordinary. When you're done, you'll be world class.

Would you benefit from this seminar? Just ask yourself these questions:

✿ Are you simply an observer in the Body of Christ, or are you an active participant? If we do not actively challenge our faith, we will stay in our

own little pre-fabricated world of comfort, a cocoon of our own making. We stay where we feel safe.

✿ Is your focus on whether or not you are fulfilled and happy or do you look for opportunities to center your attention on others' needs? An inward focus seeks to maintain "my happiness."

✿ Do you direct your faith into practical and relevant issues in the world? Deeds prove to others that faith is there.

✿ Are your paths directed by you or the Lord? If He were to show you a new path, would you take it? Would you even recognize it?

✿ Have you worshiped with those of another culture? With their traditions? In their language? By doing so we can get a preview of Heaven. The Body of Christ is not just my local church, with familiar faces; it is "every nation, tribe, people and language ..." (Revelation 7:9).

Christ is our example. When we imitate Him, we please the Father. "For God so loved the world ..." (John 3:16).

Consider this an invitation to join in a world-



class elephant barbeque. Will you sponsor this Saturday seminar for the women of your church? Your responsibilities would include preparing refreshments for the day and paying for the mileage of the presenter. The financial obligation is minimal, but the blessings will be innumerable.

— Vicki Johnson  
Amery, Wis.

## seminar presenters

**T**here are **W**omen **W**MF trained and eagerly awaiting an invitation from you to come and present the World Class Christian seminar to the women of your church. Choose your presenter, and then contact WMF National President Cheryl Skordahl to assist you in making arrangements.

We are looking for presenters for California, the Pacific Northwest and Texas areas. If interested, please contact Skordahl. Phone: (763)497-5863 Email: [wmf@aflc.org](mailto:wmf@aflc.org)

Following is a list of presenters:

**Eastern states** — Ruth Hinkelman

**Illinois/Southern Wisconsin** — Susan Garner

**Iowa/Southeast Minnesota** — Bonnie Handsaker

**Minnesota** — LaVonne Lundebrek, Jeannette Benson, Mary Pollestad

**Nebraska/Colorado** — Deanna Larson

**North Dakota/Montana** — Lynn Wellumson

**South Dakota/Southwest Minnesota** — Arlyn Jorenby, Elaine Kohl

**Southern states** — Debbie Giles (missionary/Mexico)

**Wisconsin** — Vicki Johnson

# AFLC News

New members were received at Calvary Free Lutheran, Mesa, Ariz., May 8. Pictured are, from left, Rey and Verona Anderson; Lois and Gordon Hove; Betty Orvedal; John, Rebekah, Sarah and Naomi Rowan; and Kim, Adam, Adrian and Olivia Warcken.



Maranatha Free Lutheran, Glyndon, Minn., received new members on April 3. Pictured are Steve and Ruth Stong and their daughter, Kiana, and Mark and LaVerle Severson. Standing (at left) with the new members is Pastor Dale Finstrom.



New members were received April 24 at Oiland Free Lutheran, rural Greenbush, Minn. Pictured are: back row (from left) Pastor LeRoy Flickinger, Doris Cooley, Jeff and Ann Marie Creekmore and Jeff Wahl. Front row: Dorothy Gross, Gage Creekmore, Aubrey, Jordan and Tami Wahl.



On May 15, members of Bethany Lutheran Church, Brodhead, Wis., dedicated their new church building. The original historic building, built in 1871, was burned down when the building was struck by lightning. AFLC President Pastor Robert Lee officiated at the dedication service.



New members were received at Bethany Free Lutheran Church, rural Abercrombie, N.D. Pictured, from left, are Pastor Jim Christenson, Carmen, Abby, Jack and Kent Ringdahl.





**Minnesota State Senator Michelle Bachmann served as emcee at the National Day of Prayer Breakfast May 5 at Vision of Glory Lutheran, Plymouth, Minn. The event, in its eighth year, hosted people from throughout the Twin Cities metro area and featured special speaker and Christian radio host Todd Friel.**

## Welcome to the AFLC

### Florida church formed in 1991

**P**eace Lutheran Church, Crescent City, Fla., came into existence on June 9, 1991, when eight families called Pastor William A. Olson. The church was formed to provide these believers with orthodox Lutheran worship and instruction in sound original Lutheran teachings.

Members of Peace Lutheran Church met in the Community Center of Pomona Park through Oct. 29, 1995. The first phase of their new building was completed Nov. 3, 1995. The second phase of construction began in October 2000. Members of the congregation did the work, which was completed in August 2001 and which doubled the sanctu-



**Peace Lutheran, Crescent City, Fla., recently joined the AFLC.**

ary seating capacity, tripled the altar size and provided a pastor's office, secretary's office, sacristy and classroom.

Members come from throughout Putnam County. Winter members come from Tennessee, Michigan, Indiana, Georgia, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York.

**Jesse Kneeland**, Glyndon, Minn., has accepted a call to serve on the staff of Amery Free Lutheran Church, Amery, Wis., as associate minister focusing on youth and Christian education. He will begin his ministry in mid-June.

**Pastor Jonathan Unverzagt**, Sparta, Wis., has been appointed editor of "The Christian Fellowship Banner," the newsletter of the Hauge Lutheran Foreign Mission. Pastor Unverzagt serves Christ is Lord Lutheran in Onalaska, Wis.

**Mark Johnson** has resigned as Dean of Students at AFLBS in order to accept a call to serve as associate pastor at the Dalton Free Lutheran Parish, Dalton, Minn., of Kvam Free Lutheran, Zion-Sarpsburg Lutheran and Tordenskjold Lutheran in Underwood, Minn. He will begin his ministry there in August.

**Pastor Ronald Dahle** was accepted

onto the AFLC clergy roster by the Coordinating Committee. Dahle is the son of the late Rev. Trygve Dahle, one of the founding pastors of the AFLC.

Members of the Coordinating Committee accepted a resolution of affiliation from **Trinity Lutheran**, Bastrop, Texas. The congregation, which recently formed, is served by lay leadership.

**Pastor Scott Guhl**, who recently graduated from AFLTS, has accepted a call to serve Vision of Glory Lutheran, Plymouth, Minn., as associate pastor. He was ordained on May 29.

**Pastor James Gerdeen** has retired from his ministry as pastor of Immanuel Lutheran, Springfield, Mo. He plans to work as a part-time staff member of Christian Leadership Ministries, a division of Campus Crusade that works with faculty, at different secular universities in Missouri.

**Pastor Wes Johanson** has retired from his ministry at the Winger, Minn., congregations of Dovre Lutheran and Union Lake Lutheran. Johanson is pursuing a chaplaincy ministry in Nampa, Idaho, where he hopes to work part-time in a hospital or nursing home.

**Jeanne Brandt**, 58, wife of Pastor Michael Brandt, died May 22. Brandt serves Abiding Savior Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D. Surviving are her husband, four daughters, Erika (Sherwin) DeWitt, Brandon, S.D., Alisha (Darryl) Nelson, Garretson, S.D., Kayla Brandt, Sioux Falls, and Ona (Benjamin) Deubner, Grand Forks, N.D.; five grandchildren, her parents, Lyell and Lois Johnson, Bloomington, Minn.; two brothers, Kim (Cathy) Johnson, Eagan, Minn.; Pastor Jim (Linda) Johnson, Plymouth, Minn; and one sister, Lori Alsdurf, Maplewood, Minn. The service was May 25 at Abiding Savior.

## AFLC schools graduation

AFLBS, MTI and AFLTS graduates, their families and friends gathered May 21 on the Plymouth campus for a graduation ceremony. At right, graduating seminarian Craig Scavo (right) is greeted by AFLTS middler Dean Iversen. At far right, graduates from all schools walk from Heritage Hall to the chapel for the service.



## Join Galilee Family Camp the second week of July

Galilee Family Camp, Lake Bronson, Minn., will run July 11-15. Speakers will be: Pastor Lloyd Quanbeck (evening); Pastor Gary Haug (adult Bible study); Pastor Tim Carlson (youth Bible study); and Rebecca Watson (children). Dean of the camp is Pastor Craig Wentzel. For more information and to register, contact the assistant dean and registrar, Lyle Mattson, at (218) 782-2310.

## August Golf Scramble to benefit AFLBS students

The AFLBS Scramble, the annual golfing fund-raiser for AFLBS scholarships, has been scheduled for Aug. 1 at Burl Oaks Golf Club in Minnetrista, Minn.

The four-person format tournament will start with registration at 8:30 a.m. and a 9:30 a.m. tee time. Awards to the top two teams and individual winners will be given at a lunch following the tournament.

Single registrations are \$100, or sponsor a team of four for \$1,000. Other options include a clubhouse sponsor (for two golfers) for \$500 and a hole sponsor (includes golf for one) at \$300. Any amount more than \$60 per golfer is tax deductible.

Last year, the event raised more than \$10,000 to help new and returning AFLBS students with their down payments. For more information or to register for the event, contact Cory Buck at coryb@aflc.org, or call (763) 544-9501.

## AFLC memorials — May

**AFLBS:** Amy Haugen

**AFLTS:** Mae Sondreson, Orville Vigness, Amy Haugen, Edna Merkins, Amelia Christenson, Merlaine Samuelson, Hugh Boyd

**Evangelism:** Mae Sondreson, Jeannie Brandt

**General Fund:**

Elwood Hensrud

**Home Missions:** Geri Klug, Jan Fatland, Arnie Otterson

**Parish Education:**

Mary Lindquist

**Vision:** Kathy Fruehauf

**WMF:** Charlie Mortimer, Florence Davis, Neva Talley, Hilda Loken, LaVern Larson, Freddie Gigellmen

**World Missions:** Pastor Wallace Jackson, Percy Hanowell

... in honor of

**AFLTS:** Dennis Holmquist

### Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

### AFLC Benevolences (5 months) – January 1 - May 31, 2005

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN MAY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund* . . . . .	\$387,377	\$30,924	\$184,229	48
Youth Ministries . . .	56,062	6,270	25,583	46
Parish Education . . .	81,988	3,215	28,481	35
Seminary . . . . .	156,804	12,971	85,670	55
Bible School . . . . .	269,308	28,161	123,619	46
Home Missions. . . . .	277,870	15,893	103,164	37
World Missions. . . . .	262,377	15,618	98,818	38
Personal Support . . .	368,688	26,850	156,472	42
<b>TOTALS . . . . .</b>	<b>\$1,860,474</b>	<b>\$124,009</b>	<b>\$702,872</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>TOTALS 2004 . . . . .</b>	<b>\$1,739,460</b>	<b>\$163,207</b>	<b>\$750,120</b>	<b>43</b>

#### Goal 42%

The Evangelism Department received \$5,694 in May.

\* Includes Evangelism totals

Please contact individual departments for more information on projects.

# thinking

## Encouraging

“Give a man a fish and you have fed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you have fed him for a lifetime.”

It is tempting in Christian education to just “give people a fish.” We tell them what to do and not to do. We stuff them full of information. We fill their head with facts. We get them to memorize the right things and then we send

them on their way.

We give them “good fish,” but sometimes we don’t teach them “how to fish.”

The congregation’s task is to not just tell people what to think, but to teach them how to think. We want to help people to

learn to think in a Christ-like manner. We want them to use the brain God has given them in a way that honors the Lord. Jesus said the greatest commandment is, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (Matthew 22:37, NIV). The writer Os Guinness has said, “It has always been a sin not to love the Lord our God with our minds as well as our hearts and souls. ... Evangelicals need to repent of their refusal to think Christianly and to develop the mind of Christ.”

Books have been written that tell people the best opening moves in a game of chess. I have played chess against people who have read some books and memorized what moves they should make.

They do fine until somebody makes a move that wasn’t in the book. Then they’re lost.

Some Christians can almost get like that. They know how to answer if the person asks a question that was in the book. They know how to deal with the problems for which they’ve received instruction. But often in life things come up that weren’t exactly covered in the book. The lecture didn’t address that issue.

People need to learn how to look to the Word of God for answers and think through what the Word says and how it applies to the situations we face. We want to encourage people to ask questions. We want to encourage thinking.

I was teaching a class and asked a question about what should be done in a certain situation. You could see the wheels turning in one student’s head. He wanted to answer, but he didn’t know what to say. Then his hand went up. He said, “Read your Bible and pray.” I had a sense he was thinking, “That’s always a good answer. Nobody at church will ever tell me that’s wrong to do.”

I was glad the student knew reading your Bible and praying is always a good thing to do. The goal, however, is for them to take the next step and learn how to apply the Word. We want them to be more than birds that can do nothing more than repeat what they’re told. It’s good when they start asking questions like: What Bible verses apply in this situation? What do those verses mean? What specifically should I be praying for?

Acts 17:11 says, “Now the

The congregation’s task is to not just tell people what to think, but to teach them how to think.”

Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.” The Bereans were thinkers.

I’ve been blessed in the congregations I have served to have many thinkers. They have asked questions that I often haven’t had good answers for right away. They have had different ideas as to what some section of Scripture means, and more often than not, as I’ve thought about it more, I’ve had to admit they were right and I was wrong. The thinkers have taught me a lot. May we encourage more and more to join their ranks.

The human mind is an incredible creation of God, a gift from our gracious Lord. That mind has been corrupted by sin, but it is redeemed by Christ. Because of His grace we can declare the wonderful truth of Scripture: “we have the mind of Christ” (I Corinthians 2:16). Let us use this gift so that Christ may be glorified.



Craig Johnson



# [ARC] Change afoot

**F**aith Popcorn, a sociologist specializing in studying change, states that the amount of new information the world is receiving will double in the next five years. Look around you, and remember what you see. Soon, it will be replaced. It seems the world is advancing and digressing at comparable rates, making us want to pull the blankets further up over our heads.

It's comforting to hear the words from Hebrews 13:8, "Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever" (NIV). Our Lord is our immovable rock through change. Chuck Swindoll says we have very little control in our lives. "Life is 10 percent what happens to me and 90 percent how I respond to it. Attitude is everything."

The Association Retreat Center (ARC) is not exempt from change. Former director Eric Westlake and his family have moved to Zumbrota, Minn., to begin a new ministry at Our Saviour's Lutheran. Joan and I will be doing our best to fill the directorship. Three years ago the Lord called our family from a comfortable two-salary suburbia lifestyle into ministry at the ARC — a major change! During this time our family began earnestly trusting and seeking the Lord for direction. He continues to bless our decision. Similarly in April, Jim and Lori Keller uprooted themselves from Wallace, S.D., to

accept the call to be our guest services and retreat coordinators.

New faces and changed business strategies have not changed our mission, which is summarized at the bottom of our letterhead. Jesus says, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest" (Mark 6:31). The ARC is a place where people can find rest from a fast-paced life filled with constant change. While many receive salvation and blessings at the ARC, please don't wait to receive them here. Meet the Lord in whatever circumstances you are in.

I have found that those times when I can't go to church or pray are the times when I really need to do them the most. How about you? Do you find yourself getting vacuumed into the hype of all the newest toys and technology? Jesus says, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:19-21). Change can draw us away from heavenly treasure and cause our focus to be on earthly treasure.

Dealing with change is easier when I follow these steps. First, pray. The Word of God tells us to pray

“Meet with Him today.  
Meet Him in his Word.  
Meet Him in your  
prayers. Don't be  
afraid of this  
changing world.  
Trust in the Lord.”

without ceasing. Second, open your Bible often. The Lord can lead your life better than you can. Third, surround yourself with fellow believers. The encouragement and prayers of each other constantly bless us. Last, stay encouraged. The Lord knows we are weak. He knows we will sin. That's why Jesus stands in the gap to carry all our sins to the deepest, darkest parts of the sea.

Meet with Him today. Meet Him in his Word. Meet Him in your prayers. Don't be afraid of this changing world. Trust in the Lord. Romans 8:28 says, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." God bless.

— By Pat Flanders  
Director of the ARC