

THE LUTHERAN  JULY 2006
AMBASSADOR



Go
ahead,
dig
in.

precious

I love spring and summer! I put out my bird feeders and all my feathered friends come to visit. It's always a thrill when a migrating bird stops for a snack or I see my first oriole. I like to leave my bedroom window open, and in the early morning my bird friends begin their singing. I am reminded of a little children's chorus that went something like this: "The birdies in the treetops sing their song, the angels in their chorus hum along, the flowers in the garden blend their hue, so why shouldn't I, why shouldn't I praise Him too?"

So often our Lord uses the everyday to teach or remind us of His great and precious promises. The common sparrow visits my feeders more than any other bird. They are not bright or beautiful, or rare. Like their name, they are common. Jesus used this little bird to point out His loving care for us in Luke 12:6. Six little sparrows sold for only two cents. Yet the heavenly Father sees when even one falls. He tells us to "fear not," for He knows each hair on our head and He knows the needs of today. We have an eternal soul that Jesus died for. Why, then, would He not care for us and provide for our every need?

Get your Bible out and read Luke 12:22-32. This is one of my favorite passages in Scripture. Jesus again used the ordinary to teach a great truth. The ravens (like my pesky blackbirds) don't save up food in warehouses, yet they have plenty to eat. Flowers don't spend hours in front of a mirror

primping or money on a wardrobe, yet what is more breathtaking than a rose or more fragrant than the lily? Even wild flowers bring a smile to our faces. Remember picking dandelions as a child? The point here is this: If God cares about this part of His creation, much of which is here today and gone tomorrow, how much more He cares for us!

I love picking up my grandma's King James Bible and reading verse 32: "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." If we are in a personal relationship with Christ, then God is our Father and He waits to give to us what we need out of His abundance.

II Peter 1:3 tells us that by His divine power He has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness. Did you catch the verb tense here? He has given! Our needs have already been provided for, whatever they may be. Remember that the next time you are drawn into the worry of this life. The creator of all that is seen and unseen is our loving heavenly Father. He holds open His hand to give to us what we need for this day. Will you join me, the birdies, the angels, and the flowers as we give thanks and praise to God our Father? Why shouldn't we, why shouldn't we praise Him too!

— Faylin Myhre
Bethany Free Lutheran
Wahpeton, N.D.

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If we want to see significant impact, we've got to commit ourselves to the long haul. But I sometimes wonder whether American Christians have the discipline to do that? Are we willing to stay the course for the 20, 40, 80, or more years that it takes to grow a seedling into a mature tree that bears fruit year in and year out?

— Howard Hendricks
Standing Together

There is no worse delusion than this, to think that one has advanced very far in the acquisition of knowledge 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

You should also take pains to urge governing authorities and parents to rule wisely and educate their children. They must be shown that they are obliged to do so, and that they are guilty of damnable sin if they do not do so, for by such neglect they undermine and lay waste both the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world and are the worst enemies of God and man.

— Martin Luther
Preface to the Small Catechism

A spirit-filled Sunday school teacher can revitalize a class and ultimately a church. Whenever God did something significant in Scripture, He began first by calling out a person who would be the instrument by which He would accomplish His purpose.

— Elmer Towns
154 Steps to Revitalize Your Sunday School



By Odd (Lauren) Osteroos

Contin

Spiritual development
doesn't end at Sunday
school graduation

Ongoing education and training is broadly recognized in the secular world as a means for increasing an employee's skills and contribution to a company. Likewise, continued study and meditation on God's Word benefits us, both as individuals and in our fellowship of believers in the body of Christ. Indeed, the Word is our very lifeline to continued growth and understanding and places all things in life, secular and spiritual, into a clearer perspective. It's only in the light of the Word that we are able to understand the apparent chaos of the world around us. As Christians, we are a peculiar lot who can see good coming out of troubled times. We know that God can use all circumstances to bring about His plan (Romans 8:28).

It's not by accident that the studied believer has an aura of peace and purpose that even the unbeliever recognizes, even if not knowing the origin. God's Word has the power and authority gained through the Spirit to cause great changes in us that we are unable to cause in ourselves. The comparison to continued training and education in a secular sense has striking similarity for Christians, whom God prepares through the Word to work for His purposes.

uing

Educ



Education

Stay fruitful!

First, training and education equips the workforce to be more productive. Spiritually, that means we are more equipped to contribute to the body of Christ if we go frequently to the Word through study and worship. We know from the Bible that God's desire is that none should be lost (II Peter 3:9). It is then logical to believe that God's desire for us as believers is that we speak freely of God's work in our lives and encourage others to seek after Him. It becomes our desire to be used to bring about God's will, so that others should come to a saving knowledge of Jesus (John 6:29, Romans 10:17).

We cannot of our own ability cause a single person to come to faith. Quite the contrary, I'm more likely to be an obstruction to another's faith when I depend on my own knowledge and ability (John 6:63). Through intimate and regular study of God's Word, however, the Spirit builds in us sensitivity to the plight of the non-believer and desire to share the treasure found in Him (Matthew 5:14-16, Ephesians 5:1-2, Colossians 1:9-14, II Timothy 1:9).

As with a highly skilled workforce that is more equipped to be productive, the continuous work of the Spirit in our lives abounds as we study the truth (i.e., the Word). This work isn't simply for our benefit, although we benefit greatly. Rather, God uses us as prepared and sharpened tools to prepare others and to testify to the presence of Himself in us (Proverbs 27:17). Through our reading and study of the Word, the Spirit

it brings to mind the words and verses to meet opportunities for witness to

coworkers, friends, and family (Ephesians 2:10).

Stay sharp!

Second, continuing education helps you stay more competitive. In a spiritual sense, Bible study helps keep you sharp, on your toes, able to answer anyone who questions your faith.

Christians throughout time have needed the perspective and insight found in God's Word to separate truth from lies. Our popular culture asks us to believe that many of those lies are actually virtues. If we suspend judgment of others and seek to accept all philosophies or lifestyles as equally legitimate, we are said to have the virtue of "tolerance." God's Word tells us otherwise as we are warned against words and philosophies that tickle the ears of men (II Timothy 4:3-4). At best, we attempt to be inoffensive to those who choose to follow alternative paths forged on lies. At worst, we deceive ourselves and, by acceptance, withhold the truth of the Word that convicts the hearts of men and convinces us of our need for Christ (Romans 2:4-8).

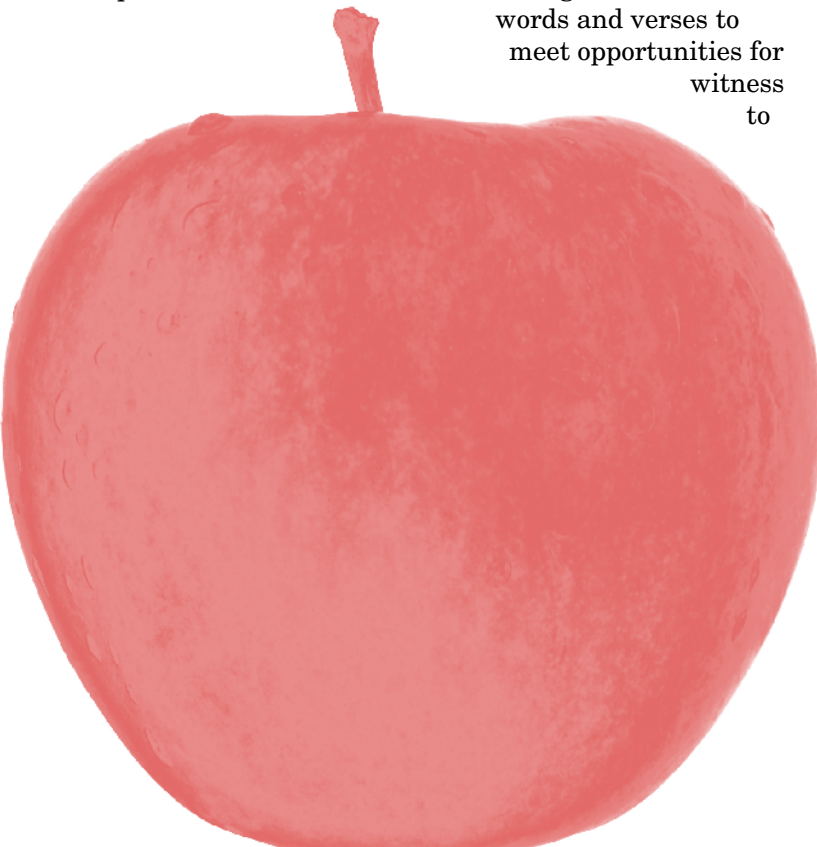
Stay engaged!

Third, continuing education and training helps employers retain employees. Spiritually, we are less in danger of falling away from our faith when engaged in active study of the Word, individually and collectively (Isaiah 55:11).

Some would argue that studying the Bible as the true and inerrant Word of God will drive people away rather than bring them in and keep them active. Actually, quite the opposite is true as God blesses the unbending use of His Word (John 15:1-2). Just as any child recognizes when a parent is "wishy-washy" about their demands, so do we as God's children if the Word is presented in an environment of relativism rather than as absolute truth.

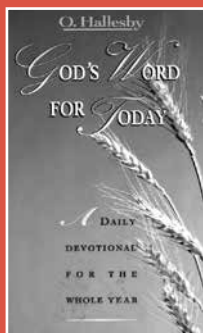
There is security in knowing that the Word is true in the past, present, and future. Although our consciences are many times pricked while studying the Bible, the same study that brings discomfort and conviction also brings unsurpassed peace as we study God's plan of salvation and redemption for us (Ephesians 2:13-22).

As a body of believers, we create opportunities for study that go beyond the weekly Sunday service. Whether in youth, men's, or women's groups, the focus must be around Scripture. If not, we become mere social groups. There are already many groups in our culture to fill social needs. Our spiritual needs derive from our need for redemption (Romans 3:10-12). That need can only be met in God through His Word, since nothing I can do





sources

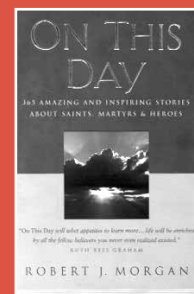


God's Word for Today

A daily devotional classic for the entire year. Hallesby's teaching of deep truths in a simple way brought renewal to the Lutheran Church of Norway. Hallesby writes, "The peace-filled, victorious, joyful Christian life is possible only to those who have learned the deepest secret of daily renewal: unceasingly to turn to God and receive new power from the realm of the eternal." \$12

On This Day

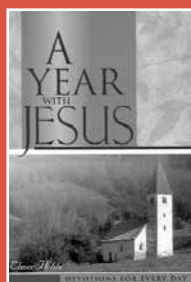
Fascinating vignettes of people and events throughout church history including stories of martyrs and saints, Protestant reformers, missionary heroes, and modern-day believers. Related Scripture included for each of the 365 daily readings. \$13.50



redeems me from myself (I Corinthians 1:30).

A conversation with seasoned believers reveals that the more they delve into the Word, the more they realize how much more they have to learn. They realize that they will not fully understand until we see His face (I Corinthians 13:12). Rather than causing despair in those believers, God creates an eternal hunger that longs to study along with fellow believers in Christ. God makes His Word fresh and relevant no matter what age level we are at or life experience we have (Hebrews 4:12). Moreover, we emerge with a new perspective and refreshing sense of joy each time we engage in prayerful study desiring the Spirit to teach us.

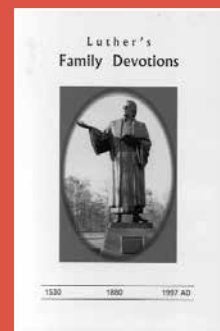
There is a war at hand that goes far beyond productivity, competitiveness, and retention of employees. This war is one of principalities in which there is no defense outside the Word of God (Job 1:6-12, II Corinthians 10:3-5). We are privileged to have easy access to the Word of God, and we pray that all would make use of this resource placed in our hands by God for the benefit of ourselves and others to come to know Him.



A Year with Jesus
Devotional readings to draw closer to Jesus, establish a firm foundation of faith in Christ, and bring renewal and encouragement in your daily walk. \$11.50

Luther's Family Devotions

Timeless daily devotional readings gathered from the writings of Martin Luther, based on Scripture and ending with a hymn verse, arranged according to the Church Year. \$20



Please see page 17 for ordering information.

Osteroos is a member of Bethel Free Lutheran, Minot, N.D.

Launching off

What are
you doing
to prepare
your child to
be an adult?



T-minus 10 seconds and counting ... nine ... eight ... seven ... six ... five ... four ... three ... two ... one ... blastoff!" When a rocket launches at the Kennedy Space Center, NASA engineers countdown in minutes and then seconds. The rocket engines burst into flames and then, if all goes as planned, an astronaut radios, "Ground control, we have liftoff." Within a minute, all you can see is the flame as the craft bolts toward its destination in a fury of ear-splitting sound.

The liftoff portion of a shuttle's journey into space often gets the majority of attention from earthly spectators, but a spacecraft could never have taken off without years of preparation. All of those years focus on one goal: successfully launching 171,000 pounds of metal into space.

Perhaps the same preparation is needed in launching our children toward the goal of adulthood. One minute they are small, cute, cuddly, and you can hold them in your arms. Eighteen short years later they are larger than life, making decisions on their own and wanting freedom. What does it take to prepare them for independence and maturity?

Ephesians 4:14-15 describes the process, "Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ."

The first part of verse 14 describes the need to start with the end in mind, and verse 15 describes that goal of growing up into Christ. In a physical manner a body will grow; it is obvious to recognize someone who has left infancy. These verses also mention that growing into Christ means that a person can stand amid the waves of society, the false teachings of men, and people's deceitful scheming. Planning out such a goal is the easy part. It will take all of 18 years (and more) to complete.

The growing process can be a difficult challenge for both parents and teenagers. Agreeing on the goal can seem impossible, understanding one another often seems hopeless, and the path to reach that goal is different depending on who you ask. Yet it is possible for both parents and teenagers to have the same goal: growing up into Christ. The key is setting a course from the beginning.

The temptation for parents is to charge themselves with raising *their* children. Hidden behind that word is a statement that says, "They are mine." It includes a list of expectations that are unattainable and assumes that

they alone know best how to raise this child. It completely leaves God out of the equation.

The temptation for children is to want to live *their* own life. Hidden behind that word is a desire for independence — even independence from God. It is an attitude that has selfishness at its core. It ultimately says, "I know best how to raise myself." Just as the nature of man is rebellious toward God, so, also, is the teenager rebellious toward His authority, will and training in their lives.

This is the point where children and parents alike fail, and it is where growing up into Christ is not just another check on a long list of things to do. No, growing up into Christ means coming before the cross of Christ, where parents and teenagers are equal. Both are sinners needing His grace. Both must confess sin. Both will find mercy. Both will receive forgiveness. And both will be able to forgive. Before the cross of Christ, parents and teenagers are both humbled, allowing them to receive from the Lord what they need to live their lives.

Parents who are humble before the Lord do not put their own expectations on their child, but instead look forward to what the Lord is going to do in them. It means that they are charged with caring for His child. Children are God's gift to them. Instead of ownership, there is gratitude and humility. Instead of personal expectations there is dependence and anticipation.

A child who is humble before the Lord is going to allow Him to be their authority and accept His plan for life. Instead of a spirit of independence, there is one of dependence on Him. Instead of selfishness, there is gratitude.

Launching a child into adulthood is never going to be an easy process, anymore than bringing that child into the world is. But it is possible when the goal is growing up into Christ. It is possible because they are His children and not ours. It is possible because there is common ground at the cross. It is possible because the Lord will be working on the inside.

One parent at a particular trying time cried out, "Lord, these are your children. I have failed in my part to raise them, and I give them back to you. I will continue to carry out the responsibility that you have given me with them. But if anything good comes from their lives, You get all the credit. If anything bad develops, I need You to fix the problems."

Eighteen years is a short time to launch someone into adulthood. But without the goal of growing into Christ, it is an impossibility. T-minus one year and counting ...

Olson, a member of Faith Lutheran, Shakopee, Minn., is the director of AFLC Youth Ministries.

By Pastor Kevin Olson

By Pastor Wes Langaas

A little knowledge
can be dangerous
to the soul. Lasting
knowledge can be
found in Scripture

“A little learning is a dangerous thing ...” Spoken by Alexander Pope (1688-1744), these words referred to man’s shallow efforts to gain knowledge and boastfulness in what little he knew, rather than digging deeper to gain more understanding. Pope understood that having a little knowledge about a subject, without full understanding, can be dangerous. For example, a first-year medical student might feel capable of recognizing symptoms and diagnosing the ill. At this point, he has a little knowledge of medicine, but not the understanding to use it wisely. Such little knowledge can be dangerous to the body.

In the same sense, a Bible student might take pride in knowing some Scripture and using that knowledge without understanding the whole counsel of God. Such a person is not concerned about being able to “comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge ...” (Ephesians 3:18-19). In this case a little knowledge can be dangerous to the soul.

The mind of man cannot understand the ways of God. Nicodemus, a teacher of Israel, had trouble understanding heavenly things and was confused when Jesus

digging deep

talked about the need to be born again (John 3:3-12). Remember Peter, when he confessed that Jesus was “the Christ, the Son of the living God,”

Jesus said, “Flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 16:16-17). And the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection. To trick Jesus, they told Him about a widow marrying seven brothers. Then they asked, “In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife of the seven shall she be?” Jesus said, “You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures, or the power of God” (Matthew 22:23-29).

Evidence of God’s eternal power is all around us, but men’s sin prevents them from seeing it. So men engage in futile speculation, and “professing to be wise, they become fools” (Romans 1:20-22). Knowledge, as used in Scripture, is not simply knowing about God or being aware of His existence. To know God is to recognize Him for who He is, the sovereign Lord who asks for love, loyalty and obedience, a God who is both love (1 John 4:8), and a “consuming fire” (Hebrews 12:29). Most people know that God is love and sent His Son “that whoever believes in Him would not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). Few want to know or understand that the



alternative is “to perish,” and that “the wrath of God abides on him” (John 3:36).

Consider the prophesies of Jeremiah. “Thus says the Lord, ‘Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast about this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises loving kindness, justice, and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,’ declares the Lord” (Jeremiah 9:23-24).

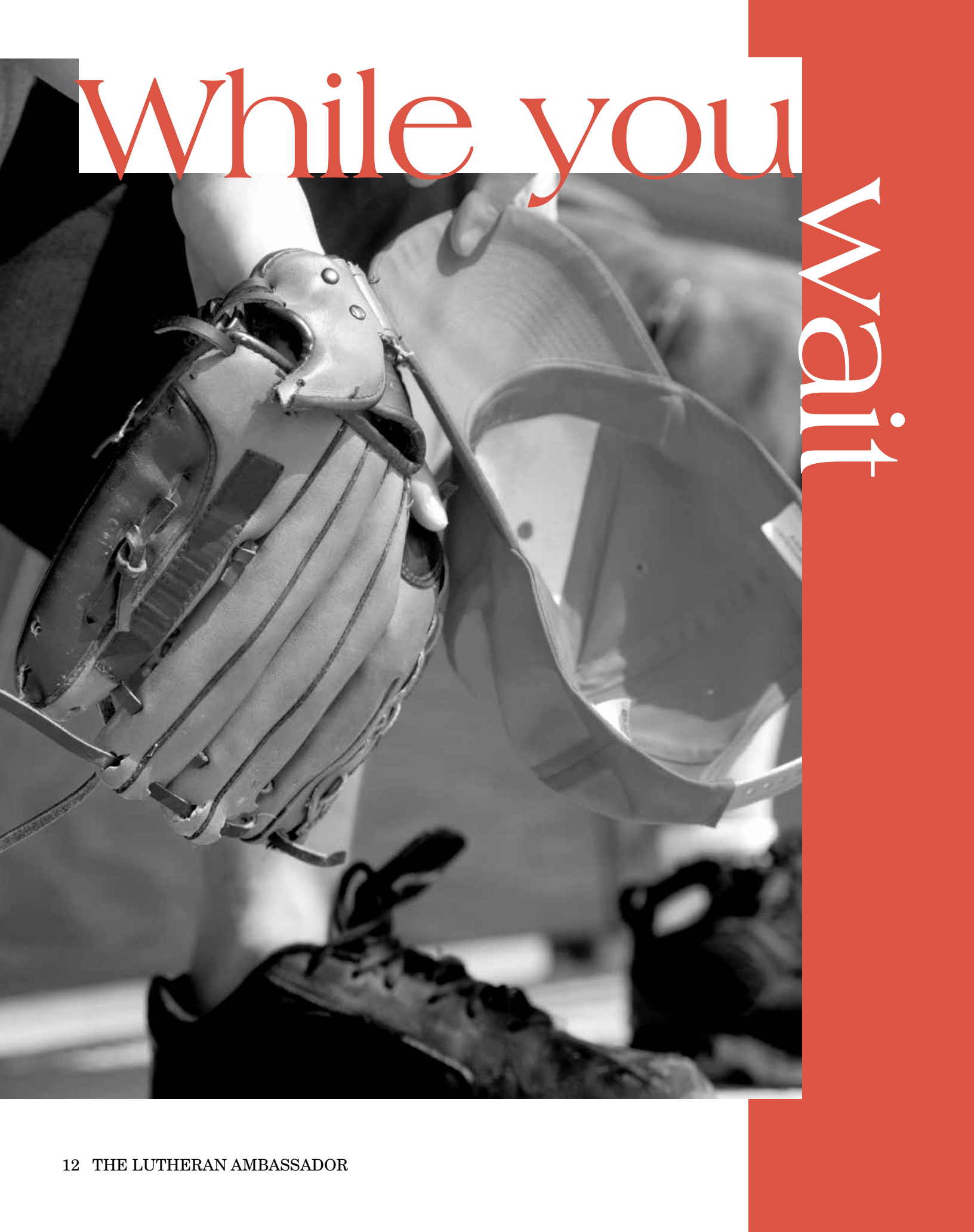
In this Scripture, Jeremiah is heartbroken over the fall of Jerusalem. The kingdom of Judah — boasting in her own wisdom, power and riches — had fallen. This “unholy trinity” has been part of the devil’s lie from the beginning, offering a superior knowledge that would lead to a better understanding of God. Remember how Satan tempted Eve to eat the forbidden fruit by saying, “Your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:5). And in the early Church, seeking higher knowledge and enjoying its rewards of power and riches led to heresies. The same lie is still seen in cults and New Age religions today.

The Lord exercises “loving kindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,”

declares the Lord” (Jeremiah 9:24). The holy work of God is beyond human knowledge or understanding, but Scripture reveals the person and power of God and the wisdom to understand it. In Scripture we learn that “God created me and all that exists.” There we learn of our sin and God’s grace, that “He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature” (*Luther’s Catechism*). Scripture gives us “wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (II Timothy 3:15).

Today, like Jeremiah, we see the ruins of a world that boasts of its wisdom, power and riches. We are called to bring the Word of God’s loving kindness, justice and righteousness so that men might “be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth” (I Timothy 2:4), and then “grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (II Peter 3:18).

Langaas is pastor of Abundant Life Lutheran, Thief River Falls, Minn.



While you wait

School is out. Vacation Bible school is being planned, or maybe it's already over. Camp applications are completed. Practice for summer sports is in full swing.

Parents, while your child is swinging a bat, swinging a tennis racket, swinging in the playground, throwing a ball, swimming a lap, learning a new dive, riding a bike, shooting some hoops, or whatever activity they're involved in, what will you be doing and saying while you're waiting?

This is summer. It's vacation time! Perhaps the camper is loaded and ready for the weekend at the lake. For many, though, these are not the lazy days of summer. These days, most parents continue their regular jobs. Farmers and construction workers labor remarkably long hours to get their jobs done in spite of a wide variety of weather conditions. Some, like me, a home schooling mom, want a break from the structure of the school-

year schedule. In my wildest dreams of the most perfect summer day, I'd love to lie on a secluded sandy beach, soothed by the soft lapping of gentle waves, bask in the warmth of the sun's rays, and (without interruption) read!

On one hand, I, like my children, am ready for a break; but on the other hand, my kids, like most, need and want something to do. So, in the midst of the activities planned for the children — whether they be work, play, or hobby — most often the lazy days of summer vacation are neither *lazy* nor do they resemble a *vacation*.

The summer for most children is filled with multiple activities and we parents often find ourselves doing one of two things — either watching their activity or waiting for them to get done with their activity.

Acts 17:16 tells of a time when the apostle Paul found himself waiting around. He had some "vacation time" in Athens, Greece, waiting for some co-workers to arrive. During this time, Scripture tells us that Paul used his *time* and his *tongue* wisely.

First, Paul did what many travelers do; he began to tour the city. He began to check out what this new place had to offer. But, instead of being attracted to the glamour and glory of Athens, Paul's heart was deeply saddened by the proliferation of idols strewn across the city: false gods used for vain worship. As he continued waiting in Athens, God used Paul at that time and place as a witness to the idol worshippers. Paul's waiting time became God's witnessing time.

As a believer, Paul didn't take a vacation from his faith. Even during his down time, Paul's heart was distressed by the people's worship of false gods; by the

thought of souls being lost for all eternity. His response? Paul wisely used his time as an opportunity to proclaim the truth of the living God. A God unlike any of the Athenian gods of wood and stone. Reading of Paul's time in Athens (Acts 17:16-34) reminds the believer that there is no vacation from God.

While waiting, Paul also used his *tongue* wisely. To begin a discussion with the Athenians, Paul chose a topic that he had in common with them — worship. He engaged those he rubbed shoulders with in a discussion

on a common topic, and from there proceeded to share the truth about the only God who truly deserves worship. During this time off from ministry, Paul's tongue was still used wisely so those around him knew he was a believer. Neither his tongue, nor his faith, went on vacation.

Fellow believers, we, like Paul, need to use our time and tongues wisely. Others are taking note of what we do and say. Non-Christians often question the authenticity of Christianity by the way believers use their time and tongues — whether wisely or wickedly — when in church and especially when outside the church. A paraphrase of James 1:26 could read something like this: "If you're a Christian, but you often spew off with your mouth, onlookers will question your Christianity. Your uncontrolled tongue makes others doubt your Christianity. Because your tongue is inconsistent, your witness is compromised and worthless."

It's not difficult to find summer activities for our children. Whether it's small town America or the big city, there are usually myriad activities children can be involved in. Summer does not always mean we're looking for something to do; it does, however, mean we'll need to be aware of using our time and our tongues wisely while we're watching and waiting. God always has something for us to do for Him even when we think we're just watching or just waiting around. Parents, let your children see you being used by Him during these lazy days of summer vacation.

Don't take a
vacation from
your witness
this summer

By Candice Johnson

Johnson and her husband, Pastor Rodney Johnson, serve Our Savior's Free Lutheran, Stanley, N.D.

Translating the

gospel



For several years we have been working on translating the AFLC Ambassador Sunday school curriculum into Spanish and adapting it for use in Latin America.

The project began with our own frustration over the lack of good, biblically sound Sunday school material from a Lutheran doctrinal perspective in Spanish. We found several sources of good-looking, well-produced material, but there were always problems. Sometimes the doctrinal position was not one with which we were comfortable. Other times the material was doctrinally sound, but written for North American children and simply translated into Spanish. Other times it was just plain boring!

We spent many years adapting whatever was available so that we could use it. We were eventually reduced to writing our own material Sunday-by-Sunday. After looking over many different options, we concluded that the best Sunday school curriculum available was the Ambassador series. This material was simply focused on teaching Biblical truth, so we felt that it could be readily

translated into Spanish, and the few cross-cultural differences that cropped up could be dealt with fairly easily, while keeping the same essential teaching. Best of all, the copyright belonged to the AFLC, so there would be no problem with stepping on someone else's toes! We approached the Board of Publications and Parish Education, and they were excited about the possibility.

After receiving generous gifts from several people in AFLC churches that enabled us to set up a computer network that could handle the task, we went to work.

At the beginning of the process, we assumed we would be reproducing the material in book form, much like what Ambassador Publications does for American churches. But we found several problems with this approach.

First, books are expensive to print. Each year's material would cost tens of thousands of dollars. Each student's book, as produced

for the American churches, costs \$6 dollars per trimester. Mission churches in Latin American countries can't afford that. A typical church in Latin America might have a dozen adults — which means six families contributing through their offerings — and 20 to 50 children in Sunday school or kids clubs during the week. Most churches struggle just to rent a space to meet, or to buy a piece of land to build a church. Most pastors in Latin America work to support themselves, because the churches they serve can't afford to pay a pastor's salary. Spending \$18 per year, per child for the books would be impossible.

Another problem was the difficulty in getting the Sunday school material safely delivered from Minneapolis

to the churches in Latin America. You can't just send boxes via UPS or other package delivery service to most places in third-world countries. And when you can it is prohibitively expensive.

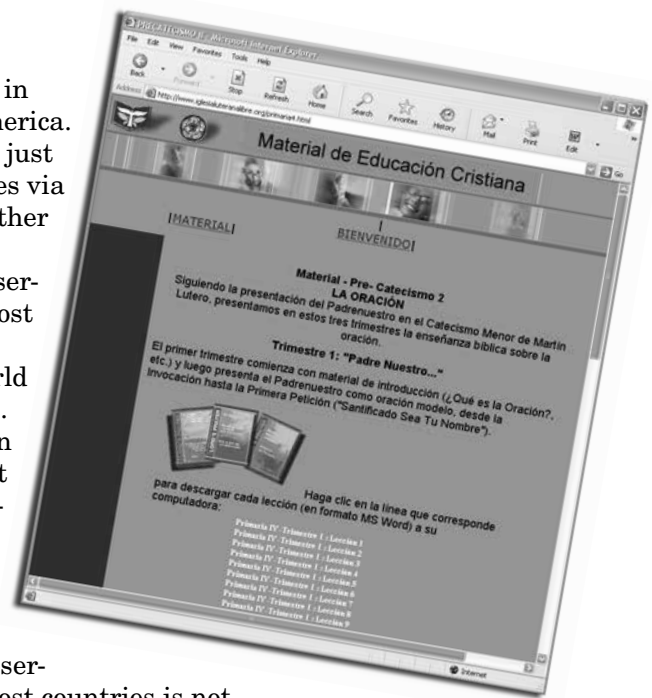
The official mail service in most countries is not as efficient as in the United States. It often takes six months to deliver a package from the States — if it arrives at all!

A third problem was getting money from somewhere in rural Latin America to Minneapolis to pay for the materials. Most countries have one-way gates built into the banking system, which make it easy for relatives living in the States to send dollars home, but very difficult to move money out of the country.

What to do? We found that the Internet is available nearly everywhere — even in remote areas. You don't even have to own a computer. After seeing Internet cafés in primitive, banana-leaf thatched buildings in small, remote villages, we decided to try making contacts and distributing literature through an Internet website. We put a trial website on our local Internet server, and for two years we averaged more than 1,500 "hits" per month. Although we made no attempt to publicize our website, we got letters from all over Central and South America, Spain, and even from Spanish speakers in the States.

We concluded that the Internet was the best way to get the material to the teachers and children who need it. We found that if we publish it in one color instead of in full color, it can be downloaded and printed at the cyber cafés, and the teachers can make as many photocopies as they need for the number of children they expect in their class the next Sunday.

Members of the AFLC Board of Publications quickly caught the vision for this missionary opportunity. They were very helpful in pointing out the legal and copyright issues that had to be taken into account. While retaining the copyright to the material in order to keep unscrupulous people from misusing it, they generously gave



By Pastor Dan Giles

See **GOSPEL**, page 16

Thankful for an update

Several months ago I was on the Internet looking for some contact information on one of our AFLC missionaries when I delightfully stumbled onto a little-known “gem” of the missions department. Our World Mission director, Pastor Del Palmer, recently set up a blog site specifically for publishing the most current mission news and prayer requests of our AFLC. I’m guessing there may be others like me who still don’t know about this rich resource.

Like an online journal, newsletter, or scrapbook, the AFLC World Missions blog expands throughout the month on the

World Missions Blog:

www.aflc-wm.blogspot.com

types of mission news you read about here in the *Ambassador*. The blog is updated weekly with personal letters and pictures from our missionaries, specific and immediate prayer requests, praise of God at work around the world, and ideas for practical involvement in missions for our congregations here at home.

The essence of this blog is spiritually uplifting and challenging. It is a tool for our congregations to

pray specifically and strategically with our AFLC world missionaries, both those in the field, and those preparing to go. Reading this blog challenges my mission participation by opening my heart to people and places that previously seemed distant. It makes me ask, “How can I be involved?” It sobers me to pray for more laborers. And my guess is that is just the effect this blog was prayerfully created to have.

It’s not difficult to access the blog, but if you want to avoid typing in the “<http://aflc-wm.blogspot.com>” address you can link directly to it from the www.aflc.org homepage under “World Mission News.” I found it most convenient to save the address under my favorites on my computer’s Internet browser, which makes it fast to pull up and read.

Our World Mission department has done a great job organizing this blog, and I appreciate all the regular contributions from our missionaries. I hope you will join me as a frequent blog visitor. These updates make a strategic difference in compelling each of us to be purposeful participants in world missions.

— Christie Ballmann
Word of Truth Lutheran
Kopperl, Texas

GOSPEL, from page 15

approval for it to be distributed free of charge over the Internet and photocopied as needed.

About a year ago, we set up a new website (www.iglesialuteranalibre.org) and began posting the lessons as we finished them. We have spent as much time working on the project as our other work allowed; each lesson was taking about 16 hours for us to produce. When our daughter, Ingrid, graduated from college last spring, she joined us here in Mexico as an AFLC World Missions short-term assistant. Born and

raised in Latin America and a native speaker of both English and Spanish, Ingrid has been working full-time on the translation of the lessons. We’ve been able to finish the lessons much more quickly and make more of them available on the Internet site on an almost weekly basis.

Our plan is to make five years’ worth of Sunday school material available through this process. Currently, we have completely finished three years’ worth of material. We have another year about two-thirds

done, and one year we are just beginning.

In a short time, the best biblical Lutheran Sunday school material will be available for free download anywhere in the Spanish-speaking world.

Pastor Daniel and Debbie Giles have been AFLC Missionaries in Mexico for more than 20 years. They currently serve in Jerez.



**AMBASSADOR
PUBLICATIONS**
Minneapolis, Minnesota

To Order Resources

Available from AFLC
Parish Education at (763)
545-5631 or [parished@
afcl.org](mailto:parished@afcl.org). Note that some of
the materials may be
borrowed from the Parish
Ed lending library.

AFLC Parish Education RESOURCES

Bible Overview



Divisions of the Old and New Testament are shown with a brief overview of themes, facts, and key verses from each book of the Bible. *Foldout pamphlet \$3.95, Laminated chart \$12.50*

How the Church Grew

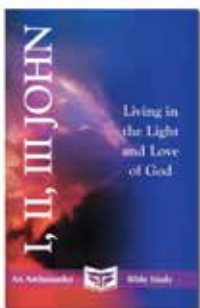


From Pentecost to the present day, follow the history of the Christian church and see God's love and care for His people. Student book appropriate for age 12 through adult includes many helpful illustrations and discussion

questions plus a lesson insert on AFLC history. Teacher guide provides background information, memory passages, answers for lesson activities, and review. 17 lessons. *Student Guide \$12, Teacher Guide \$19.25*

I, II, III John

LIVING IN THE LIGHT AND LOVE OF GOD



Is there such a thing as absolute truth? Many people say that truth is relative and right and wrong are determined by the situation. Study God's answer to those who deny that God's truth is absolute. Bible study for youth and adults with helpful study notes. \$5

Jesus Loves Even Me



Colorful illustrations help teach children the important Bible truths of this hymn. \$8

Other illustrated songs available include:

Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus; I Love to

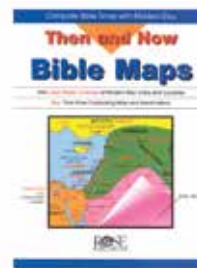
Tell the Story; The Light of the World Is Jesus; One Day; Take My Life and Let It Be; Great Is Thy Faithfulness; Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us; and many more.

Teachers Interaction



Created especially for Sunday school teachers, this colorful magazine is packed with innovative ideas and tips for teaching all ages. *\$15.50 per year (4 issues)*

Then & Now Bible Maps



Full-color Old and New Testament maps with overlays of modern cities and countries, helpful for classroom or personal study. *Spiral bound book \$18, Transparencies \$18, PowerPoint CD \$39.95*



Christian education is our responsibility

As our third child graduated from high school recently, a familiar question ran through my mind, “Have I done everything I could to prepare him to face a world that does not, as a whole, recognize the Ruler of the universe?”

My husband and I brought Nathen to the Lord in baptism as an infant. We know it is only through God’s grace imparted to him that Nathen will have the hope of eternal salvation. We enrolled him in Sunday school at 3, and he began the life-long process of learning God’s promises to him through the Bible. We enrolled him as a first-grader in the local Christian school. Family devotions, Wednesday night Bible studies, summer Bible camps, and Free Lutheran Youth conventions have been a part of his entire life.

Nathen has not only had his parents, siblings, and grandparents praying for and guiding him, but also a congregation that has loved him and by God’s grace has taken on the challenge of building upon the foundation laid at his baptism.

“We believe that God gives the gift of faith in baptism, but that this gift will be lost unless the child is taught the Word of God, upheld by prayer and given a Christian example to follow. This is the first responsibility and privilege of you parents, then of the sponsors, and the entire congregation” (*Ministerial Acts*).

Money given by local WMFs are often designated for Christian education. When the financial goal of printing the third quarter preschool Sunday school curriculum and teacher’s book is accomplished, the offerings will then go toward reprinting

the catechism. While the WMF is phasing out contributing monthly towards the Parish Education director’s salary, we are identifying areas of need and working toward accomplishing specific goals each year.

For instance, through the generosity of a grant provided by Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, a gathering for Bible school women and seminary wives was held in January to better acquaint women with the WMF goal of awakening a love for and interest in missions at home and abroad. Also, donations given through the WMF this year will go toward replacing the roofs on the AFLBS dorms. The WMF will also sponsor two seminary professors to attend the Evangelical Theological Society convention where they will have the opportunity to preview new textbooks and meet with other professors. And the WMF offerings designated “Mission Scholarship” are used to provide seminary scholarships to men who are preparing to serve on a foreign mission field.

When I asked Nathen recently what his plans are for this fall, his response was so typical of him, “Well I was thinking of going to Williston State, but the family tradition has been to go to AFLBS, and both Sam and Abbey have turned out okay.”

May our congregations continue to raise up the next generation to fear and love God with all their hearts, souls, and minds, and never doubt that our children are prepared to take the gospel to a lost world.

— By Lynn Wellumson
WMF Treasurer

Second seminary housing unit dedicated



On May 20, just hours before the graduation services began at the AFLC Schools campus chapel, a group gathered outside the new four-unit seminary housing for a dedication service. Speaking at the dedication were AFLTS Dean Dr. Francis Monseth, AFLC President Pastor Robert Lee, School Board chairman Dr. Dan Mundfrom, Coordinating Committee member and campus maintenance head Wayne Floan, as well as seminarians and the construction project manager. Also present was Alice Cox, Willmar, Minn., whose financial contribution made possible the construction project.



New members were received April 30 at Our Savior's Free Lutheran, Mason, Wis., following the confirmation service. Pictured are (front row, from left): Ron and Thomas Hmielewski; back row (from left) Brittany Hmielewski, Eileen Pufall, Krista Sackmann, Lexi Lucius, Maytor Bowers (church president), and Tomasz Chmiel (intern pastor).

Seminary hosts summer institute

*Courses will be held
Aug. 7-11 at AFLTS*

The Association Free Lutheran Seminary will present the Summer Institute of Theology Aug. 7-11 at the Plymouth, Minn., campus. Courses this summer include:

- "Studies in Galatians," by Pastor Phil Haugen.
- "Pastoral Counsel and Care," by Pastor Jerry Moan.
- "The Doctrine of Salvation," by Dr. Francis Monseth.
- "History and Aims of the AFLC," by Pastor Robert Lee.
- "Building Strong Homes in the Congregation," by guest instructor Pastor Ray Ballmann.

Registration is \$15, and tuition is \$16 per credit. Campus housing and meals are available for a fee. A downloadable form is available at www.aflc.org. Or call (763) 544-9501 for more information.

The Light

Here he comes again,” I thought to myself as I stood on the sidewalk talking to some of my men from our congregation. Rogério was drunker than usual. He came up to us singing. He tried to slur some words in English and finally came to his objective.

“What do you have for me today, 50 cents, a real?” He slurred in quite good Portuguese.

“Sorry,” I said, “I don’t have anything for you today, and you know my policy on money. And what about your promise to me?”

“Are you always going to bring that up?” he answered.

“I expect you to be a man of your word,” I answered, “after all, you promised.”

“I am a man of my word, but you know how it is. I have needs,” he answered.

Rogério and I have been in this debate for some time now. He is one in a group of chemically dependent persons who come by my house on a regular basis. He is not such a bad looking young man, but is all scarred up from years of living on the streets. He has no home and no relatives, at least none he knows. As early as he can remember, his home was a Christian orphanage here in Maringá. He lived there until he was 14, when he got into a big fight with the leaders of the orphanage and then ran away. Since then he has been on the streets.

I have shared the gospel with Rogério — which he knows quite a lot about — but he doesn’t want anything to do with it. He has very little education, though he seems to be pretty smart, sometimes using sophisticated words when he talks to me. (When I ask him the meaning of the word, he knows it.) Yet because he has no education or work experience, the only jobs he is qualified to do are in menial labor, which he won’t take because he feels the pay is too low and he is worth more than that. So Rogério goes around begging and using his money on drugs and alcohol.

Our hearts go out to Rogério, for we know that the answers he is looking for are in the gospel, which he rejects. The illusions of this world trap him into a hopeless life. I wish he could see the light, but for now all I can do is pray. The Word is certainly true when it says, “Though they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God, nor gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise they became fools” (Romans 1:21-22).

— By Pastor Jonathan Abel
AFLC World Missions
Maringá, Brazil



Graduation



Pastor Kevin Olson, center, places a wreath on Pastor Zakaria Dalle/i after he received his graduation certificate. In traditional Tanzanian culture, a wreath is a sign of accomplishment. At left is Dr. Dan Mundfrom, chairman of the AFLC Schools Board of Trustees.

Students celebrated following the graduation ceremony on May 20. Eight men graduated from AFLTS, two women graduated from the Ministry Training Institute, and 65 students graduated from AFLBS. Pictured are (from left) senior Vanna Osteroos, junior Jesse Hamilton, junior Grace Robertson, senior Tom Willard, junior Elise Wright, senior Keith Chapin, senior Cera Russell, junior Lauren Smith and junior Jeremy Anderson.

AFLBS Summer Teams



Ambassadors: Justin Strand, Arika Fedje, Kaele Olson, Rachel Kylo and Adam McCarlson.



Majesty: Chris Johnson, Elizabeth Jore, Anna Long, Kirsten Olson and Joel Mattson.



Foundation: Shawn Rogers, Christine Nash, Emily Pierson and Tom Willard.



Cornerstone: Lukas Zielina, Victoria Gordejeva, Luke Johnson and Elise Parsley.



North Barnabas: Dave Mattson, Christina Rolf, Peder Aadahl and Naomi Tuura.



South Barnabas: Jodi Larson, Brent Raan, Kristin Agrimson, Ryan Tonneson and Naomi Finney.



Timothy: Preston Nash, Katie Schram, Marie Benson and Tyler Prentice.

PEOPLE & PLACES

Pastor Tom Gilman has accepted a call to serve as senior pastor of Emmaus Lutheran, Bloomington, Minn. Gilman had previously served as associate pastor at Emmaus. He was installed as senior pastor on June 11, with **Pastor Elden Nelson**, AFLC vice president, officiating.

Pastor Brian Pearson has accepted a call to serve Cornerstone Christian, Brandon, Fla., a congregation that recently joined the AFLC. Pearson has served at St. Olaf Lutheran, Montgomery, Ill.

Pastor David Johnson has accepted a call to serve St. Paul's Lutheran, Cloquet, Minn. Johnson has served at Amery Free Lutheran, Amery, Wis.

Pastor Tim Johnson has accepted a call to serve Ebenezer Lutheran, Northwood, N.D. Johnson has served Resurrection Free Lutheran, Beltrami, Minn.

Members of the AFLC Coordinating Committee accepted a resolution of affiliation from **Mighty Fortress Evangelical Lutheran**, Seward, Neb. The congregation, which was formerly independent, recently celebrated its second anniversary.

Senior seminary graduate **Rich Ramsbacher** has accepted a call to serve Bethel Community, Culbertson, Mont. He will be ordained during the closing service at the annual conference on June 23.

Ruth Tollefson, widow of Pastor Hans Tollefson, Astoria, Ore., died May 9. The funeral service was May 15 at Bethany Lutheran, Astoria, with Pastor Craig Johnson officiating.

Dienne Andrews, wife of Pastor J. Christian Andrews, Palmdale, Calif., died May 6. The funeral service was May 11, with Pastor Richard Gunderson officiating.

Owen Myhre, Abercrombie, N.D., former member of the AFLC Home Missions Committee, died May 11. The funeral service was May 16, with Pastor Jim Christenson officiating.

MAY

AFLC Memorials

AFLBS

Helen Skartvedt, Celeste Finstrom (3), Evangeline Lynne, Robert Strand, Milton Roppe, Bjarne Overlid, Jeanne Anderson, Bette Ford (8), Virginia Robertson, William Maki, Dienne Andrews (2), Irene Baldwin

AFLTS

Virgel Larson, Joyce Alquist, Ernie Roisland, Clarice Brown, Ida Rieth, Irene Baldwin

Builders Fellowship

Julia Werner

Home Missions

Owen Myhre, Ida Rieth

Miriam Infant Home

Carolyn Dyrud

Parish Education

Dr. Mary Lindquist

Vision

Celeste Finstrom, Viola Olson, Dienne Andrews, Vernon Hove

World Missions

Tom Johnson, Bette Ford

Youth Ministries

Dienne Andrews

... in honor of

AFLBS

Willard and Arlene Weikel, Pastor James L. Johnson

AFLBS hosts Golf Scramble July 23

AFLBS's annual fund-raising Golf Scramble has been set for July 23 at Stonebrooke Golf Club in Shakopee, Minn. Funds raised through the golfing event will help students with financial needs continue their studies at AFLBS.

Registration begins at 1 p.m. You may either register as a team, or be placed on a team if you register solo. For more information, visit the AFLBS web site at www.aflbs.org, or email aflbs@aflc.org

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences (5 months) – January 1 - May 31, 2006

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN MAY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$325,700	\$33,255	\$143,853	44
Youth Ministries . . .	57,949	7,477	31,423	54
Evangelism	98,330	14,870	43,265	44
Parish Education . . .	96,477	4,868	34,033	35
Seminary	189,224	19,961	81,318	43
Bible School	296,257	36,414	120,007	41
Home Missions	293,287	18,300	107,954	37
World Missions	260,933	32,981	108,590	42
Personal Support . . .	376,641	34,832	177,187	47
TOTALS	\$1,994,798	\$202,959	\$847,629	42
TOTALS 2005	\$1,860,474	\$139,902	\$806,036	43

Goal 42%

These are the Annual Conference-approved budgets but do not reflect all

the financial needs of the departments. Contact the individual departments for further information.

education application

In the 1990s a business magazine reported on the changes taking place in the economy of Brazil because of the increase in the number of evangelicals. People who made a commitment to follow Jesus Christ became better workers. They were more responsible and dependable. The improved work ethic was helping the country's overall economy. The impact was evident, even to a secular business reporter.



Craig Johnson

That is how it should be. A change in actions is the result when someone is spending time in the Word of God. The Bible says, "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says" (James 1:22, NIV). God has given us the Scriptures not just to provide religious information. It is about life transformation.

Unfortunately, though, biblical truths flow from our lips many times but are not seen in our lives. Jesus said, "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46).

George Barna has written many books and done many surveys on people's beliefs and behaviors. His findings have led him to some discouraging conclusions regarding Christians in the U.S.: "We rarely find substantial differences between the moral behavior of Christians and non-Christians. ... millions of people who rely on Jesus Christ for their eternal desti-

ny have problems translating their religious beliefs into action beyond Sunday mornings."

Studies among children have prompted Barna to suggest that Christian churches and families need to teach children to put faith into practice at earlier ages. "We have found that unless young children are taught how to tie their beliefs into their daily behavior, the chances of that faith ever influencing their lifestyle in significant ways is slim. ... Faith perspectives that are not quickly translated into action become mantras that get lip service but have limited affect on lives — theology without hands and feet. Our studies consistently show that the habits formed while we are young are the behaviors that define us when we are old."

Barna's current discoveries are similar to what Philip Jacob Spener found in the church of the 1600s. Spener wrote the book *Pia Desideria* in an attempt to call people to live out the biblical truths they were being taught. His writings led to the start of a spiritual movement known as pietism. Much of our heritage in the AFLC can be traced back to that movement.

Spener wrote: "... you hear the Word of God. This is good. But it is not enough that your ear hears it. Do you let it penetrate inwardly into your heart ...?"

Regarding Christian education Spener said, "... 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."

We want students to learn bib-

God has given us the Scriptures not just to provide religious information. It is about life transformation.

lical facts and information, and also how it can change their lives. We want them to realize the Bible is the most practical and relevant book of all.

I had a math teacher who loved story problems. His goal in using them was to help students see how what they were learning could be useful in everyday life. He knew students ask questions like: "Why do I need to know this? When will I ever use this? Is an acute angle just something that looks nice?"

Students in Sunday schools, Bible studies and youth groups ask similar questions. "How is what took place 2,000 years ago going to help me in school tomorrow? How should what happened long ago in a faraway place affect the way I relate to my family?"

By the grace of God we can answer those kinds of questions. Scripture is always "useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (II Timothy 3:16, 17). We're given the call and the privilege of showing people the usefulness of Scripture and helping them apply it to their lives.

[ARC]

Resting



Peter sat back and felt the calming motion of the boat as the disciples pulled away from shore and the crowd of people seeking Jesus. He and the other disciples had just returned from their very first mission trip. Like students returning back to school after Christmas vacation, they had each shared and compared their experiences. People had been healed. Lives had been touched. They had power over demons, illness and hopelessness.

Jesus listened intently, smiling at their excitement, offering encouragement where it was needed, and laughing at the jokes made about various situations. Like a proud father, He watched as His disciples chattered and jested excitedly about all that had gone on. As their chatter began to slow, Jesus rose.

“Come on. Let’s get out of here,” He said. “I’m hungry and you’re tired. We need to get away, somewhere we can be alone and rest.” Then, leading His disciples down to the seashore, they climbed into a boat and away from the crowds.

The warm sunshine and cool breeze had the effect Jesus had hoped for and one by one the disciples nodded off to sleep.

While we don’t know if the story in Mark (6:8-12; 30-32) actually happened that way, we do know from this Scripture, and others, that Jesus saw the value in getting away to rest. Resting is an important part of our spiritual, mental, emotional and physical well-being. The apostle Paul gives us a brief picture of what happens when we don’t have rest, “For when we came into Macedonia, this body of ours had no rest, but we were harassed at every turn — conflicts on the outside, fears within” (II Corinthians 7: 5).

Rest has different meanings for each of us. For some, rest is a quiet walk in the woods. For others it could

mean a road. For others, it can actually be restful to join a group of people for conversation, sports or some other activity. Scripture never tells us what rest is. But it tells us over and over again that rest is important.

Rest isn’t a sign of weakness, but a sign of good health and strength. After all, in the very first book of the Bible we are told that God the Father, the Omnipotent One, rested after His work of creation. Later, the Gospel writers give numerous instances where Jesus got away to rest.

Using “rest” as an acronym, here are four ideas to make it meaningful and effective.

Reconnect with nature — The writers of our Bible make constant reference to the wonders of God’s creation. I find it helpful to read from the Psalms in preparation for Him to reveal Himself in nature.

Exercise — Exercise isn’t necessarily a workout. The important thing is to take an opportunity to allow your body to release the tension life brings.

Study — While there are many good books about God and Christian living on the market, the best book to read is still the Bible. Find a version that is easy to read and understand and take that with you. Read it regularly, allowing God to speak to you.

Talk to God — Prayer is telling God exactly how you feel. Don’t hold back. (He already knows anyway!) Talk to Him as you would a friend.

At the ARC, our motto is, “Get away and rest awhile.” It’s a lesson we all need to learn. It’s something we all can do in our own way, and God will bless us for it.

— By Mike Fisk
Editor of the ARC newsletter
“The ARC-ives”