

THE LUTHERAN 

JULY 2009

AMBASSADOR



the
gift
of
wisdom

Not



My greedy 3-year-old eyes flew directly to the most expensive doll buggy in the toy store. My mother and I were here to buy a birthday party gift for a little friend of mine. Giving was not in my vocabulary. Getting was. I wanted *that* one. *Now*.

My mother tried to rationalize with me. It was not *my* birthday, she calmly but unnecessarily reasoned. That was completely and frustratingly clear to me. My birthday was coming, Christmas was coming ...

I furiously struggled out of the elegant white wool coat my mother had spent hours making, threw it on the floor, and jumped up and down on it, screaming all the while. I won.

This particularly ugly character trait might have been channeled had my parents known the Lord and His governing principles. As it was, I won most of the confrontations with my parents, my brother, and the few friends who would put up with me. I was a strong-willed child who intuitively felt if I lost control of anything, important parts of me would fall off. I won, but I lost.

Many years later, control of my life swirled out of my desperately clutching hands. My mother died in spite of my passionate, God-directed legal arguments, bargains and ultimatums. My father continued as an alcoholic needing my care. This almost-40-year-old, strong-willed child coped by seeking refuge in bed.

A few months passed. One day my husband tentatively sat on the edge of my bed and suggested an unfamiliar concept. "Maybe those people who turn everything over to the Lord have something."

losing

BY SUSAN WHITEHEAD

I suggested he leave. But when he gently closed the door behind him, I got down on my knees, and in my pathetic, still-longing-for-control-mode said, "Okay, God. Do something."

Unbelievably, a month later I was a restored wife, mother, and daughter thriving in exactly the same circumstances that almost destroyed me before. Only then did I realize that my prayer of submission, though crude, was answered.

In the passing decades, I've been able to put words to a few of God's principles I've noticed at work in my life:

- God permitted me to re-assume "control" of some areas of my life because I had finally let go. I continue to struggle with control, but now each win feels like a loss.
- Personal bravado slowly falls away as my confidence in God deepens.
- My growing understanding of God's perception of me dims my concern about what others think of me.
- As I care less about what others think of me, I care more about what concerns them.
- The more I die to self, the more free and alive I feel.
- Acknowledging that I have absolutely no control over God gives peaceful relief.
- Knowing the results of my efforts rest in God's hands frees me to think and act on a bolder scale.

My childhood goal wasn't really about winning—it was about not losing. Jesus had something to say about that. Paraphrasing one of His most remarkable paradoxes, "What good is it for me to gain a pink doll buggy, and yet forfeit my very self?" (Luke 9:25)

Whitehead is a member of Vision of Glory Lutheran Church in Plymouth, Minn.

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Education without values, as useful as it is, seems rather to make man a more clever devil.

—C.S. Lewis

[You teach a little by what you say. You teach the most by what you are.]

—Dr. Henrietta Mears

The best learning I had came from teaching.

—Corrie ten Boom

Teaching is of more importance than urging.

—Martin Luther

The Secret of the Lord

By Pastor Dale Mellgren



Our world is infected with a great uneasiness. The religions of man and the nominal church only feed the unease by their failings. Christians often yield to an uneasy outlook as the fruits of godlessness grow. Is even God great enough to rescue man from the many perils of his own making?

In the King James Version of the Bible, we read, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him ..." (Psalm 25:14). In His church, the fellowship of believers, God has planted and nurtured the very hope and peace which the souls of mankind need. He has done it in such a simple and direct way that it caused the Savior to pray, "I praise Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and intelligent and didst reveal them to babes. Yes, Father, for thus it was well-pleasing in Thy sight" (Matthew 11:25-26).

The unique aspect of this proclamation by the Lord is that, actually, it isn't the complexity of truth which hides it from the wise and intelligent, but the simplicity. Anyone who has been humbled enough to bow in submission to God and yield to His majesty will have the eyes and ears of their souls opened to see and hear "the secret of the Lord" and, through His grace be welcomed and cared for as His own child. This is the exalted position of the believer in Christ.

It has become common for many groups or congregations to seek to meet the needs of souls through what are generally known as "contemporary" means. These efforts often seem to be an appeal to people in order to make God, and the worship of Him, more pleasing to them. More "up-to-date" methods—music, meditations which promote greater activity or a more immediate response—are often thought desirable.

There is no doubt that Christianity needs to be contemporary in that it is up-to-date and able to meet the needs of souls. The true Church is always up-to-date. In fact, is way out in front because where the Word of God is preached and taught in its truth and purity, and the sacraments administered according to the Word, the needs of our souls will always be met. Nothing is as contemporary as the Word of God, for it is eternal truth—past, present, future, and forever.

The ministry of the Word central and foremost in our worship and study, with prayerful attention to the proclamation of both law and gospel, will bring us to and keep us in harmony with the Lord. As the Word is then preached and taught, the needs of souls are met and the Lord is exalted, not only at the worship service, but also in the lives of His children in their day-to-day circumstances.

God has given us the means to go to an uneasy world bringing hope and peace as we live in His grace and declare His eternal Word. As this ministry is carried out through His children, our concern is not that God be represented in a way to somehow make Him acceptable to people, but rather the people be made acceptable to God.

A new study from Parish Education, *Worship: The Secret of the Lord*, attempts to remind us of the great blessings from God contained in our Confession of Sin and the Apostle's Creed found in our morning worship order of service (page 2 in the *Ambassador Hymnal*). The simple, basic truth of God's Word found in these confessions will be a continual source of hope and peace for our souls, even in an uneasy world.

"The secret of the Lord is for those who fear Him, and He will make them know His covenant," says Psalm 25:14. It's not a secret because He has hidden it from us. He has clearly revealed His

salvation by which we may become His children. But this salvation is hidden from and by the sin-darkened heart of man. Yet the Word of God gives us the light to see Him and His salvation sufficiently to live by faith. My prayer is that this study will open the eyes of your soul more completely to His glory and grace.

"Great Father of glory, pure Father of light, Thine angels adore Thee, all veiling their sight: All praise we would render—O help us to see 'Tis only the splendor of light hideth Thee!" ("Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise," #184, *Ambassador Hymnal*.)

Mellgren, who serves Trinity Lutheran and Mt. Carmel Free Lutheran, McIntosh, Minn., is the author of "Worship, the Secret of the Lord," which will be published by AFLC Parish Education later this summer.



The intimate association of
His friendship is with them
that fear Him, so that He
makes known to them things
which are hidden to others.



Paul Kretzmann

What is the purpose of studying God's Word? II Timothy 3:16-17 tells us that God has given us His inspired Word and that it is "... profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." The "so that" of these verses tells us that the purpose of Bible study is that we "may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

Romans 15:4, however, speaks of another purpose for studying the Bible that we may not always consider—encouragement! The word encouragement in this verse is related to a similar root word (*paraclete*) that Jesus uses to identify the promised Holy Spirit in John 14:16. In connection with the Holy Spirit, this word speaks of the counsel, help, comfort and guidance that the Spirit gives to us in our Christian walk. Romans 15:4 shows us that these promises come to us also through the Scriptures "so that" we receive encouragement in our lives. As we consider the encouragement of the Scriptures as a purpose of Bible study, there are three ways that the Bible encourages us:

The timeless authority of the Scriptures

Romans 15:4 tells us, "For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction ..." Not only was Scripture written for the instruction of its immediate recipients, but also for our instruction today! From time to time I have sought the guidance of a road map only to discover that it was outdated and had misled me. It was discouraging to realize that roads had been rerouted, highway numbers had been changed, etc. I thought I was on the right road, but I was not. This will never happen with the Scriptures. The unfailing and never changing truth of God's Word will always instruct us and teach us in the way we should go—the good and right way. It is encouraging to know that we can trust God's Word today as a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.

The timeless application of Scripture

As they seek to instruct us, the Scriptures are profoundly honest about our situation in life, as our verse says, "so that through perseverance." We live in a fallen world and we realize the effects of that fallen-ness every day, whether it be an effect of the world, our sinful flesh,

or the devil. Through the Scriptures we are encouraged to persevere as we apply the promises of God's Word to our specific situations in life.

Perhaps that perseverance takes the form of trusting God for an answer to prayer, or trusting Him to protect you as you seek to remain true to Him in the midst of a godless culture. Perhaps it takes the form of patiently waiting for spiritual maturity to develop in your life or the life of a family or church member. There are instructive verses of Scripture that God has given to us to apply to every circumstance of life that will grant us the grace we need to persevere in the midst of life's discouraging moments!

The timeless anticipation of the Scriptures

Finally, this verse promises us, "so that ... we might have hope." Have you ever felt hopeless? Perhaps a particular situation that you are facing even today seems to lead to a sense of hopelessness. I believe there is a lot of

hopelessness in our culture today. The Bible leaves no room for such feelings of hopelessness for God's people. As we study its instruction and apply it to our lives it will result in a sense of hope even in the midst of the seemingly hopeless situations of life.

Having been promised that he would be the father of a multitude of people, the aged and childless Abraham faced a situation where there seemed to be no

reason for hope—yet he claimed the promise of God, applied it to his life and, "In hope against hope he believed, so that he might become a father of many nations according to that which had been spoken, 'So shall your descendants be'" (Romans 4:18). We may never receive a promise similar to Abraham's. But God's Word is full of promises that are specific to our need. They instruct us, and as we apply them to our lives they encourage us mightily!

What is the purpose of Bible study? While we can definitely answer that question in a variety of ways, Romans 15:4 reminds us of a very special purpose—the purpose of encouragement! Are you in need of such encouragement today? Open your Bible and study it. Be diligent in your personal devotional life and in the corporate study of the Word in your church. Allow God to encourage you.

Johnson serves Christ the King Lutheran, Wilson, Wis.

"For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."

.....
Romans 15:4



the

provision

of the
Scriptures

By Pastor Les Johnson

God's

BELOW: Four kids from the Solid Rock Free Lutheran Kid's Klub program earned stickers, pins and key chains by memorizing Bible verses.



One congregation's
unique Scripture
memorization
program will soon
be available on the
AFLC's Ambassador
Publications and
Parish Education
Web site.

ABOVE: Rebecca Moan
(right) quizzes a student who is
reciting his memory verses for
Kid's Klub.



Word by heart

By Rebecca Moan

It happened almost 30 years ago. I was an AFLBS student, and a Bible verse memory quiz was looming the next day. But, alas, I had procrastinated, and now I needed to learn the assigned Scripture in one night. I tackled Acts 20:24: "But I do not consider my life of any account, as dear to myself, in order that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God." Now, dear reader, I just typed that verse from memory from 30 years ago! Amazing? No, not really. You see, that night in the women's dorm, (except we called it the girls' dorm back then), I just put that verse to a familiar tune, and I have never forgotten it.

I believe there are at least two helpful ways to retain Scripture. The first, in emergency situations and otherwise, is *setting it to music*, and the second is *repetition*. For example, why do we easily recall the Lord's Prayer or John 3:16? We have repeated it several times in our lives.

Just think of all the benefits showered upon us as we learn God's Word: It is how a young man can keep his way pure (Psalm 119:9); it will keep us from sin (vs. 11); it counsels us (vs. 24); it strengthens us in grief (vs. 28); it produces reverence for God (vs. 38); it provides the best lyrics for our songs (vs. 54); it gives us a standard for choosing our friends (vs. 63); it puts money in perspective (vs. 72); it gives us wisdom, insight, understanding, and restraint (vss. 98-101); it directs our nighttime thoughts (vs. 148); and it gives us great peace (vs. 165).

Please do not think of Scripture memorization as another thing to add to your

to-do list. Think of it as a gracious invitation from your loving Lord to get to know Him better and to receive the blessings He desires to give you.

Home schooling my five kids has spurred me on to memorization. The Lord has graciously given us school time together, and memorizing has become a habitual part of our day. That accountability has been beneficial in our family.

Would you like to make it a habitual part of your day, too? Would you like to see your children involved in a memorization plan? The AFLC parish education department can help you. They are making the Scripture memorization program, *God's Word by Heart*, available online for any individual or congregation to use. Let me tell you about its background and structure.

Two years ago, a dad in my congregation, Solid Rock Free Lutheran, met with our Christian education committee. He shared the benefits he received as a child attending a children's ministry that is well-known for its Scripture memory, and his vision for the children of Solid Rock to receive such training. Our own Scripture memory program, *God's Word by Heart*, was then developed for use in our congregation for our Wednesday night Kids' Klub.

It is pretty simple. Verses are selected, run off on colorful paper, placed in sturdy bright folders, and given to each child. Time is then devoted to Scripture memorization during class. The children study any verse they have chosen from the folder and then recite individually to a Scripture listener. This volunteer is stationed just outside the classroom and listens to verses, encourages the child, and places a sticker under each verse that is recited. Each Bible verse has a

spot for three stickers, so the child will review the verse at least three different times. When a page is filled up with stickers, the individual chooses a Christian-themed pin or a key chain to attach to his Kids' Klub backpack.

So what have we learned about structuring a Scripture memorization program? We included the valuable aspects of repetition, building excitement through promotion, reciting individually, repetition, making it completely voluntary, avoiding the use of candy as a prize, and, of course, repetition! Additionally, we chose not to assign one verse per week, which proved to be a key component. Each child could proceed at his or her own pace, which was conducive to ministering to various ages, as well as to those with special needs. It also was a factor in keeping highly motivated children challenged and making visitors feel welcome. The individuality of the program served us well.

Would you like to learn more about *God's Word by Heart* or use it in your family or congregation? The AFLC Parish Education department plans to make it available this summer online at www.aflc.org/publications. You are welcome to download all the materials listed there, and it would bring us great joy to be a small part of encouraging you to treasure God's Word in your heart.

Now if I could just get someone to put all the verses to music ...

Moan is a member of Solid Rock Free Lutheran, Anoka, Minn.

How can a congregation
engage senior high students
in the study of God's Word?
It seems teens think they know
everything. What could we
offer them? How can a
congregation instill in
students a hunger for the
Word? Let's ask a group of ...

precious Eternal senior high souls

By Pastor Wade Mobley



Sometimes adults get the impression that teens think they know it all. In what ways could a congregation encourage teens to be an active part of a class like this?

Hans: Adults get that impression because teens *do* think they know everything. For a long time that was me—I had heard the Bible stories over and over. To encourage teens to dig deeper into the Word a congregation needs to lead by example. A congregation shouldn't view its teenage group as its own separate identity. Teens need to see the congregation learning the same lessons.

Rachel: Teens say the exact same thing about adults—that they seem to know everything. Adults will know more about most things, just from experience. I think adults, and especially parents, can encourage us to go to Sunday school and not leave right after church. I think adults can set an example by going to their own class.

Jake: Maybe encourage the parents to go to adult Sunday school, then the kids won't have anything to do!

Kristian: I think there are a lot of families that for them it's not near the top of their priority list, so usually they are not going to be here, but they should be. I'm not sure how to make it something that they would prioritize.

Jake: Don't make it seem like a class. We come in to hang out and learn at the same time.

Garret: [Agrees.] It's a time to hang out and chill with people while at the same time learning from what's going on in their lives.

Kent: A lot of times when we are talking here we share some of the challenges we face outside these walls and how we can face them in a godly way, sharing with others.

Garret: I don't know if it's the whole congregation, but a few teens who are into it can encourage other teens to come.

Why do you come to Sunday school?

Hans: I come to Sunday school to spend time with my peers, taking in-depth looks at specific Bible stories, characters, and lessons. Sunday school provides a great opportunity to ask questions about lessons learned and to talk about life applications.

Kristian: A lot of the time there is no place else to go. Plus, it's Sunday.

Garret: I come to spend time with peers, classmates and friends. It's not just getting lectured. I can relate to Kent [my teacher].

Rachel: It has a lot to do with participation. I feel I should set an example for those younger, and also the guys my own age. I know that it takes just a few people to encourage everyone to come, and when everyone comes it's a lot more productive and fun. I also really enjoy Kent, Nick and Tony [my teachers]. They care about what's going on in our lives. The material is very informative and I like how the lessons are structured, giving you a passage to study.

What benefit have you received from Sunday school?

Garret: This class, and youth group have helped me do better spiritually. When I stopped coming during Lent I started doing stupid things. This keeps me on track, closer to the Lord.

Rachel: This class has helped me get a lot more out of just reading the Bible, and it has strengthened my relationship with God and my peers. And sometimes Kent gives us candy!

Kristian: Class makes you talk to people, which in turn leads to relationships you wouldn't normally pursue.

Kent: As an instructor—and a relatively new believer—class allows me to dig in and spend time in the Word. It helps me to hear students' perspectives, and it's encouraging to get the group together.

Hans: I benefit from feeling conviction from the lessons: The temptation of Jesus (answer by quoting Scripture), the prodigal son (forgiveness of God and the nature of man), and Samson (we are utterly powerless apart from the Lord) are all stories that I learned a lot from.

Editor's Summary

Teens, like adults, thrive when Christian education is valued, modeled and taught with high expectations. Parents who attend Sunday school have teens who attend Sunday school. A committed core of teens makes it much easier for others to participate. Teens benefit from God's Word and each other as prepared instructors teach excellent curriculum with loving application.

Mobley serves Living Word Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D. With teacher Kent Hartsuiker and class members Garret VanMeveren, Rachel Tanner, Hans Tanner, Jake Rinehart, and Kristian Asfeldt of the senior high Sunday school class.

Lessons from Burnnie the bunnie

By Missie Quittem



I first met Burnnie the Bunnie back in 2006. As a volunteer for Wednesday night Faith Weaver Friends activities at Abiding Savior Free Lutheran (Sioux Falls, S.D.), I helped with the preschool classes. Burnnie was there every week to sing songs, share God's Word, and teach the children about the love of Christ.

Much has changed since 2006. Steve and Faith Treague, Burnnie's creators, have both retired from a combined total of more than 60 years of teaching. They knew God had something pretty special in store for them. The Treagues had already been in full-time ministry to children since 1981 with Reaching the Children (RTC), based in Sioux Falls. The RTC ministry has used puppets, radio and television to teach and entertain children of all ages.



"During the run of RTC's radio program, listeners would comment on how perfectly this program could be transformed into a television series," Steve said. "Television production was very expensive in the '90s. However in 2007 the development of video technology made it possible to consider turning the old radio show into what is now known as, *Burnnie: Tails From the Light Side*."

The Treagues knew that transitioning to television was God's will. Even though it would require an initial investment of \$50,000 they trusted in His perfect timing and in the generosity of God's people. God was faithful and many people came forward to support the Treagues and RTC, including one generous gift that would cover the cost of the cameras, lighting, sound and props.

The target audience for the show is children ages 5 through fifth grade. Steve says their goal is to provide an entertaining, yet faith-based program projecting one important Bible concept per episode. Each episode focuses on Burnnie, a rabbit puppet that lives in Celebration, a small town with great folks who understand the importance of putting God first. Illusions with a message, great music, an amazing cast of live

characters and the personality of Burnnie all come together from the creative and educationally directed minds of the Treagues.

I recently had the opportunity to watch an episode. One afternoon I needed to get some work done around the house. I popped in the latest Burnnie DVD for my 2-year-old daughter. She was mesmerized by Burnnie the Bunny. I couldn't help but listen as I cleaned, and I found myself laughing out loud at the antics of Burnnie. But what I was most impressed by was how time and again the characters brought the conversation around to Jesus and what it means to follow Him.

"Many children do not enter a church building, but their television is on and watched many hours each day," said Steve. "Our intent is to bring God's Word to the children in their own living rooms with a program designed to appeal to both genders while crossing intergenerational boundaries."

While the Treagues create new episodes for the series each month, funds are tight.


"Faith does a few substitute teaching positions each week to help us meet personal expenses," said Steve. "But produc-

tion could certainly improve with continued financial support, so we depend on God's provisions to keep us moving forward. We continue to pray for God to alert those He has specifically designated to be a part of the television outreach. We also pray that those whose hearts are touched to reach the children will indeed become prayer warriors and financial supporters of this important ministry."

Each 30 minute program requires 250 hours of effort from script design, shooting, editing, music composition, and distribution. Steve and Faith's goal is to complete one episode each month. RTC has also recently started providing "Parents Night Out." Parents of children ages 4 and older can drop off their children on a designated Friday night and the children will be able to participate in the live filming. Parents are also welcome to stay.

Visit RTC's Web site (www.riddles.org) for more information on the ministry of RTC and the filming of *Burnnie: Tails from the Light Side* or to preview a Burnnie episode.

Quittem is a member of Abiding Savior Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D.



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In his writings, the reformer Martin Luther spoke frequently and strongly about the importance of education. In two excerpts of his works Luther encourages people to recognize the importance of maintaining schools to educate their children. His primary focus in these writings was on public schools and education in general, but the principles can be applied to congregations and Christian education.

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—Pastor Craig Johnson

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the need for proper education

By Martin Luther

To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany

No one believes what a dangerous design of the devil's this is. It goes forward so silently that no one perceives it, and the harm is done before one can prevent it. Men fear the Turks and wars and floods, for in such matters they understand what is harmful and what is beneficial. But what the devil has here in mind, no one sees, no one fears it proceeds so quietly. And yet everyone who would give a gulden to fight the Turks, if they were at our very door, ought properly to give a hundred gulden to this cause, even if only one boy could be trained therewith to become a true Christian man; for a true Christian man is better and worth more than all men upon earth.

Therefore, I pray you all, my dear sirs and friends, for God's sake and the poor youths', not to treat this subject as lightly as some do, who are not aware of what the prince of this world intends. For it is a serious and important matter that we help and assist our youth, and one in which Christ and all the world are mightily con-

cerned. By helping them we shall be helping ourselves and all men. And reflect that these secret, subtle and crafty attacks of the devil must needs be met with deep Christian seriousness. If it is necessary, dear sirs, to expend annually such great sums for firearms, roads, bridges, dams and countless similar items, in order that a city may enjoy temporal peace and prosperity, why should not at least as much be devoted to the poor, needy youth, so that we might engage one or two competent men to teach school? ...

Indeed, for what purpose do we older folk exist than to care for, instruct and bring up the young? ... And what would it profit us if we possessed and performed all else and became utter saints, and yet neglected the chief purpose of our life, namely, the care of the young? I believe also that among outward sins none so heavily burdens the world in the sight of God nor deserves such severe punishment as the sin we commit against our children by not giving them an education.

A Sermon on Keeping Children in School

My dear friends, you see with your own eyes how that wretch of a Satan is now attacking us in all sorts of ways, ... Among his wiles, one of the very greatest, if not the greatest of all, is this—he deludes and deceives the common people so that they are not willing to keep their children in school or bring them up as scholars. ...

I would be brief and say that a diligent and pious schoolteacher, or master, or whoever it is that faithfully trains and teaches boys, can never be sufficiently rewarded, or repaid with any money, as even the heathen Aristotle says. Nevertheless, this work is as shamefully despised among us as though it was nothing at all. I

myself, if I could leave the preaching office and other things, or had to do so, would not be so glad to have any other work as that of schoolmaster, or teacher of boys, for I know that this is the most useful, the greatest, and the best, next to the work of preaching. Indeed, I scarcely know which of the two is the better; for it is hard to make old dogs obedient and old rascals pious; and that is the work at which the preacher must labor, often in vain. But young trees can be better bent and trained, though some of them break in the process. Let it be one of the greatest virtues on earth faithfully to train other people's children; very few people, almost none, in fact, do this for their own.

praying friends

Walking visitors find fellowship with two Montana congregations

In my family's first summer in Culbertson, Mont., we and our congregations were blessed by visits from two groups of prayer warriors.

The first to arrive were Gerd and Mary. God had called Gerd to pray for the churches of the nation as he walked the length of the United States. Mary and Gerd used Culbertson as a base station for a few days as they walked. They shared with the congregation what God had placed on their hearts as they joined us for worship on Sunday. After the service Mary was crying, and I was worried that I had said something that had struck a nerve. She shared that it was the first gospel message that they had heard since leaving home. [They had traveled through] Iowa, Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota to Montana. They had been staying mainly with Lutheran congregations. My heart sank a little as they shared their observations of frustrated pastors and lack of belief that the Bible is the inerrant Word of God.

The next to arrive a couple of weeks later was Mary and her friends. She was walking across the United States, praying for the nation. Mary, who had started her walk two years previous in Florida, has a prosthetic leg. Again we were blessed as she shared how God had placed on her heart the need to pray for the na-

tion as she walked. Mary placed a cross at each mile marker that she passed with a Scripture message attached. After the service our family was able to take Mary and her support group out to lunch. They started asking questions about the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations. Who was this group of Lutherans? This was her summary of the Association of Free Lutherans, "So you are the Lutherans who preach the salvation message." Again my heart sank a little.

When I visited with Pastor Michael Brandt last fall he said, "I am a Christian out of necessity and a Lutheran out of conviction." What a wonderful statement, but one that is not being realized by many.

Our Lutheran roots and foundations are a precious thing, but people outside of our great heritage don't see Lutherans as the preachers of the gospel or salvation messages. It makes me cry.

Is there enough evidence to convict you of being a Christian and a Lutheran?

So are you a Lutheran who ...

Ramsbacher serves Bethel Community Church and Faith Free Lutheran, Culbertson, Mont.





TOP: Pastor Paul Nash, AFLC Home Missions Director, leads a parish builder session.

ABOVE: Naomi Tuura and Naomi Finney (top), Liz Lackey and Brandon Marschner (above) are currently serving as parish builders at Good Shepherd Free Lutheran, Camarillo, Calif.

Building up parishes

On Sept. 8, 2007, I drove down the Conejo Grade into Camarillo, Calif., and began my time as a parish builder at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church. I had been joined in the adventure by Chad Friestad, a good friend of mine from Bible school. I had no idea what to expect from the experience, but was convinced that this was where God wanted me to be.

Almost two years later, Chad and I have seen Good Shepherd Church almost double in size. We've also visited roughly 8,000 homes in Camarillo, watched our youth group nearly triple, helped to conduct more than 100 sports clinics, unpacked and repacked our "church-in-a-box" more than 100 times, logged thousands of miles hauling youths from place to place, taught hundreds of Bible lessons, and have seen the Lord change dozens of lives. If the church has done it, we've been a part of it.

As parish builders, our jobs are to basically integrate ourselves into the heartbeat of a church and to add hands and feet to its ministry team. It has been a blessing to work closely with Pastor Jim Johnson and to see his heart for reaching people for Jesus Christ. Chad works at a coffee shop and substitute teaches while working full-time for Good Shepherd. I began a sixth and eighth grade math teaching job this year, but continue to teach Sunday school and help with the youth group at church in addition to my work at school.

I want to personally thank all of you who have been praying faithfully for all our AFLC parish builders. I am excited about the growing number of AFLC parish builders and the work that God is doing and going to do through our team across the nation. Please continue to keep us in your prayers as we are on the front-lines in the battle to win souls for Christ in our communities.

Langness, who is from Ishpeming, Mich., is a 2003 graduate of AFLBS.

Crisis management

BY PASTOR CONNELLY DYRUD

The safety of the messengers of the Lord has always been at risk. The prophets in the Old Testament were in deep trouble when they spoke out, "Thus says the Lord," especially if that message of God was His judgment on the sins of the kings or a nation.

Jesus repeated that sentiment to His disciples, saying "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves" (Matthew 10:16). That risk continues until the Lord's return.

When my wife, Carolyn, daughter, Shannon, and I left for Brazil in 1969, we were very much aware of the risk missionaries faced in South America after the Cuban Missile Crisis. Missionaries were being taken hostage and some were kidnapped and even killed because a ransom was not given.

Due to the September 11 crisis in the US, greater steps of precaution and methods of prevention have been applied in our country and around the world. Mission agencies have also realized that the risks for missionaries are even greater in foreign countries. With that in mind it is expedient to heed the last part of Matthew 10:16, "Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves."

AFLC World Missions supports and prays for the safety of our missionaries around the world. That's why I was sent to participate in the Crisis Management Seminar in April in Waxhaw, N.C. The seminar was taught by three security officers who have worked with missionaries and mission compounds around the world. Many other mission agencies were represented at the seminar.

Some of the crisis control and prevention topics covered at the seminar included:

- Pre-plan a strategy: prevention and control of crisis for missionaries in foreign countries is important.
- Tailor-made security plans: initiating a crisis control policy in each country where our missionaries reside.
- Kidnappers and hostage takers: how to negotiate with them.
- Terrorist attacks: steps of prevention.
- Evacuations: the need to move missionaries in civil war-torn countries.
- Emergency rescues: applying help in natural disaster areas where our missionaries are located.
- American consulates: learning how to work with our



American consulates in all foreign countries where our missionaries reside.

- National governments: learning the laws and rights of foreigners in their country.
- Death: Steps to take with the government and families of loved ones who have died in foreign countries.
- The sending church: our responsibility to our missionaries is to be ever aware of their dangers and pray for their protection every day.

As a missionary in Brazil for 35 years I can relate several risky situations that could have spun out of control. A crisis would've taken place, leaving the mission and missionary in a very awkward situation that could have caused collateral damage.

Today Mexico is struggling to get control of their security and protect their citizens and foreigners living in their country. The AFLC has missionaries there and it is our concern that steps are taken to protect them, besides much prayer. We do not want to be alarmists but we must be realistic. We live in a very uncertain world today. I believe Jesus explained the world situation for all His disciples and also told us what to do about it: "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves."

Dyrud, who served for 35 years as a missionary in Brazil, is now a missionary-at-large for the AFLC and director of the Ministry Training Institute.

AFLBS summer teams serve across the country

A look at the nine groups of Bible school students who will minister in churches and camps in 2009



Timothy

Members of the Timothy team include (from left) Lindsey Bjornstad, Annika Nyman, Owen Parsley and Gideon Johnson.



South Barnabas

Members of South Barnabas include (from left) Amanda Aldrich, Bethany Marschner, Jeremy Langness and Matthew Quanbeck.



Cornerstone

Members of Cornerstone include (from left) Dan Hurner, Greta Swanson, Rachel Foss and Josiah Rolf.



Foundation

Members of Foundation include (from left) Caleb Fugleberg, Kayla Paige, Brianne Fedje and Austin Albers.



Majesty

Members of Majesty include (from left) Paul Berge, Erin Olson, David Olson, Liz Johnson and Jon Langness.



Association Retreat Center

Members of the ARC team include (from left) Feven Mesmer, Amanda Bellefy, Drew Stockman, and Jacob O'Flanagan.



Ambassadors

Members of Ambassadors include (from left) Rachel Papillon, Jordan Rumohr, Tressa Quanbeck, Ben Kumpula and Jessica McCarlson.



Joshua

Members of Joshua include (from left) Phil Nash, Audrey Nash, Heather Vogt and Tim Larson.



North Barnabas

Members of North Barnabas include (from left) Michael Osthus, Stephanie Nelson, Carolyn Kylo, and Nathan Olson.

Labors for curriculum

BY BONNIE HANDSAKER

One of the many roles of women may be that of a mother. In this role women are responsible for the training of their children, spiritually, emotionally, socially and physically. Spiritual training begins in the home and then may move out to our local congregation through Sunday school, kids clubs, youth group and confirmation. Our AFLC Parish Education Department and its Board of Publications and Parish Education come alongside families and congregations to provide biblical Lutheran teaching materials and resources.

Our WMF members have diligently prayed for the work of Parish Education. Some women have been involved directly with the work of creating and reviewing curriculum, editing materials, and illustrating lessons, for the most part volunteer tasks. If these volunteers are from your congregation, pray for them and say a personal thank you for the time they spend in this important work. The WMF has graciously provided money for many of these projects and seeks to keep its members informed about the ongoing work of Parish Education.

On behalf of the Parish Education Board we say a hearty thank you to the WMF and its members. We thank you for your ongoing prayer support as well as your financial gifts. As the newest member on the board I am still learning about the work of Parish Education. I would encourage you to

seek out and peruse the new fifth grade curriculum published last fall, titled, "Journey Through the Old Testament." It's awesome, and I am enjoying teaching this in my congregation.

I would like to take this opportunity to share some items on the Parish Education Board's prayer list with you so that you may partner with us in our endeavors. We are committed to the completion of the sixth, seventh and eighth grade curriculum within the next few years. We see this as an urgent need before we can begin the process of updating our other Sunday school curriculum. Please pray that our volunteer writers may find clarity as well as time to complete the task at hand. And pray for the members of the board as they review and edit educational materials. Finally, pray that the Lord will provide the funding needed to publish these materials.

We have a team of writers who have started the task of creating curriculum for confirmation instruction and a number of individuals who are collaborating with board members to produce high school Sunday school materials. We also have adult Bible study materials that are awaiting funding for publication. Pray for the Parish Education staff: Director Marian Christopherson and office staff Sarah Daas and Brent Rahn.

Look for our online catalog coming soon.

Handsaker, a member of the Board of Publications and Parish Education, is a member of Salem Lutheran, Radcliffe, Iowa.



Thief River Falls congregations host district-wide Parish Education Expo

A district-wide Parish Education Expo was held at Abundant Life Free Lutheran Church, Thief River Falls, Minn., on April 18. Brenda Leier led in devotions and welcomed participants representing several congregations. Pastor Cal Willard, Roseau, Minn., gave the keynote address entitled, "The Vital Link," based on Ephesians 6:4.

Small group sessions offered included: "Using Puppets in Ministry," led by Pastor Warren Swanson and son Ian, Argyle, Minn.; "Creative Child Evangelism Ideas and Tools," led by Rose Carlson, Grafton, N.D.; and "Discovering Learning Styles" and "Teaching a Bible Lesson: Do You Have a Plan?" led by AFLC Parish Education Director Marian Christopherson.

Participants also enjoyed browsing through educational resources at the AFLC Parish Education and Mercy and Truth Publishers book displays. The event was hosted by AFLC congregations in Thief River Falls: Abundant Life and Our Saviour's Lutheran Church.



Rose Carlson, Grafton, N.D., and Cheryl Aakre, Argyle, Minn., look at the AFLC Parish Education book display, which was set up at the district-wide Parish Education Expo.

Free Lutheran Seminary hosts Summer Institute of Theology August 3-7

The Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary will host the Summer Institute of Theology (SIT) Aug. 3-7 on the Plymouth, Minn., campus.

Courses offered this year include:

"Studies in the Book of Hebrews" (2 credits), taught by Pastor Jerry Moan, AFLTS faculty.

"Doctrine of the Church" (2 credits), taught by Dr. Francis Monseth, AFLTS dean.

"The Ten Commandments for Today" (2 credits), taught by Dr. John Eidsmoe, guest instructor.

"Church Leadership and Administration" (2 credits), taught by Pastor Robert Lee, AFLTS faculty.

"History and Aims of the AFLC" (2 credits), taught by Pastor Robert Lee, AFLTS faculty.

Breakfast, lunch and housing options will be offered on the AFLC campus. Registration fee is \$20, and the cost per credit is \$25 (maximum \$200). An auditing fee is also offered at \$18 per credit.

For more information on SIT and to download a brochure, visit the AFLTS Web site at www.aflts.org.



Pastor Gerald Steele (right) was installed May 31 at St. Petrie Lutheran, Leland, Ill., by Pastor Elden Nelson, AFLC president (left).

AFLBS hosts Golf Scramble

The Association Free Lutheran Bible School will host its annual Golf Scramble Aug. 10 at Cedar Creek Golf Course, Albertville, Minn. This fund-raising event benefits students who are in financial need as they study the Word of God at AFLBS. Last year's event raised \$8,000 toward that goal.

For more information on the event, visit the AFLBS Web site at www.aflbs.org, or e-mail Lyle Guhl at lyleg@aflc.org.

People and Places

Sam Nash has accepted a position as Director of Student Development for the Association Free Lutheran Bible School. Nash, who is a member of Solid Rock Free Lutheran, Anoka, Minn., began in his new position in June.

Emily Walker has been hired as the women's resident head at AFLBS. Walker, who is a member of Hauge Lutheran, Kenyon, Minn., had worked as a dorm assistant during the previous school year.

Catherine McLaughlin has been hired as a receptionist at AFLBS. McLaughlin, whose husband, Pastor Scott McLaughlin, serves Vision of Glory Lutheran, Plymouth, Minn., began in her new position in May.

Brian Rikke, who completed his second year at AFLTS, has accepted a call to serve Calvary Free Lutheran, Arlington, S.D.

Pastor Jeremy Vance was installed April 26 at Bethany Free Lutheran of Bluegrass, Sebeka, Minn., and Zion Free Lutheran, Wadena, Minn. Pastor Elden Nelson, AFLC president, officiated at the installation.

AFLC memorials: May

AFLBS

Martin Pederson

AFLTS

Shirley Olson

Home Missions

Victor Myhre

Parish Education

Dr. Mary Lindquist

Lauren Hoey

World Missions

Kermit Wolden

Youth Ministries

Kenny Bates

LBT offers free missions workshop

Three-day event offered to those interested in pursuing mission work

A free, three-day workshop designed to answer questions people have about becoming a missionary will be held Aug. 12-15 at Lutheran Bible Translators (LBT) headquarters, Aurora, Ill.

The workshop, called IDIOM (In Depth Investigation of Missions), informs, advises and encourages individuals and couples considering missionary service.

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

"We cover a wide range of topics and issues, including training, living standards, expectations, cross-cultural engagement, [and] the role nationals play in the process," said Peter Slayton, LBT mobilization director. "But perhaps the best feature is the opportunity to spend one-on-one time with experienced missionaries who can provide firsthand, detailed responses to questions and concerns."

This is the 15th year LBT has hosted IDIOM workshops. Interested individuals or couples should contact Slayton by e-mail at pslayton@LBT.org, by phone at (800) 532-4253, ext. 23, and/or visit the LBT Web site at www.LBT.org.

Summer retreats at ARC

Family Camp

July 26-August 1

Costs vary depending on family size and lodging choice. Maximum family rates range from \$465-\$675 for the week, including lodging and meals.

Come help us celebrate the ARC's 30th anniversary. Pastor Kevin Garner, Marseilles, Ill., will be the special speaker.

Classics Retreat

Sept. 18-20

Led by Pastor Elden and Faith Nelson and Pastor John and Barb Skeie.

Ask your church for our brochures/bulletin inserts or for more information on these events, visit the ARC's Web site at www.arc-aflc.org, or call (800) 294-2877. Scholarships are available.

Emmaus hosts worship seminar

Emmaus Lutheran, Bloomington, Minn., will host a worship seminar July 25. Nationally acclaimed worship author and teacher Tom Kraeuter will lead the seminar. Kraeuter (pronounced kroyter) offers practical, scriptural teaching on worship, helping his audience move past the distractions that hinder worship and develop a vibrant worship life in their church.

"I'm thrilled to visit Emmaus Lutheran Church," said Kraeuter, "and grateful to Pastor Gilman for inviting me and hosting this seminar. I look forward to discussing worship in practical, biblical ways ..."

Kraeuter is the author of more than 15 books, including *Worship is What?!*, *The Worship Leader's Handbook* and *Reflecting Mercy in an Unmerciful World*.

The all-day seminar is open to everyone interested in learning more about worship or desiring a stronger relationship with God. The lowest registration cost is available in advance at WorshipSeminar.com. Registration is also available at the door.

The seminar will be held at Emmaus Lutheran Church, 8443 Second Ave. S., Bloomington. For more information or to register, call Mike Borg at (952) 884-4751, or visit WorshipSeminar.com.

Beaver Creek Lutheran to celebrate 120th anniversary

Members of Beaver Creek Free Lutheran Church, located south of Ray, N.D., will be celebrating the congregation's 120th anniversary this summer. The celebration will take place Sunday, Aug. 9, with a worship service at 10 a.m., followed by dinner at noon and a special program at 2 p.m. with guest Pastor Tony Stockman.

Family Bible camp at Wilderness Bible Camp July 14-19

A week of family Bible camp will be held from July 14-19 at the AFLC Wilderness Bible Camp, near Lake Park, Minn. Pastor Elden Nelson will be the evening speaker and Pastor Dale Finstrom will lead the morning Bible study. There are classes for the kids and the relaxed schedule presents great opportunities for both physical and spiritual renewal. The camp is located 11 miles south of Lake Park on County Road 5.

AFLC BENEVOLENCES Jan. 1- May 31, 2009

FUND	TOTAL (subsidy)	REC'D IN MAY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$434,087	\$32,196	\$134,366	31
Evangelism	112,642	4,632	35,938	32
Youth Ministries	78,909	5,514	26,676	34
Parish Education	135,207	7,326	49,786	37
Seminary	244,110	11,048	77,347	32
Bible School	398,910	27,149	135,908	34
Home Missions	375,908	18,084	120,055	32
World Missions	327,017	19,503	101,076	31
Personal Support	435,500	27,782	164,605	38
TOTALS	\$2,542,290	\$153,234	\$845,758	33
TOTALS 2008	\$2,307,821	\$195,227	\$939,646	41

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.

Teach them to love others

Before the foundation is laid, before hammers start pounding nails and walls start going up, there needs to be a plan. Thought needs to be given as to what is going to be built. Is it going to be a house or a barn or a church? What

you are trying to build is going to determine how you build.

It can be easy in Christian education to resemble a carpenter who starts sawing boards and swinging a ham-

mer around without any blueprint. Just because the builder is busy doesn't mean the building is going to be solid and usable. In a similar way, a church calendar full of activities does not mean solid Christian education is going on. Instead of just rushing around maintaining a busy schedule we need to give thought as to what kind of lives we want to build.

Some students in our congregation recently made vows confirming their faith in Christ and desire to serve Him. The completion of these two years of instruction with them caused me to think again about our plan for Christian education. What do we want to see going on in their lives? What are we trying to build during the short period of time we're blessed to have with these young people?

We teach the Ten Commandments in confirmation. As we do so we want to be sure to teach the greatest commandment.

"Jesus replied, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself." All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (Matthew 22:37-40, NIV).

To paraphrase I Corinthians 13: If the students have memorized Luther's Small Catechism and know all the fine points of Lutheran doctrine, but have not love, it is nothing. If they can stand in front of the congregation and calmly and confidently say all the right words, but have not love, it is just a lot of noise. If they come to class all the time and complete all their assignments perfectly, but have not love, nothing has been gained.

The type of students we should be striving to build up in our Sunday schools and confirmation classes, our youth groups and our Bible studies, are ones who are full of sincere and passionate love for the Lord and love for other people. If we've filled their heads with knowledge but their hearts are not full of love we have missed the mark. We have not built according to God's plan.

As we came to the close of another year of confirmation instruction I thought again of a song with a chorus that asks:

"Will you love Jesus more
When we go our different ways
When this moment is a memory
Will you remember His face

Will you look back and realize
You sensed His love more than you did
before

I'd pray for nothing less
Than for you to love Jesus more."
(*Will You Love Jesus More* by Phillips,
Craig & Dean)

I want students to know all kinds of good things, but most of all I want them to know the great love God has for them, demonstrated in Jesus dying on the cross for their sins. I pray for them as Paul did

If we've filled their heads with knowledge but their hearts are not full of love we have missed the mark. We have not built according to God's plan.

for the Ephesians: "And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:17-19).

I pray our young people would know they are loved by God and by our congregation. I pray that love would motivate them to show sacrificial love in their daily lives. Students who love God and love others—that is something worth building.



Pastor Craig Johnson

association *retreat* center

Lines

BY JIM KELLER

Christian education determines the very important future of young minds. Christian parenting, along with a good biblical Christian education, will give children a biblically-based world view. The Bible makes it clear that it is essential to train children in the ways of the Lord so that they don't grow up and forget God and His teachings.

We certainly do not want the children of our nation to grow up and forget about God. Our future generation needs to have strong biblical values and morals so this nation will remain "one nation under God."

In Deuteronomy 6:1-2 we read, "These are the commands, decrees and laws the LORD your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the LORD your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life."

Battle

There are many influences in the world that are battling for your children's minds and hearts, forces that can take away our future of eternal life promised to us by God. These rival forces seek to kill, steal and destroy not just you, but your children and grandchildren. They are real and not imaginary. We are in a constant battle with Satan for our very lives and the lives of those we love. We must realize that it is a serious battle that must not end with this generation.

The Bible clearly records God's promise: "Whoever honors me, I will honor. And whoever disregards me, I will disregard" (1 Samuel 2:30).

We certainly need strong academics, but we must teach our young people about the wonderful love of a God who desires each one to come to and love Him.

Keller is the director of guest services at the Association Retreat Center in Osceola, Wis.

