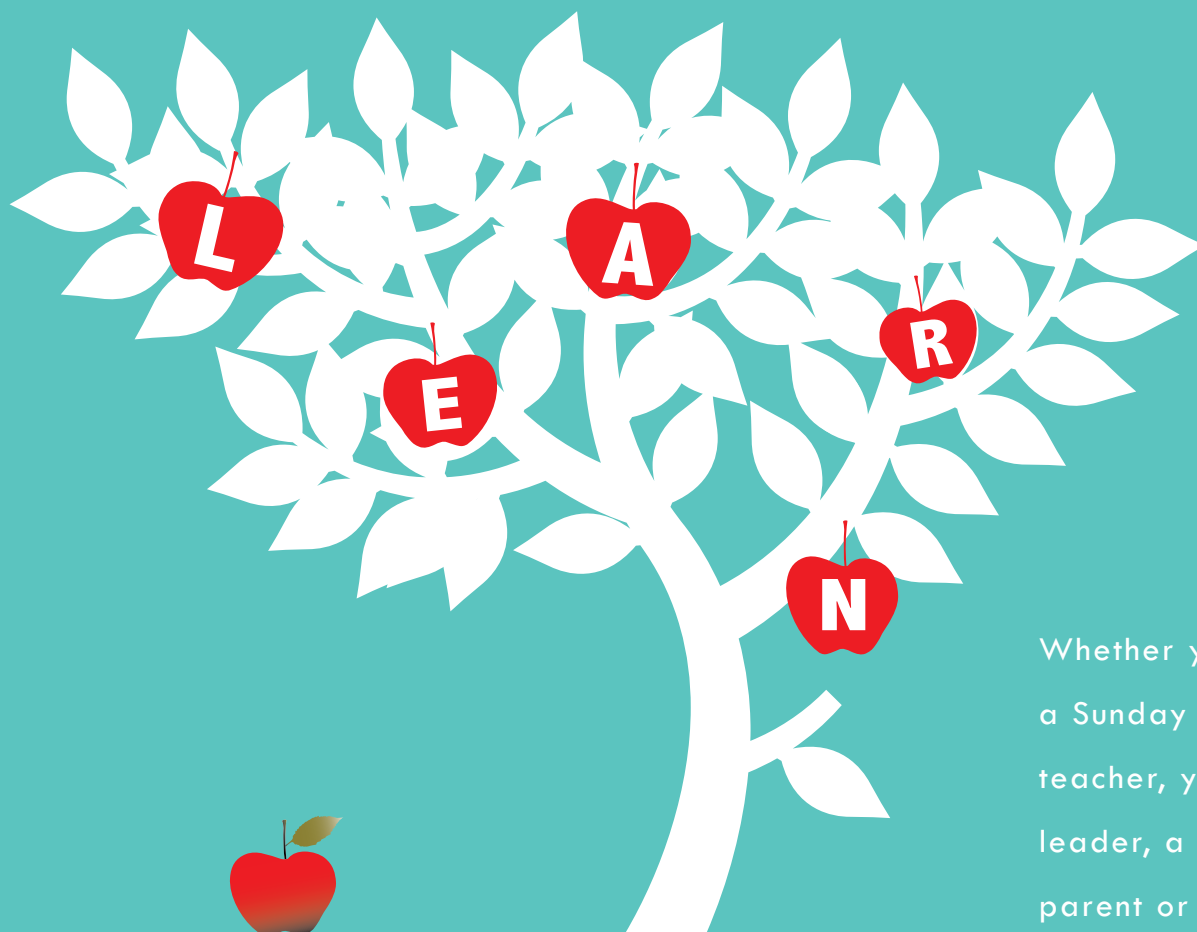


THE LUTHERAN 

JULY 2007

AMBASSADOR



Whether you're a Sunday school teacher, youth leader, a new parent or one with years of experience, the role you play in the lives of children and youths will have a lasting impact.

Not



for me

BY PASTOR JIM JOHNSON

I'll never forget the anxiety I felt soon after I became a follower of Jesus.

I was a teenager who recently made a commitment to a life of serving the Lord. "Telling people about Jesus" made me twitch. My teachers used words like "witness" and "evangelism" as if they were natural parts of their lives.

Not for me.

I wanted to tell people about Jesus as much as Ventura County drivers in southern California love driving north on the 101 on Fridays after 4 p.m. "No thanks," I thought. "It's not for me." I wanted to get off at the next exit, so to speak, living my life on the quiet back roads.

But God kept bringing verses into my mind like Acts 1:8, "And you will be my witnesses." Peter and John would say things such as, "We cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20), and I thought, well, that's Peter and John. But then I would read what Jesus said, "If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels" (Luke 9:26).

I surrendered. "If You can make me talk, Lord, I'm willing to learn."

Slowly, God is making me learn to talk about the Lord naturally — supernaturally, really, but in a way that sounds more like conversation than it does a pres-

sured sales talk. A book that has helped me significantly is Rebecca Manley Pippert's "Out of the Saltshaker and Into the World" (InterVarsity Press). Pippert describes evangelism as learning to talk naturally about what God is doing in your life. "Christians and non-Christians have something in common," she says. "We're all uptight about evangelism." Pippert tells believers to admit it openly and let people know you're trying to learn to deal with it anyway. Your consideration should help them deal with it, too.

Jesus can make us feel uptight — look at some of the people He talked to in the Bible. Some loved Him, some hated Him, just like today. But God steers us to walk across the room and tell people what matters to us: a living, breathing, risen Savior who died for sinners like us. Even the uptight ones!

Because I care about people being rescued, I'm learning to surrender the fears of being uptight. I want to learn to connect with the people God places around me. Our church is learning to do it in southern California — the land where the uptight collides with the relaxed. I believe that God is going to do something special among us — but only if we're willing to obey Him, break out of our shells and talk about Jesus. He wants you, too, to branch out. You weren't chosen so you could cling, says I Peter 2:9. You were chosen so you could "declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."

I'm learning — slowly, just like you — but I'm learning. I'm learning to talk about Jesus in my everyday conversation a little more naturally every day.

Johnson serves Good Shepherd Lutheran, Camarillo, Calif.

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What comes into our minds when we think about
God is the most important thing about us.

— A.W. Tozer

[The Gospel must be protected as carefully against legalism as against
antinomianism. An active pride is as dangerous for faith as the laziness
that shirks every task. ... The battle against dead works is just as
important as that against dead faith.]

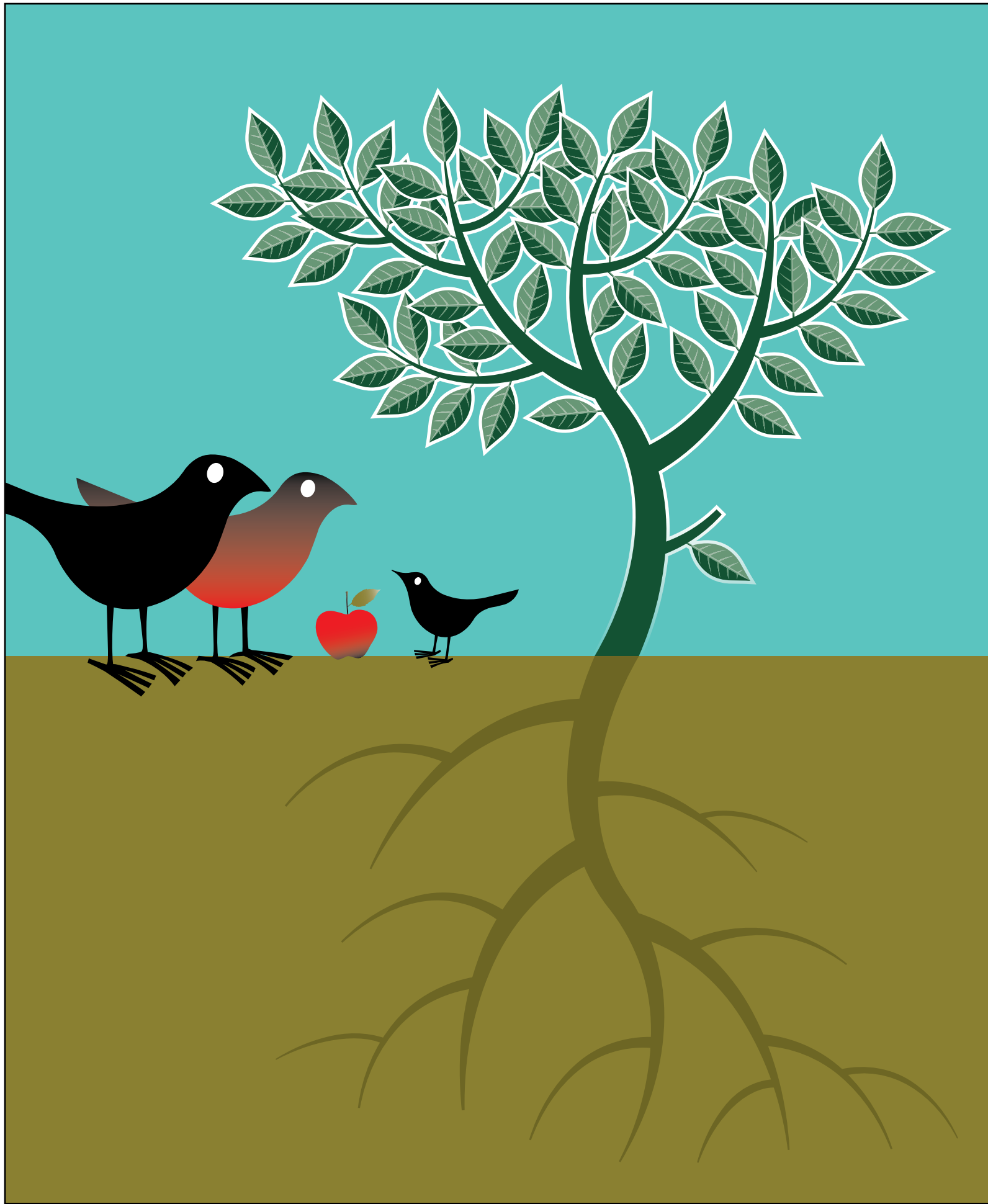
— Adolf Koberle
“The Quest for Holiness”

Since we have an everlasting freedom from the
judgments of the Law, let us fervently love the
commandments of the Law so that with cheerful
mind we serve our neighbor in love, with words,
deeds, and patience.

— C.O. Rosenius
“The Believer Free From the Law”

The problem is not only to win souls but to save
minds. If you win the whole world and lose the
mind of the world, you will soon discover you
have not won the world. Indeed it may turn out
you have actually lost the world.

— Charles Malik



Better than SILVER & GOLD

BY PRISCILLA HORN

Recently I asked my teenage sons why they thought it was important for parents to teach their children from the catechism. “It instills values,” said my 15-year-old. “It builds character,” my 13-year-old added. “Yes!” I thought. “That’s the point.”

In last month’s issue of “The Lutheran Ambassador,” there was an article entitled, “Teach it to Your Children.” The article was a means in which to introduce us to the new edition of “Luther’s Small Catechism and Explanation” just published by the AFLC’s Ambassador Publications. Since we had received a copy, I picked it up and began glancing through it. I was amazed again at what a wealth is contained in that little book! It is filled with insights from God’s Word, hundreds of Bible verses, the basic doctrines of our Lutheran church, and answers to such questions as, “What should a man care for most of all?” and “What is the will of God?” as well as prayers and creeds of our Christian faith.

We live in a country where we still have the *right* to impart the wisdom of God’s Word to our children. With the increase of liberalism, including moving away from teaching sound doctrine in many churches, it is a freedom we dare not take lightly. There are fewer and fewer young people today who can truly discern truth from error. But as

Christian parents we have the privilege of making a difference in the lives of our own children.

A couple of years ago, my husband and I decided to teach the Ten Commandments to our children during our family devotional time. We were motivated by the fact that our oldest son would soon begin confirmation, but it turned out to be a joyful experience for all of us as each child memorized the commandments and their meanings. From it we gained many opportunities to talk about why we must obey God’s laws and the consequences of disobeying. In the early years of our children’s lives, their hearts are open to the things of the Lord. What an honor to fill them up with solid biblical teaching and training in Lutheran doctrine!

Imparting this truth to our children is our right, but it is also our *responsibility*. As parents we have many responsibilities in the care of our children — feeding and clothing them, nursing them through sickness, providing a safe environment for them, and making sure they have a good education. But nothing is more important than our responsibility for their spiritual needs. God has told us in Proverbs 22:6 that we are to “Train up a child in the way he should go ...” and in Deuteronomy 6:6-9, Moses reminded the Israelites of their responsibility to pass on

(Continued on page 19)



Unchurched CHILDREN

Last summer we had more than 80 children attend vacation Bible school (VBS) at Calvary Free Lutheran in Fergus Falls, Minn. More than half of those children were from our community and not regular members or attendees of our church. Of course, some of them were from other area churches, but several were also unchurched children.

Members of our Children's Ministries Board have struggled to address the following questions: How do we follow up on unchurched children who come to VBS? How do we encourage them to come to Sunday school and kids' club? How do we get their parents involved in the church?

Getting the unchurched children to attend other church events is the first step toward helping them to love and follow Jesus. We've come to realize there is no one right way, but several possibilities to carry this out. We have learned that each family needs to be approached in a way that is best for them. The following are some suggestions that might work in your church.

Fliers

On the second or third day of VBS, send a flier home inviting the parents, grandparents, and friends to a VBS program. On the last day of VBS or during the following Sunday morning worship hour, have the VBS children sing songs, recite Bible verses, etc. Let them showcase what they learned during the week. Parents, grandparents, and other extended family members will come for this event. When these visitors come, be sure to make them feel welcome. Introduce yourself. Shake hands. Tell them something you saw and liked about their children during the VBS week. And, of course, invite them to come back again.

At the end of the VBS week, send a second flier that invites children to attend fall programs: Sunday school, kids' club, confirmation, and youth group. List specific dates and times when the events occur. Ask parents to post this on their family calendar or bulletin board for future reference.

Postcards/telephone calls

During registration of VBS students, be sure to collect the children's full names, birth dates, mailing addresses, and telephone numbers. Then, when fall programs start, send a personal postcard to each child a week or two before

fall events start. Children love to get their own mail. Follow that up with a telephone call to the parents. Ask them if their children will be able to attend Sunday school or kids' club. Ask them if they have any questions.

Rides to church events

Sometimes children can't come to church events because they don't have a way to get there. Ask members of the congregation to provide rides for these children. Try to choose someone who lives close to the children and can do outreach to the family on a regular basis.

Christian education programs

If children have fun at Sunday school, kids' club, VBS, etc., they will come back. If children feel loved and valued, they will come back again and again. Not only will they come back, they'll invite their friends, cousins, and neighbors. Take the time to plan well-organized classes and events. Take the time to staff your children's ministries with people who love working with children. Provide training for your volunteer workers so that they know how to teach children.

Portable billboard signs

Consider renting or purchasing a portable billboard sign or an electronic sign. Place the sign in a heavily traveled area. This will draw additional families and children to the church, and the cycle of outreach can start all over again.

As we gear up for our VBS program this summer, we eagerly anticipate that God will open doors for new contacts with more unchurched children. We pray for His direction and guidance because it is His work we are doing. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matthew 19:14).

Outreach is important. Don't forget to invite the unchurched child who lives next to you to your VBS program or any other children's ministries program this year. There is no greater joy than leading children to Christ and helping them grow in their faith.

Lein is a member of Calvary Free Lutheran, Fergus Falls, Minn.



BY PETER & BETHANY HAUGEN

Training up CHILDREN

When we were blessed with the arrival of our first child, we rejoiced as the grace of God was bestowed upon her through the sacrament of baptism. As with countless parents before and after us, we heard and responded to the baptismal vows, the third of which asks, “Do you [parents] promise to instruct this child in the Word of God, and to nurture him/her in the chastening and admonition of the Lord?” Obviously this is a most vital task, which God has chosen to lay primarily upon those of us who are parents. This is perhaps most clearly seen in Deuteronomy 6:7 (NASB), “And you shall teach [My words] diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.”

Luther recognized this when he wrote the Large and Small Catechisms, both of which started as an effort to facilitate parental instruction of children in fundamental biblical truths. We also recognized the importance of this responsibility, and we readily accepted what we believed to be a doable task.

We have taken many practical steps toward fulfilling the baptismal vows we have now made four times. We faithfully bring our children to Sunday school and require them to sit with us through the worship service; we teach them such simple prayers as “Now I Lay Me” and the Lord’s Prayer and also how to pray on their own; we help them memorize Bible verses; we sing hymns; we have family devotions. And yet we have failed repeatedly in our calling to be faithful to the responsibility given by God.

As we quickly found, becoming parents did not automatically make us better people; rather, having children has served to expose the depth of our own depravity. It is unfortunate, then, that children (particularly very young children) learn primarily through imitation. Instead of curbing their natural inclinations to sin, we have repeatedly encouraged those very traits by our own constant failings. Why does our daughter struggle with anger management? Because we do. Why does our son struggle with jealousy? Because we do. Why do our children often display resentment towards “spiritual” activities? Because we do. Indeed, much more than we would care to admit, we find ourselves crying out in despair with Paul, “Wretched man

that I am! Who will set me free from this body of death?” (Romans 7:24).

Such depravity renders us eminently unqualified to provide anyone with advice regarding how to best teach young children scriptural truths. However, along with Paul we possess the sweetest of assurances: “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 7:25). Most assuredly does the grace of God cover, also, the failings of parents in regard to their children. Indeed, it is as we look back at our past failings and look ahead to our future failings (of which there will be many, despite our best intentions) that we must remember the promise found in Romans 8:28, “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”

Luther has noted that “not only the misfortune which comes to us and which is placed upon us by others, but also the evil which we ourselves commit must become a means for our good” (quoted in C.O. Rosenius’ “Romans: A Devotional Commentary,” 115). This must cover the sins and failures of us parents, and, furthermore, it must include our believing children who suffer because of our sins and failures. What a comfort to the afflicted parent to know that God is capable (and has promised) to work things together for the good of those whom He has brought into a personal relationship with Himself — including the children who were granted faith by Him in baptism.

For His own inscrutable reasons, God has elected to call many of us to the vocation of parenthood. As we struggle with our own flesh and inadequacies and try to live life from one day to the next, we must remember the exhortation of God in Colossians 2:6, “As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.” That is, in the same way we received Christ — by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9) — so are we to live our daily lives as believers. Of course, we will still stumble and fall repeatedly; thankfully, God is capable of preserving our children even then, for “if we are faithless, He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself” (II Timothy 2:13).

The Haugens are members of Faith Free Lutheran, Minneapolis, Minn.



BY PASTOR DEAN IVERSON

Making the SIMPLE WISE

In a recent issue of “The Pastor’s Weekly Briefing” from Focus on the Family I read of the three biggest challenges in raising children today. First is societal influences such as drugs and alcohol, peer pressure and media, including TV, the internet, and movies. Second is the challenge of maintaining discipline, teaching morals, and creating a sense of family life. Last is the challenge of balancing time between work and home.

Psalm 78:7 gives us the purpose for Christian education. “That they [our children] should put their confidence in God and not forget the works of God.” Trust in and loyalty to God must be instilled in our young people today for obvious reasons.

This can be a daunting task. However, as our text declares, God “has established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel.” In other words, God has made truth known to us through the Word. Psalm 19:7 says, “The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.”

We have the testimony of Scripture that God *is* mighty; God *is* wondrous in all His works; and God *is* powerful to save. God has commanded us to teach our children (Psalm 78:5). Our young people need to hear the hope of salvation in Jesus. They need to see it in the way we live. They need to see loyalty and devotion to God based upon a personal relationship with Jesus. It needs to be a covenant relationship based upon the promise of God’s Word, not based on feelings. Do you know what it means to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ?

Christian education is vital for our young people today, and not only for them, but also for their children and their children’s children. One might ask, what will our young people teach their children? What will their children teach their children?

What do we teach them today? Foremost is the testimony of Scripture, the testimony God established. All of Scripture, the perfect law of God, holds the key to salvation for all people. It is the standard by which we relate to them the wondrous works of God and the power of His saving grace. There is no other means by which we can instill godly character. The Word of God is the only source

for teaching young people the power of His saving grace.

The testimony of Scripture itself compels us to teach the doctrines it holds. II Timothy 3:16-17 says, “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God [our young people] may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”

Christian education of our young people is sharing what we have learned from God’s Word, not only in the classroom setting but also by the way we live. Am I living my life based upon the testimony established by God in His Word? The testimony of God shows us the reliability of His promises. It also points us to the power of living free from sin in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, in contrast to the futility of relying upon self, the world, or others.

When it comes to Christian education we need to ask, am I living according to the established testimony of God’s Word or according to the world? When our young people look at our lives do they see us or do they see Jesus living in us? Our young people see the value we place on a personal relationship with Jesus Christ by the way we prioritize and live our lives.

We all need help in living the Christian life. That is why we must never look elsewhere other than Scripture to see the revealed character of Christ. He is our resource, our strength, our example, our standard and our pattern.

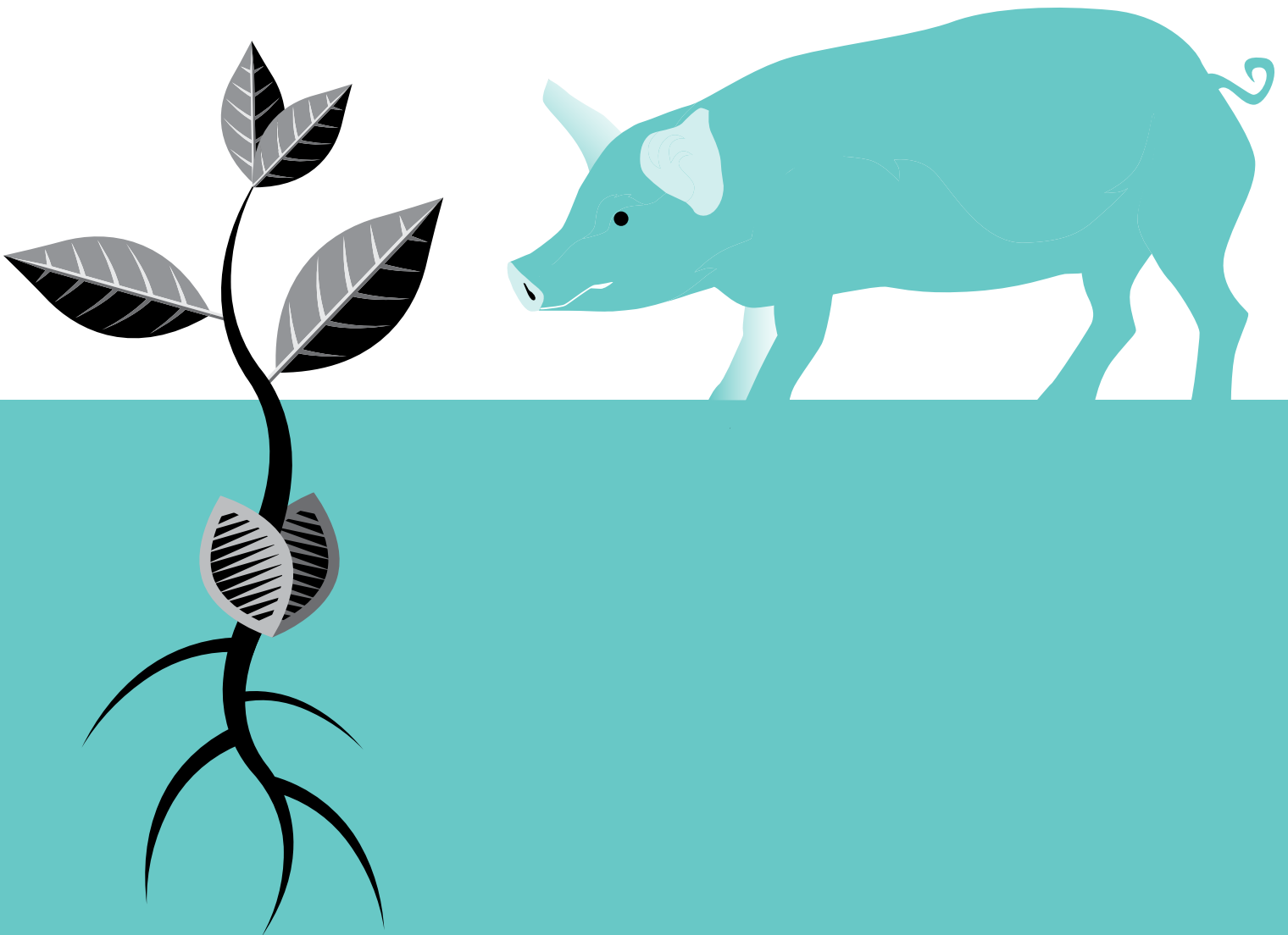
I have shared with my congregation how thankful I am for our seminary and Bible school. The biblical foundation of the teaching is tremendous. So long as we make the Word of God our sure foundation we will always have the established testimony of God to help us teach our young people and to help us live our lives according to His good, perfect, and pleasing will. There is no need to dress it up. The Word is powerful and living.

Our job is to plant the seed and let God make it grow. Together let us plant joyfully by teaching and by example. Don’t be afraid to let young people see your devotion and loyalty to God. Dare to be a Daniel. There is nothing sissy about that.

Iverson serves Triumph Lutheran, Ferndale, Wash.

Total COMMITMENT

BY PASTOR ARLIN OLSON



A pig and a chicken were walking together one day. As they walked they passed a soup kitchen full of hungry people. The chicken said, "Come on, let's go in and make a contribution."

The pig replied, "That's easy for you to say. You can make a contribution, but for me it would be total commitment."

I have a great appreciation for the work of volunteers. The dictionary describes a volunteer as "one who enters service of one's own free will."

We have many volunteers in our society. There are voluntary fire fighters, volunteers who assist in hospitals, volunteer tutors, people who volunteer at food banks, and the list goes on. Even in the church volunteers do much of the work.

We don't compel people to teach Sunday school, read Scriptures, sing for special music, put money in the offering plate, serve in the kitchen, etc. People do these things of their own free will. I'm convinced that even paid jobs in the church are to be done from the heart, not with pay as the incentive.

God wants people to serve Him from their hearts. In a sense, the Christian life is a volunteer life. We are to be people serving God of our own free will. The motivation is love resulting from the free mercy and grace of God, not fear or compulsion.

There can be problems with a volunteer system. Food banks have trouble keeping a constant supply of food to meet the demand. I've seen missionaries return home because of a lack of funding. And it's not always easy to find enough people to fill roles in volunteer organizations. The problem is the level of commitment involved.

It seems to me that we have come to see volunteer work as work that requires a low level of commitment — something we can just squeeze in if we have time or resources. It's an attitude that works for some things, but not so well for others. In the military, for example, one can't opt in and out at will. Once committed, the term of service must be completed.

Similarly, the call to us as Christians is total commitment. We are volunteers in that we serve by our own choice. But like military service, it is a very real and demanding commitment; it is a choice to give our lives.

Paul, in writing to Timothy, put it this way, "Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs — he wants to please his commanding officer" (II Timothy 2:3-4).

Jesus encouraged us to count the cost, then make the choice to volunteer for His kingdom. He also made it clear that it is total commitment He is looking for. He said, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62).

Jesus also said to His disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it" (Matthew 16:24-25).

The work of Christ's kingdom is too important to be haphazard about it — it needs real commitment. How do you view your life in Christ and His Church? Is it a contribution or total commitment?

Olson is lay pastor of Bethel Lutheran, Elbow, Saskatchewan, Canada.

Successful Sunday schools start with dedicated teachers

I like to read and study and be prepared for teaching my Sunday School class before Sunday arrives. I'm always looking for new and exciting ways to teach a Bible story, to make it come alive and to be able to relate it to today. I get all excited and can hardly wait for Sunday to come!

Sunday morning finally comes ... but, where is everyone? There is only one student! Of course, there are only six children total, and sometimes there are eight, but today only one child showed up. My first reaction was disappointment. Now what?

But then, one child is encouraging! We had an in-depth study with many questions asked.

Is a Sunday school only successful if it's large? Does size have anything to do with success?

We're not in ministry for numbers. We want to touch lives. And we don't measure success by numbers, status and recognition. We measure it instead by the changes seen in the children's lives. Focus on impact instead of volume.

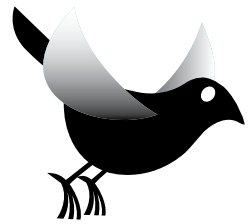
Sunday school is more than nifty programs and creative Bible stories. It's nurturing a young person in getting to know Jesus. It's getting to know those kids personally and caring about them enough to pray for them every day. It's seeing a young lady willing to go where she's needed for missionary work. It's watching young people care about those around them and seeing their willingness to work with the handicapped and the less fortunate.

Aren't these the real signs of a successful Sunday school? Students grow out of the love, patience, energy and prayers of teachers who take time to care. God blesses church workers for their faithfulness.

*By Linda Mohagen
Slim Buttes Lutheran
Reva, S.D.*



A living INTEREST



Many say that the mission and the missionary are changing in the 21st century. Yes, we cannot dispute the fact that time changes people and things: fads come and go, the twists and turns in life change us; age changes us; methods change. But concerning the *mission*, the message will *never* change. Discipling is difficult without missionaries. God's mission plan to reach the lost continues to "the end of the age."

The Command — "Go"

Jesus said: "Go and make disciples of all nations ..." (Matthew 28:19). Teaching and preaching can be done by many methods: radio, TV, computer, etc. These methods will continue to be used and made better, even penetrating the most remote tribes and places left on this earth. Praise the Lord for this. The church cannot neglect the responsibility the Lord placed upon us, His people, who make up the congregation.

But discipling is done by example. It's like parenting children: there really are no quick methods to do that job. Jesus walked with His disciples for three years while on earth. He taught them, He warned them, He showed them by on-the-job training. These are His words, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21).

The Need — "Save the lost"

"This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of truth" (I Timothy 2:3-4).

Religions don't save. The need to help the lost grows every day as they seek false religions for hope. They are going to a dark and desperate eternity apart from the Lord, who wants all to be saved and share eternity with Him in heaven. The message never changes: the *gospel message* of Jesus Christ teaches us that we are saved by grace through the blood of Christ. This message cannot be blurred. It has been said that people today want to be saved from hell but not from their sins. That thinking and teaching is false and

destructive to the gospel of Christ. God wills *all* to be saved and come to the knowledge of truth.

The Cause — "Passion with compassion"

"The cause of foreign missions must become dear and precious to every member of the congregation, from the child to the old man, so that they all love the cause, live for it, pray for it, suffer for it, read about it, save for it, sacrifice for it. All, all in active work for the cause of Jesus Christ, so that the part of the pastor becomes that of encouraging, exhorting, guiding, and instructing," wrote Georg Sverdrup.

A *passion* for Jesus Christ cannot be taught in the classroom. We have it or we don't have it. Do we enjoy our time with Him in His Word each day? Adam and Eve, before their fall into sin, enjoyed their daily communion with the Lord. The more we read God's Word and pray, the more our passion for Him grows. Our *compassion* for the lost will grow greater, too.

The Interest — "Contagious"

"Much of the blame for the lack of a living interest in missions among the laity, professor Sverdrup placed upon the pastors," wrote Dr. John Stensvaag, former president of the Lutheran Free Church.

The mission interest should be as contagious as an epidemic, affecting many people at one time. The account in Acts of the early church was that it "grew in great numbers." Thousands of people were "affected" by the good news. Praise the Lord for epidemics like that!

Now the real question for all our church leaders today is this: How much living interest do we have for missions, both home and afar? Does the living interest for missions spread throughout our churches and communities? Remember, our interest in missions is contagious — either negative or positive.

Dyrud, a former missionary to Brazil, now works with the Ministry Training Institute at the AFLC School's campus in Plymouth, Minn.

serving the LIVING GOD

Last month, families from across the AFLC came to Sioux Falls for the 2007 AFLC Annual Conference. Abiding Savior and Living Word Free Lutheran Churches were honored to host you. Many of you who attended also participated in the dedication of Living Word's building site, located in southwest Sioux Falls. By God's miraculous provision, we plan to break ground later this summer. New construction generally causes some excitement, but our excitement comes from more than progress on a permanent facility for our congregation. We are celebrating God's faithfulness in the past and anticipating His continued blessing in us and through us.

The ministry of Free Lutheran congregations in Sioux Falls began with our sister congregation. Settled in a baby-boomer neighborhood on the east side of Sioux Falls, Abiding Savior experienced great growth after its beginning in 1989. From the start, their vision called for multiple AFLC congregations in our rapidly growing city. Talk of a new congregation intensified in 2001, and a steering committee began meeting regularly. They soon formulated a mission statement: "Proclaiming the living Word, serving the living God." After much prayer and planning, Living Word opened its doors on Oct. 6, 2002, with 28 charter members and about 40 regular attendees.

While Living Word launched mostly with people from Abiding Savior, more than half of those joining since come from other (or no) church backgrounds. Most have had little or no contact with the AFLC but are passionate about receiving and living God's Word and focusing on evangelism and discipleship in the context of the local congregation.

God has blessed us with both new

converts and those with renewed commitments to Christ. Over the past two years we have invested in areas of ministry that led to equipping the saints for ministry (Ephesians 4:11). In this process, God has often provided and called just the right people at just the right time. Recently, we are emphasizing the team aspect in every ministry. Just as life as a Home Missions congregation is better with a supportive sister congregation, so is all ministry better when done together.

The biblical conviction that living congregations are organisms, not just organizations, is at our core. Just as healthy plants grow and multiply, so also do healthy congregations. Numerical growth doesn't guarantee that a congregation is faithful. But God generally produces numerical growth when congregations minister faithfully in the midst of growth. Our city is growing rapidly, with many of its new residents from nominal Christian backgrounds. Further, more than a dozen distinct language/people groups call Sioux Falls home. We have both great opportunity and great responsibility to reach this burgeoning mission field.

As you experience similar joys and opportunities to trust God in your congregation, will you join us in prayer? Our needs are probably a lot like yours: God's continued provision and guidance. Boldness to walk by faith, not by sight. A heart for lost souls. A pioneer spirit when tempted to slip into "settler" mode. A servant's heart when tempted to look within instead of reaching out.

With Christ's continuing work in our congregation, each of these prayers will be answered, and God will be glorified as we proclaim the living Word and serve the living God.

Mobley is pastor of Living Word Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D.



A meeting with PARISH EDUCATION

BY FERN BOHLING

With my five-year term on the Board of Publications and Parish Education coming to a close, I have been reflecting on that experience. I began serving in 2002 with little knowledge about what this committee did and soon learned it was more than business; this was a *working* committee. It has been a tremendous challenge for me, but one in which I have felt so much reward and blessing with a sense of learning more than I contributed. There have been accomplishments in these five years — the completion of Volume II in the Heritage Series, “The Dream That Would Not Die,” the third grade and preschool Sunday school materials, Sunday school CDs, and the Catechism editing and reprinting.

With this in mind, I would like to share what a typical (though hypothetical) day would be like in the form of ... “A journal page from a member of the Parish Education board.”

It's 9 a.m. and our board of two pastors and three laypersons has gathered in the AFLC conference room along with Parish Education Director Marian Christopherson. It's the beginning of the monthly two-day committee meeting. As chairman, Pastor John Mundfrom opens the meeting by reading from Psalm 103:1-12, which sets the tone of praise as we talk about how wonderfully we have seen

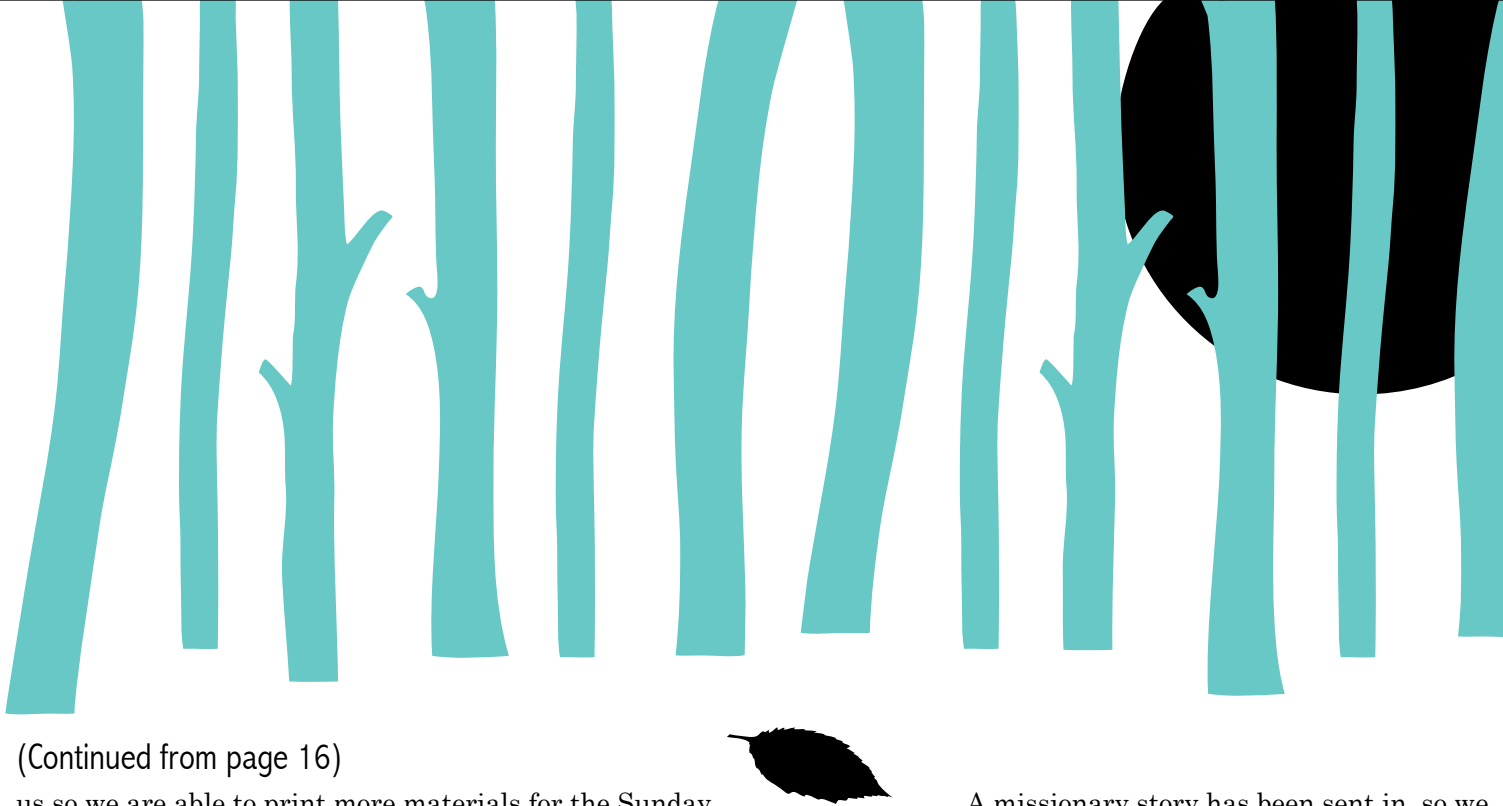
the Lord at work lately — supplying the various needs for Parish Ed staff and volunteers and for the financial needs. With these praises on our lips, we join in a time of prayer for the AFLC departments, this department's staff and the volunteers, congregations and Sunday schools, the concerns of family and friends, the guidance of the Holy Spirit as we seek direction for the issues before us, and the financial provision for the projects that are nearing completion.

Pastor Mundfrom passes out the agenda — it looks like we have much to accomplish. The minutes are presented by the secretary, Loiell Dyrud, and the financial report is reviewed with a few questions discussed and reconciled. It is noted that the cash in bank includes designated funds, so we look at that amount to see how much is available for operating expenses. This month looks good, but that isn't always the case. Yet, God supplies our needs! We stand in awe as we are told of the funds that have come at just the right time for the reprinting of the Catechism. This was a long and tedious project, and we are rejoicing that the Catechism is ready to send to the printer!

We also note the funds that have been sent to us from the WMF, which are designated for the new preschool curriculum. It's so good to have the WMF working alongside of

(Continued on page 18)



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(Continued from page 16)

us so we are able to print more materials for the Sunday schools and congregations of the AFLC. Along with the financial support, the WMF encourages us by informing congregations about the Parish Education projects. The reports are accepted with a motion made by Jan Strand and a second by Pastor Les Johnson.

The director's report is presented, which lists the materials sent in by volunteers for review and/or editing, other correspondence items, business matters, and things accomplished by the Parish Education staff in the previous weeks. As we look at the list, we're aware of the many hours volunteers have committed to the various projects and are so thankful for all their endeavors. I am looking forward to doing some of that volunteer work when I leave the board.

It's time to take another look at the items listed in the agenda and to consider priorities. Marian has received some illustrations for the fifth grade, so we take a look at these first. We are impressed by the artistic work and so thankful for the talents of this volunteer and her willingness to share it to enhance the Sunday school materials. This is an area that could use more volunteers.

Break time arrives about 10:35 a.m. as we need to move around and rest our eyes for awhile.

After the break, we get to the editing of Sunday school materials that have been sent in by three of our volunteers. The materials are so good, but more "sets of eyes" will refine the work and check on details. It is the desire of Parish Education that the materials published be as accurate and understandable as possible both scripturally and grammatically. With both pastors and teachers on the board, suggestions come forth readily. As a homemaker, I seem to contribute my share too! Editing is time consuming work, and before we know it it's lunch time! Pizza has been ordered and we share in good food and conversation.

A missionary story has been sent in, so we take a look at that after lunch. Some suggestions are noted, but the story will be sent to Clara Gunderson to edit. We're grateful to the WMF for their encouragement and financial support of this project.

Board members were asked to read one of Lutheran theologian Dr. Uuras Saarnivaara's biographies previous to the meeting. Homework is assigned at the end of our meeting, and that helps us to proceed through the review and editing more quickly. We are asked for our comments and some of us differ in our opinions, but with further discussion we come to a consensus as we have so many times before.

An afternoon break is called for about 3 p.m. As we return, we are given a written report by the preliminary planning committee for the new confirmation curriculum. We are glad to see this proceed as updated curriculum is needed for teaching our young people. Writers from the board are needed for a "Lutheran Ambassador" article on the new catechism and for four bulletin articles. It doesn't take long for some to volunteer and others to be volunteered.

We are running out of time to complete more on our agenda for today, so before tomorrow we need to take a look at the adult Bible study that is ready for review. We will also continue editing Sunday school lessons that weren't completed today. A number of business matters including future meeting dates and consideration of equipment needs will also be addressed tomorrow.

Adjournment is at 5 p.m., and I leave the first day of meetings feeling weary but with a sense of accomplishment. After tonight's rest and sleep, I will be ready to start the next day as we work to accomplish more on the agenda.

Bohling, Golden Valley, Minn., is a member of the AFLC's Board of Parish Education and Publications. She is a member of Faith Lutheran, Minneapolis.



(Continued from page 5)

the teachings they had received. “And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart, and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be frontals on your forehead. And you shall write them on the door posts of your house and on your gates.” God made it very clear that He expects our children to know His commandments. He admonishes us to be diligent in teaching them.

It is not enough to expect the church to handle the spiritual training of our children. Sunday school teachers, pastors, and youth workers cannot replace the teaching role that comes from a parent. God has given this role to every parent because He knows how desperately we, along with our children, need to know what we believe, why we believe it, and what the Word of God says. Use the catechism to teach the doctrines of the Word. Use the *Explanation* by discussing one question a day for a year. It is a wise and profitable endeavor.

We have the right to teach our children, and God has given us the responsibility. When we follow in obedience, we will see great *rewards*. Imparting truth and sound doctrine that is based on the Word is planting seeds in our children’s hearts. We are giving them the gift of wisdom, which according to the words of Proverbs 3:13-14 is better than silver or gold. “How blessed is the man who finds

wisdom, And the man who gains understanding. For its profit is better than the profit of silver, And its gain than fine gold.”

We want to see our children mature into responsible adults who use their gifts and talents in the service of the Lord. By taking the time when they are young to teach and train them, we are laying the groundwork for their future. Proverbs 3:15, 17-18 continues with this to say about wisdom, “She is more precious than jewels; And nothing you desire compares with her ... Her ways are pleasant ways, And all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, And happy are all who hold her fast.” To give to our children a love for wisdom is preparation for a life that is full of honor and pleasing to the Lord.

When my boys expressed to me their opinions on teaching the catechism at home, I breathed a prayer of thanks to God that some of this wisdom was making its way into their hearts. As a home school mother, I have invested many hours in the training of my children. When I see glimpses of godliness sprouting in their lives, when I sense that they really believe gaining spiritual wisdom is valuable, then I see a bit of this reward! My training days are not over yet, though. So I will reach again for that little book and find a place to continue.

Horn, Kenyon, Minn., serves Emmanuel Lutheran and Hauge Lutheran, Kenyon, with her husband, Pastor Martin Horn.

Have you read a good book recently?

Read any good books lately? The October issue of the "Lutheran Ambassador" will be a book review issue. If you've been impacted by a certain book recently or in the past, and would be open to writing about it, please contact the editors. The deadline for the issue is Aug. 27. Contact Editor Craig Johnson by email: craigj@teleport.com, or phone (503) 325-2925; or Managing Editor Ruth Gunderson by email at ruthg@afcl.org, or phone (763) 545-5631.

FLY Committee nominees

Elections at convention

The nominees for the 2009 FLY Committee have been announced. The election will take place during the FLY Convention July 2-7 at Estes Park, Colo.

The nominees for president are Daniel Keinanen, Christ is Lord Lutheran, Onalaska, Wis.; and Pastor Eric Westlake, Our Saviour's Lutheran, Zumbrota, Minn.

The nominees for vice president are Tonya Nagel, Newark Lutheran, Newark, Ill.; Nathan Olson, Faith Lutheran, Shakopee, Minn.; Ryan Patenaude, Peace Lutheran, Canal Winchester, Ohio; and Phil Wiese, Emmaus Lutheran, Bloomington, Minn.

The nominees for devotional life secretary are Pastor Todd Erickson, Roseau Free Lutheran, Roseau, Minn.; and Brenda Stilley, Hope Lutheran, Minneapolis, Minn.

The nominees for secretary are Jacob Fedje, Bethel Free Lutheran, Grafton, N.D.; and Betsy O'Neil (incumbent), Faith Lutheran, Minneapolis, Minn.



Seminary housing unit dedicated

The third and final seminary housing unit was dedicated during a special ceremony on May 19, prior to the graduation service for AFLBS, MTI and AFLTS. Dr. Daniel Mundfrom (above, left), chairman of the AFLC Schools Board of Trustees, welcomed participants. Several members of the seminary chorus (from left: Andy Coyle, Eric Rasmussen,



Marc Rakow and Micah Hjermstad) sang a musical selection.

AFLC Schools hosts graduation service



The commencement service for AFLBS, MTI and AFLTS was held May 19 on the campus of the AFLC Schools in Plymouth, Minn. AFLBS graduated 67 seniors, MTI had five graduates and the seminary conferred Master's of Divinity degrees on two graduates, a graduate of theology on two graduates and certificates of recognition to two students.



Nebraska church named to Historic Register

St. Peder's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Nysted, Neb., was named to the National Register of Historic Places in March. The congregation, founded in 1883 by Danish immigrants, is served by Pastor Don Voorhees. The current building, a rare example of Danish church design, was built in 1921.

With a declining membership of just 20 people, the building has fallen into disrepair. Above the church's wooden pulpit bearing carvings of the authors of the four Gospels, large sections of plaster are peeling from the ceiling. Members are forced downstairs for services during winter months because of heating problems in the sanctuary.

Marilyn Nelson, a member of the congregation who helped lead the effort to get the church on the National Register, hopes to get the community involved in restoring the building. The designation qualifies the congregation for grant monies, as well.



New members were received May 6 at Triumph Lutheran, Ferndale, Wash. Pictured are (from left) Pastor Dean Iverson, Mr. & Mrs. Melvin Kremser, Mr. & Mrs. David Ketah, and Max Perry, deacon. (Not pictured is Kathy Amundson).



Pastor Bob Kessler was installed May 6 at Ny Stavanger Church, Buxton, N.D., and Valley Free Lutheran in Portland, N.D., by Pastor Robert Lee, AFLC president. Pictured are President Lee, and his wife, Gloria, along with Pastor Bob and Eileen Kessler.

AFLBS summer teams begin ministries in congregations

Seven summer teams headed out for ministry on June 2 after a week of training on the AFLBS campus. The team ministries will include working with vacation Bible school programs, summer camps and leading musical programs. Their schedules are available on the AFLBS web site at www.flbs.org.

The teams and their members include:

Ambassadors: Josh Berge, Adam McCarlson, Miriam Alanen, Emily Nelson and Elizabeth Berge.

Majesty: Micah Johnson, Karl Thompson, Bethany Johnson, Carmen Parsley and Anna Alme.

Northeast Barnabas: Marie Benson, Kristin Fritz, Tyler Prentice and Ryan Tonneson.

Southwest Barnabas: Naomi Finney, Alison Knutson, Brandon

Marschner and Dan Warner.

Cornerstone: Ryan Folsland, Andrew Benson, Clare Efteland and Sarah Tonneson.

Foundation: David Pillman, Cody Brua, Katie Schram and Julia Osthus.

Timothy: Abby LaPlante, Heidi Anenson, Ben Antal, Jared Langness and Ben Olson.

AFLC Memorials

► May

AFLBS

Ingeborg Bayless (2)
Dale Jones
Herman Schultz
Bobby Moe

Meta Farup

Merton Knattrud

Parish Education

Dr. Mary Lindquist
Warren Lang

Evangelism

Arthur Rost

World Missions

Alvin & Gladycie
Miller

General Fund

Clarence & Odena
Bowder
Ella May Bowder
George & Isabelle
Stockeland

... in honor of

Evangelism

Dean & Deanna
Hobelmann

Home Missions

Helen Johnson
Florence Graham

AFLTS

Micah Hjermstad

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Pastor Joseph Schultz, Buckley, Wash., has resigned as pastor of Grace Lutheran Church, Buckley, and accepted a part-time position as assistant to the president and dean of independent study at Covenant Bible Seminary, Lakeview, Wash.

Internship assignments were made for two seminarians. **Andy Coyle** will serve at St. Ansgar's Lutheran, Salinas, Calif., with Pastor Herb Hoff advising. **Ron Brubakken** will serve Bethany Lutheran, Abercrombie, N.D., with Pastor Lee Hoops advising.

Pastor Jeff Swanson has accepted a call from the Lutheran Mission Society/Alaska Mission to serve Naknek Lutheran Church, Naknek, Alaska. He will also oversee other LMS ministries (KAKN Radio, the LMS hangar and the South Naknek congregation). Swanson will leave Helmar Lutheran, Newark, Ill., and begin his new ministry in mid-September.

Nick Dyrud, a 2007 graduate of AFLTS, was ordained June 10 at the AFLC Schools chapel, Plymouth, Minn. Pastor Robert Lee, AFLC president, officiated. Dyrud accepted a call to serve as assistant pastor at Emmaus Lutheran, Bloomington, Minn.

Three youth ministries directors have resigned from their positions. **Rich Niles** has resigned from Helmar Lutheran, Newark, Ill.; **Dave VanAcker** has resigned from Sunnyside Lutheran, Stacy, Minn.; and **Nate Opdahl** has resigned from Prince of Peace Lutheran, Beulah, N.D.

Kurt Osweiler has accepted a call to serve as youth ministries director at Emmaus Lutheran, Bloomington, Minn.

Lutheran Bible Translators hosts missions workshop

IDIOM is free to those interested in missions

A free, three-day workshop designed to answer most questions people have about becoming a missionary will be Aug. 9-11 at Lutheran Bible Translators (LBT) headquarters, 303 N. Lake St., Aurora, IL.

There is no cost for the workshop, and housing and meals are also provided. Participating individuals only need to arrange transportation to and from Chicago.

LBT concentrates on long-term mission projects. Missionaries who serve Christ through LBT generally focus on Bible translation, Scripture use and literacy among people groups who do not yet have God's Word translated into their language. LBT currently has 88 missionaries and associates on the field working on more than 80 projects in 19 countries on 5 continents. "We're interested in identifying, encouraging, advising and, if appropriate, developing individuals and couples

to serve Christ and spread His word," said Peter Slayton, mobilization coordinator. "It is common, after listening to attendees, for our LBT staff to refer potential missionaries, whose hearts are leading them in another direction, to other organizations they fit with better."

Some of the topics covered in-depth at the workshop include: "Is God calling me?" "Coping skills for cross cultural ambiguity, stress and discomfort," and "Linguistics and the process of language learning." A complete list can be found at www.lbt.org (click on IDIOM) along with a registration form and other information about the workshop.

For more information, contact Slayton at PSlayton@lbt.org or call 800-532-4253 ext. 23. Spaces are limited and reservations are made based on the degree of interest in becoming a missionary (very strong, some interest, just curious) and order of application.

AFLC BENEVOLENCES Jan. 1- May 31, 2007

FUND	TOTAL (Subsidy)	REC'D IN MAY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$361,225	\$28,759	\$174,432	48
Youth Ministries	73,114	8,956	29,154	40
Evangelism	108,236	9,439	43,445	40
Parish Education	107,052	4,728	31,963	30
Seminary	216,097	15,129	82,410	38
Bible School	343,545	33,885	133,295	39
Home Missions	316,413	25,233	113,020	36
World Missions	287,808	19,433	92,814	32
Personal Support	407,198	35,165	214,774	53
TOTALS	\$2,220,688	\$180,725	\$915,306	41
TOTALS 2006	\$1,994,798	\$211,585	\$847,629	42

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.

A teacher's FAITH

A former Sunday school teacher of mine recently went home to be with the Lord. As is often the case, I don't remember any specific lessons she taught. I do, however, remember the life she lived.

Virginia loved the Lord, and she loved people. She believed the Bible was God's Word and kids needed to learn it. She knew God had worked through the Word in her life. She believed He wanted to do the same in the lives of others.

I don't remember any of the visual aids she used or any of her teaching methods. I do remember she demonstrated by the way she lived a confidence that "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, cor-

recting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (II Timothy 3:16, NIV). Her faithfulness at Bible study and worship showed that she wanted to grow in her knowledge of the Word, and it inspired students to want to do the same.



Pastor Craig Johnson

The character of teachers, the status of their own relationships with the Lord, is crucial to the Sunday school class.

The AFLC Parish Education department puts a lot of time and effort into developing Sunday school material that is doctrinally sound, well written and presented with excellence. That is how it should be. The teaching of God's Word should receive nothing less than our best. In our congregations we ought to care a great deal about what material is used in our Sunday school classes. Don't think, however, the job is done once good material is ordered.

A class where the artwork is amazing and the material is sound and written with brilliant prose, but the teacher is just going through the motions is going to have problems. Students can quickly pick out a hypocrite. If they don't trust the sincerity of the teacher's faith, they will likely question the material being taught.

Congregations, small ones in particular, are often desperate for Sunday school teachers. It is tempting to think any warm body will do. If they just read what is in the book everything will be fine.

A person doesn't need a master's degree in Christian Education to teach Sunday school. We don't want to intimidate potential teachers by giving the impression only the perfect need apply. God uses imperfect people to share the good news of Jesus. He puts the treasure of His truth in "jars of clay" (II Corinthians 4:7). Still, the teaching of God's Word is of such importance that we shouldn't have the attitude that we'll just settle for whoever we can get.

We need teachers who admit their imperfections. Humility and honesty has a lasting impact on students. Our congregations need teachers who have a sincere faith

The character of teachers,
the status of their own
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in Christ and are seeking to grow in Him. We don't want teachers who just read lines from a book as if they are actors playing a part. We want teachers who truly believe what they're teaching. The desire is that the Word of God would first move the teacher, and then they share in response to what the Lord has done for them.

Because the role of the teacher is so important we should put much time and effort into building up our teachers. Be prayerful and careful in selecting them. Pray for them regularly. Try to provide them with opportunities to learn and grow.

We ought to care about the appearance of our buildings and rooms, but we ought to care even more for our teachers. When I was a kid I had a Sunday school class in the church basement, meeting around a furnace. The decor left something to be desired, but the teacher loved the Lord and kids and God worked through His Word.

In her later years Virginia mentioned various times how glad she was to be a Christian. Jesus had made a difference in her life. She knew it and was thankful for it. She rejoiced in knowing Jesus and wanted others to share in the joy.

association retreat center

BY PAT FLANDERS

BLACK WHITE & GRAY

Recently my good friend and co-worker, Gene, was leading staff devotions. He mentioned a question a friend had posed: God's Word doesn't say anything about gambling, right?

Replace gambling with getting drunk, excess food consumption, sex addictions, gossip, slander and a whole host of other addictive behaviors and I'm pretty sure we've all been tempted. Without checking them against the standards God set in the Bible, we may have trouble seeing them as right or wrong, black or white. They become gray.

Addictive behaviors manifest in different forms. We know these behaviors are destructive. God has plenty to say about them. Look at Ephesians 5:18: "Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit." This verse focuses not only on the physical act of drinking, but on what and for whom we are building our lives. If you are not led by the Holy Spirit, something else will fill that void.

The journey into the depths of addictive sin may be long. From the outside it may appear that your actions don't affect anyone else. In fact, it may even lead to a successful life (by worldly standards). But treating sin with a light hand does affect relationships. These relationships overlap with other people's issues, and the overlapping dysfunction creates a destructive culture. I Corinthians 8:13 says, "Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause him to fall." We are called by God to watch for

the snares of Satan and to look out for our brothers and sisters, as well.

Let's address some black and white facts. We know that God is Holy. We know that sin and Satan cannot coexist in His presence. We know that nothing can ever separate us from His love. So why are most of us either straddling the line or among those who don't want to "point fingers" since we are sinners as well? Perhaps we don't have the biblical knowledge to defend our stand, or maybe we believe the world is just an evil place and our efforts really don't matter anyway.

Satan uses his entire bag of tricks on us, but God's plan is black and white! He loves all His children and desires for all of them to be in heaven with Him — period. In God's eyes there is no gray. If it isn't light, it's dark; if it isn't good, it's bad. There is no middle ground. Sin cannot exist with the holiness of God.

A simple definition of sin is anything that draws us away from God. Romans 14:23 says, "But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin." Simply put, if what you're doing or planning to do doesn't bring you closer to God, then you will be moving away from Him into sin.

So remove the log from your eye and help your neighbor with his splinter.

Flanders is director of the Association Retreat Center in Osceola, Wis.