

LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

*Our Father
who art in heaven
hallowed be thy name
thy kingdom come
thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven
give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us
and lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil
for thine is the kingdom
and the power and the glory
forever and ever. Amen.*





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WHY I BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST

BY PASTOR TOM PARRISH

In I Peter 3:15 we read this command: "But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect."

As Christians are being martyred around the world today I am convicted that the Lord Jesus is preparing us to stand up for Him and His gospel in troubled and dangerous times. The day may come when you are asked to state publicly why you believe in Jesus. Permit me to share with you the top five reasons I believe in Jesus Christ as the one and only Lord and Savior.

No. 5: The Bible says that James, the half-brother of Jesus (Galatians 1:19), became a believer and headed the Church in Jerusalem. What difference does that make? Imagine you are James growing up with Jesus. Every time you did something wrong Mary, your mother, would say to you, "Why can't you be more like your big brother Jesus?" The envy and resentment would have been tremendous. Yet James became a believer and worshiped Jesus as God. I am convinced.

No. 4: I met three young Muslim men in Dhaka, Bangladesh. They had all met Jesus in a dream and become ardent believers. As a result they lost everything this world counts as valuable. They lost family, jobs, money, houses and well-being. I asked them if it was worth it to suffer so for Jesus. Their faces brightened and they said, "Yes, it is worth everything to know Jesus." I am convinced.

No. 3: I have sat at the bedside of more than 50 Christians at the moment of death. Many of them did not know each other, but person after person shared with me that Jesus was talking to them, taking them by the hand, bringing them peace and joy, just moments before they breathed their last breaths. Jesus' words are true: "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also" (John 14:3). I am convinced.

No. 2: It is one thing to say you believe in Jesus, it is quite another to permit Jesus to rule your life. I have watched alcoholics turn to Jesus and never drink again. I have seen husband and wife cheat on one another, come to repentance, admit their sin, and truly be forgiven by their spouses who were hurt beyond human reason. I have witnessed atheists and agnostics get close to the Word of God and be transformed by the power of Jesus. I have seen Satanists and witches who met Jesus in His Word or in a vision, repent, burn their ritual books, and become faithful followers of Jesus. I am convinced.

No. 1: The number one reason why I firmly believe in Jesus Christ is truly quite simple. As I open the Bible these words keep bombarding my heart. "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so." I am convinced.

Parrish, Mendota Heights, Minn., operates Stepping Into Eternity Ministries, which develops discipleship materials and seminars (toeternity.org).

True repentance comes before prayer. There can be no sincere calling on God's name without it.

—John Knox

Prayer is a safety valve. It releases dangerous pressure, like opening a vein to let out bad blood. When we are unhappy and disturbed, prayer brings relief. It is like a key that unlocks our soul and allows whatever disturbs us to flow away.

—Thomas Watson

It has been suggested that prayer is unnecessary if God already knows everything. This misses the point. The purpose of prayer is not to tell God something He doesn't know. Prayer allows us to communicate with God.

—Hannah More

With a few excellent words, the Lord's Prayer demonstrates the full spectrum of prayer. It begins with great respect for the mystery of heavenly things no earthly mind will ever fully comprehend. It moves on to everyday needs. And it deals with the evil within us. Wisdom itself produced such a prayer. Only God could have given it to us.

—Martin Luther

To pray is to let Jesus come into our hearts.

—Ole Hallesby

To be ill is to sit on our Father's knee. To be troubled is to feel the Father's embrace. To be in distress is to hear the throb of the Father's heart.

—Fredrik Wisløff

BY PASTOR PETER WARD



couple who are special to us recently experienced the joy of hearing their first grandchild say “grandpa” for the first time. Imagine the joy of the Father of heaven when He hears His adopted children—born again by faith into the family of God—say, “Our Father who art in heaven ...” The King James English seems to grant an added sense of dignity and reverence to how we are to greet our Lord in prayer.



Our heavenly Father

Biblical scholars surmise that Jesus taught His disciples on several occasions how to pray. He presented His model of prayer in His beatitudes of Matthew's Gospel and again in Luke when He responded to His disciples' desire to be taught how they ought to pray. In Luke, Jesus essentially teaches us that if He were in our shoes, this is how He would pray. It is the model upon which we can base our prayer lives, both in public worship and in the privacy of the prayer closet.

OUR FATHER, WHO ART IN HEAVEN

Even in His introduction to the Lord's Prayer, Jesus teaches us that praying should never be reduced to a cold, mindless recitation of learned words. We are not praying to a title or a position. We are not praying to some far away, disengaged entity, as were the pagans of Jesus' day who hoped to garner some meager measure of mercy by their repeated begging. No, we are praying to our Father of love who is in heaven. Prayer is a conversation born out of a relationship.

Most of our Sunday worship services close with the Lord's Prayer. Sometimes a congregation develops a cadence in the words as they are spoken. Every one of us, however, must be careful that our participation not become merely a mindless saying of the words of the Lord's Prayer. Rather, we should be moved in our hearts to the realization that we are speaking to our Father in heaven—He who loved us so much that He gave to us His only begotten Son; He who removed from us our transgressions as far as the east is from the west; He who has adopted us into His family through faith in His sent Son who rose from the dead and is coming again. Jesus teaches us in this model of prayer first and foremost that we be mindful we are a people in relationship to our *Abba* Father.

HALLOWED BY THY NAME

From this relationship Jesus teaches that we not only are permitted to, but should come with

our requests. He helps us recognize what would be the heart of our requests even beyond our own immediate temporal needs, the consolation for our concerns, the lessening of the hardships of life's struggles, or even the fulfillment of our personal desires. We ask that in all of these and above all these, that our Father's name would be honored and revered—hallowed. What sweet fellowship in a congregation and what satisfaction in our own personal lives when our main concern is not merely ourselves, but that our *Abba* Father's name be hallowed.

When we make this petition, whether as individuals and or as a congregation, we must be mindful that we are declaring that we want to see His name honored in our personal lives and in the fellowship of His church. He has given us a book which prescribes for us the manner and means by which our Father's name can be hallowed in our lives. Of course we fail in this daily, and so we are taught a little later on in the prayer of our need to be forgiven.

FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM,
THE POWER, AND THE GLORY,
FOREVER AND EVER. AMEN.

Even as Jesus teaches us the manner of closing our prayers, we are reminded that even though He is our heavenly Father, even above all, He is sovereign. We willingly admit that all is His, and that our all is to be under submission to His will, even when we do not receive what we have requested as His child. His is the kingdom, now and forever more. The forevermore part we more readily accept than the surrender of the present. Everything is for Him and for His glory. May He give us the grace needed daily, forever and ever, amen.

Ward, Pelican Rapids, Minn., is a member of St. Paul's Free Lutheran, Fargo, N.D., and provides pulpit supply in the area on a regular basis.



BY VELMA AMUNDSON

Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done,
on earth as it is in
heaven." We pray
this every week at

my church. At least we recite it every week. Speaking for myself, sometimes I get distracted by things going on in my life, and I can recite this as I'm planning what to fix for dinner, or what I'm doing later in the day. If I can do that, then I am just reciting, and not praying.

But this prayer is important. We're asking for God's kingdom to come. In some ways His kingdom has come. Christ came, He lived, He was crucified and has risen. By His death and resurrection, as a Christian I am a child of God. As a child of God I am already a part of the kingdom of God. It's already here.

But in this prayer we also are asking that Christ return as He promised He would. I'm looking forward to Christ's return, knowing it could be

any day, or sometime in my great-great-grandchild's future. I still ask, "Thy kingdom come," because until then, God's work is not complete.

God's kingdom comes as we do His will. I once saw a cartoon in which God was making something and an angel was watching. The angel said to God, "You can do it anyway you want, of course, but are you sure you want to do it *that* way?" We're all supposed to chuckle at the absurdity of anyone telling God what to do. But do we really? No way. In heaven, when God gives a command (and they're not guidelines), He is obeyed instantly and without question or argument. He told Gabriel to go announce to Mary that she would be the mother of the Savior (Luke 1:26). In Daniel 10:13, Michael was sent to fight the "prince of Persia," and he will be sent to fight again in the last days (Daniel 12:1). The angels in Revelation are told to throw down the plagues, and they never argue or question.

They just do it.

Have you ever tried to give medicine to a 2-year old, or, in my instance, a cat? We have two of the most loving, snuggly cats—until you try to give them medicine. Then they clamp their mouths down, shake their heads from side to side, and all four sets of claws come out. I don't think I've ever successfully dosed my cat without getting some sort of damage to my person. They don't understand that we're trying to make them better, they just know they don't want it. Sometimes I'm like that with God's will, I don't always understand what He's trying to do, I just know I don't want to do it. I do not trust that what God wants is just to make me better. Going through trials is something we all have to do, trusting God. It's not easy. But I find that when I do, He gives me the strength and the peace to accomplish what He wants to make me a better Christian. I'm definitely not there yet.

Often when I pray the Lord's Prayer, I like to personalize it. It makes it more meaningful for me and hopefully I pay better attention to the words. "My Father who art in heaven ... Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done by me, as it is in heaven." God's Word to us is also a personal one. In 1 John, as is echoed in many other parts of Scripture, God's people are given a "new," yet old, command: "For this is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another" (3:11). We tend to think of love as a noun, an emotion,

but I think of it often as a verb. This love is an action. When we love one another in action, we do God's will. When we pray for each other, make cookie baskets for our shut-ins, visit and cook for someone who's temporarily disabled—and the list goes on—we're loving our neighbor. And, in essence, we are making His will be done on earth.

I'd have to admit that I'm not that good at following His will. I tend to argue with Him, a lot. Sometimes it seems to me that when I argue, what I really mean is, "Thy will be done so long as it agrees with what I already want." It's easy to do God's will when it's doing a Bible study or embroidering a quilt square for a baptismal quilt, or donating socks, shoes, mittens and canned goods to those in need. But ask me to love the person I don't quite like? Or, that I'm supposed to pray for that person who insulted me? Or reach out to the "druggie" down the street? God really expects me to love the unlovable? Yes, He does. That's a gargantuan task, and I desperately need God's help to do it. So I pray, "Thy will be done."

The good news is that I—and you—have an example to follow in the life of Jesus Christ. I will pray to do God's will, by Christ's example and in His strength.

Amundson is a member of Immanuel Lutheran, New Leipzig, N.D.



Dear Lord, give us



BY MOLLY WIESEN



What a privilege to focus on bread. After all, it is one of my favorite carbs. Our food

culture has turned it into an art form. Just check out the local bread or bagel shop, full of choices we take for granted. When I think of the hundreds of times I have spoken, “give us this day our daily bread,” I am convicted of how casually I often request this bread.

Bread has a principal role in the Bible, mentioned as early as the days of Abraham in Genesis. Directions in preparation, serving, and use are woven throughout Scripture. When teaching the disciples how to pray, Jesus placed this very important request immediately after the petitions focusing on “our Father.” He knows

the vital role bread has in our lives. Of greatest importance is acknowledging the sovereignty and holiness of God as we pray the first petitions. Our hearts and minds should then be set in a state of humbleness as we pray, “Give us this day ...” Do we realize how truly dependent we are on God’s mercy, or does it become a rote phrase as we recite the Prayer that ends the service?

Some days, many people don’t bother to ask God for His provision at all. In fact, Martin Luther acknowledges in the *Small Catechism*, “To be sure, God provides daily bread, even



emphasizes this attitude in Philippians, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God” (4:6).

“What is meant by daily bread?” Luther asks us. Did you memorize that long list in Confirmation class? The phrase, “Everything required to satisfy our bodily needs,” starts an expansive slate that mentions everything from food to spouse, rulers, weather, health, “and the like.” Does the Lord really provide me with all of that and more, even when I don’t ask? Yes. Let us proclaim with the Psalmist, “Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His love endures forever” (Psalm 118:1).

But the old nature wants to sneak in here. Our culture emphasizes performance, with the tendency to attach some idea of merit to obtaining things we think we need or deserve. If I perform, pay, or do the right thing, God will reward me with my daily bread. No. Watching the birds in their springtime return, I am reminded, “Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?” (Matthew 6:26). How great is His love.

Living in a country where our needs are usually so well met, it is truly distressing (but not surprising) that we can become so dissatisfied with that daily bread. Like the Israelites receiving manna in the desert, we get bored with God’s provision, His timing, and His choices. We want something extra to go with it. We want to store things away. Seeking those extra material things that demand too much time and energy away from family may be the result. Looking

for new relationships that meet our preferences is rampant. Having it “my way” saturates our culture. Why should I wait for God to provide in His timing when I want it now? How quickly the old nature works in subtle rationalizations for the Christian.

Left to our own intentions and nature, we soon distort and take for granted all of the daily bread provided by the Lord. How great that Isaiah challenges us, “Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good” (55:2). Jesus tells us plainly in John 6, “For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world” (vs. 33). And, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry; and he who believes in Me will never be thirsty” (vs. 35). Without Christ as our Savior, there will never be true filling and satisfaction in our lives.

The Israelites learned it in the desert. “He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you manna ... to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord” (Deuteronomy 8:3). But God did not leave His Word in the scrolls of parchment. He sent His Son—“The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us” (John 1:14). How we need Him each day in our lives. He comes to us as we read and meditate on His Word. That daily time in the Word provides our sustenance for strength, comfort, peace, hope, guidance, and more. May we hunger more each day for our daily bread.

Wiesen is a member of Bethel Free Lutheran, Grafton, N.D.

to the wicked, without our prayer ...” The Lord has amazed me with His provisions, time and again, when I didn’t even have a clue what I should be asking for. Jesus reminded the disciples before this prayer, “for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.” What a great and wonderful God we have. But by asking Him for the daily sustenance needed, we are reminded of how intimately He is involved in our lives. Then, as Luther explains, “we pray in this petition that God may make us aware of His gifts and enable us to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.” The Apostle Paul

Forgiveness for me, and you

BY PASTOR JOE OCKER

The Lord pulled some strings a few years back, and before I knew it I was leading a Bible study in the local county jail. While I know the Lord wanted the clear and wondrous gospel to be offered to folks in need of it, I have come to realize that the Lord had much to teach me in the experience, as well.

One of the things I have learned is that the debt we owe in forgiveness to others is the last thing we want to think about when our own lives are in pain and we want relief. And when the pain we are experiencing was caused by another person sinning against us, then we can quickly get angry when someone else tells us we have to forgive the offender in order to let God minister to the rest of our pain. Spoiler alert: Jesus is the one telling us we have to forgive the offender. “But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.” That quote is from Matthew 6:15, which is part of Jesus’ commentary on the Lord’s

Prayer, which He had just given as an example to His disciples.

Most people in jail could write a very painful book chronicling all the terrible things others have done to them which have caused them pain. Abuse, betrayal, and rejection just get the ball rolling. Again, most of the people I have met in jail have never even considered forgiving the people who have “sinned against them.” Is there any hope for them? Is there any hope for those reading this little article and realizing that they have a big forgiveness problem in their lives? It may be why your prayer life has seemed wooden and ineffective lately. Oh yes, our God is hope; and hope in Him never disappoints.

I have seen God use three truths in the jail study that help folks begin to forgive others, even terrible sin debt burdens.

First, usually the answer in the jail seems to start with an encounter with a Holy God. When I begin to recognize how far short of His glory I personally have fallen, my heart begins to soften toward those who have fallen short of His glory. But God’s holiness gives us another—maybe unexpected—help in forgiving others their sin debts. Allow me to paint the scene for you.

The Gospel of Matthew’s Parable of the Unmerciful Servant, found in 18:21-35, adds some powerful detail to the Lord’s command to forgive others. A helpful detail—and our second truth in learning





to forgive others—is learning that God is the King and judge, and we are not. In fact, the Bible is full of admonitions against us judging others. The Lord makes it exceedingly clear: He alone is to judge. So, how do I let go of that desire to judge the person myself?

In our Bible study, I have started drawing a picture on the marker board at the jail, and asking the students to picture themselves wearing the judge's robe and sitting on the judge's bench, with all the people whom they have not forgiven standing before them in their courtroom. I encourage them to write every charge against the person standing before them on a scroll. Then, I ask them to picture themselves handing the scroll to each charged person, while declaring, "I am forgiving you for each of the items listed here. You are released from my courtroom, by my order. Now, go across the hallway to God's courtroom. His judgments are true and just."

It is a tremendous help to those scarred by abuse, etc., to know that their forgiveness lets

the offender off their hook, but that the offender must stand before a Holy God in His eternal courtroom. Is it possible that God might forgive the offender who was just sent to His courtroom? Certainly, if the offender should receive grace by faith, just as I have done. But I can trust God to handle the judgment rightly. That helps me forgive, and leave the rest to God.

Now the third truth that helps us to forgive others: The God who lives in me by faith is "gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, forgiving sin, wickedness and rebellion" (Exodus 34:6-7). Whatever resource of love and forgiveness I might need is available to me through the Lord Jesus Christ and His presence in me. The Lord has poured love and forgiveness into my life, and by His grace I am able to pour it out on others. How could God command me to forgive others if He had not made it possible for me to do so? He *has* made it possible. The cross and the empty tomb stand as witness that God has forgiven all the sin

of the world. He will help me forgive, as well.

"And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us," says Jesus in the fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer. Our forgiveness of others is a huge key in our prayer life, and in our own relationship with God. May our gracious God release His love and power from heaven to empower us to forgive everyone who has sinned against us. To His glory. Amen.

Ocker serves Dell Lutheran, Frost, Minn.

BY PASTOR RON DAHLE

The petitions in our Lord's Prayer were designed by Jesus to address every aspect of our lives.

The previous petitions have their purpose, and the order in which they are organized in the prayer is important. So now we turn to the last two—"And lead us not into temptation. But deliver us from evil. Amen."



When tempted by evil

AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION

I must direct your attention to the Catechism in use in our AFLC. It has a wonderful explanation, and I hope we all memorize it and use it daily.

The mystery surrounding temptation is that as long as we are in our bodies, we will be exposed to temptations of all kinds. We need to understand that all of us experience temptation, but we pray in this petition that God would give us the strength and courage to not fall for it. Even if we take God at His Word, and know that God cleanses us from all sin—such as expressed in I John 1:8-9—we may stumble and fall. This mystery shocks us, and in some cases we are so devastated or embarrassed that we are not sure that God will accept our prayers. It is at such a time that God requires of us to return to prayer

Temptations fall into three large categories: of the flesh, of the world, and of the devil. Here, Martin Luther describes these temptations in vivid detail in his *Large Catechism*.

Of the temptations of the flesh, Luther says that we have the old “Adam,” that is our sinful self, put to death by faith in Christ Jesus but still hanging around our necks. This old Adam lures us daily into impurity, laziness, gluttony and drunkenness, greed and deceit, and acts of fraud and deception against our neighbor—into all kinds of evil lusts, which by nature cling to us. These

acts inherent in human nature often wound and inflame us all, even the most innocent of heart.

Next, there are the temptations of the world. In the world that surrounds us we find hatred and envy, enmity, violence and injustice, vengeance, cursing, reviling, slander, arrogance and pride, and a fondness for luxury, honor, fame, and power. It seems like no one wants to take a back seat to anyone else. We all want to be thought of as someone of importance by other human beings. In truth, it is God who validates you as His very own child. Paul writes to the Roman church, “If God is for us, who is against us?” (Romans 8:31).

Third are temptations that come from the devil. From him we are baited and badgered on all sides. The most difficult to withstand are matters of the conscience and spiritual life. His most direct attack is to separate us from God’s works and His Word. He does this by tearing us away from faith in Jesus, hope promised by Jesus, and the love of God. Nothing pleases the devil more than to draw us into unbelief, false security, and stubbornness, which leads us into despair, atheism, blasphemy, and other abominable sins.

We must understand that everyone faces temptation. Yet it is one thing to face it, and quite another thing to yield to it. Christians must be armed and ready at all times. We can never let our guard down, thinking the devil is far from us. Even if, at present, you think that you are secure in the knowledge of God’s Word, and you are patient, kind, and firm in your faith in Jesus, it is at this very moment that the devil sends a shaft into your heart so that it is almost impossible to stand. Being armed and ready is to be immersed

in God’s Word, trusting in the knowledge and promises found there, so as to stand against all sorts of temptation

We can conclude that God leads “us not into temptation” when He gives us power and strength to resist temptation, even though the tribulation is not removed from our presence in this world.

BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL

As I have studied this prayer, I often wondered why Jesus added this petition. It seems so similar to the previous one. But certainly “leading” and “delivering” have distinct meanings. Here we are praying that God would deliver us from all manner of evil. The previous petitions take care of every aspect of our lives, and so the prayer conclude with one final plea, “Dear Father, help us get rid of all this misfortune.” And in this petition, we ask for protection against poverty, shame, death, and all the misery and heartache of which there is so much in our world.

One final thought regarding our Lord’s Prayer. We close it with a doxology, and an “Amen.” This is as it should be, even when the prayer concludes in the Scriptures with this petition. The doxology directs our hearts to thank and praise God for all the blessings we receive. This is followed by our own affirmation, the “Amen.”

God has commanded you to pray believing that you will receive His answer. Amen. Yes, it shall be so. Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

Dahle, Alkalbo, N.D., is a retired AFLC pastor.



My prayer journey began many years ago when my friend, Susan, asked me if I had been praying about a problem that was bothering me. I was ashamed to admit that I was not. In fact, it never even occurred to me to take this matter to God in prayer. God used that question and that friend to help me begin a life of prayer.

God used an elderly woman named Eva to teach me about prayer. Eva arrived one hour before church began for prayer. I joined Eva during her prayer time on Sunday mornings, and thus began my education in prayer.

Her prayers reminded me of an intimate conversation with a dear friend. She poured out her heart to God, whom she spoke to as if He was sitting next to her. She began with praise, and then she asked God to forgive her of her sins. She

would go on to pray about her concerns, lifting them one by one to God, ending with thanks for all God had done and was about to do.

When she had finished praying, Eva would quietly wait for me. My attempts at first were bumbling, but she didn't care, and she helped me to understand that God is pleased with any attempt to connect with Him.

Eva had a dream for our little church to have a room

devoted to prayer. It took her many years to get this accomplished, but before Eva passed away, her dream became a reality. Our church now has a room devoted to prayer.

Eva was a perfect example of an elderly Christian woman teaching the younger women of the church, and I am forever grateful that she was willing to take me under her wing.

The Bible has also taught me much about prayer. When I read Paul's instructions to



My prayer journey

BY BETSY VAN MUENSTER

I learned to not give up in prayer when I read the angel's comment to Zechariah about how God had heard his prayer uttered many years prior (Luke 1:13). I learned to pour out my soul to God when reading Hannah's anguished prayer (I Samuel 1:1), and David's heartfelt prayers (Psalms). Jehoshaphat taught me what to do when the enemy is overwhelming by keeping my eyes on Him (II Chronicles 20:1-19). Ezra and Daniel both have taught me about corporate sin and the power of confession before God—about falling to my knees in repentance totally at His mercy (Ezra 10:1-6, Psalm 50). Nehemiah showed me how to trust in God and leave revenge in His hands (chapter 4). He also taught me about quick, short prayers that can be prayed in the moment. Manasseh taught me about the true heart of God, which hears the prayers of the worst sinner when humbly offered (II Chronicles 33:18-19). Elijah demonstrated how to listen quietly for God's whisper (I Kings 19:11-13).

The prayers of Jesus, the apostles, and of Stephen have influenced my prayer life greatly, and I often pattern my prayers after them. Paul's prayer in Colossians 1:9-14 is an example of a prayer that I use when praying for churches or for people who are not well known to me.

And then there are my family members. My grandmother set an example of praying without ceasing for loved ones and waiting patiently on the Lord as He works in their lives. My husband has taught me that a lot of words aren't always necessary. My daughter often reminds me when I am anxious or worried to lift my concerns to Him. My daughter-in-law encourages me to be bold in praying for others. My son has shown me how to include the gospel in prayer. My brother taught me much about prayer in his death—that we can't

demand anything of God, but we can sure ask for anything. And then we leave it there with God to decide what is best.

My pastors, both past and present, are great examples of taking everything to God in prayer. I love it when Pastor Eric Swenson will stop during our church service to lift the concerns of the congregation to God.

Oswald Chambers, in his devotional *My Utmost for His Highest*, had a life-changing effect on me. One day I overheard a very discouraging conversation in church between a man and his wife. When I got home that day, I read the devotion for the day and soon it became clear that the Holy Spirit was speaking to me. Instead of being critical of that couple, I learned to pray for them. I knew God was teaching me something very important and immediately asked God to forgive me of my judgmental attitude and to help me become the prayer intercessor He wanted me to be.

In a very small way, I feel like the author of Hebrews 11. So many people have taught me about prayer that they can't possibly all be named. As I think about all the people who have influenced me, I am reminded of a favorite quote from Corrie Ten Boom. "Every experience God gives us, every person He puts into our lives, is the perfect preparation for a future only He can see."

My prayer journey is far from over. Every day of life that God grants brings new opportunities to share with God, to bring all to Him in prayer. How about you? Are you on a prayer journey? I hope so; I pray so.

Van Muenster is a member of Christian Free Lutheran, Wheatland, Iowa.

the Romans to join him in his struggles by prayer (15:30), I feel as though he was talking to me. That verse has become my motto, giving me insight into the powerful, divine weapons of which Paul writes, weapons that can "demolish strongholds" (II Corinthians 10:4). When you come alongside someone in prayer, the fervent kind of prayer that James 5:16 talks about, you find that you are joining someone in their struggles.

AFLC Schools graduation



TOP LEFT: Andrew Hanson directs members of the AFLBS Concert Choir during the graduation service. TOP RIGHT: Seminary graduates Brandon Marschner, Jon Langness and Aaron Olson, together with Licensed Pastor Eric Christenson (left), who completed a special course of study toward ordination. ABOVE: Class speakers Jenaya Crestik and Joe Larson greet family and friends at the service. RIGHT: Audience members joined both choirs during the "Hallelujah Chorus" at the end of the spring concert.





TOP LEFT: Alex Woodworth receives his diploma from Pastor Joel Rolf, dean of AFLBS. TOP RIGHT: Scott Olson, of the AFLBS Wind Ensemble, plays during the spring concert. MIDDLE RIGHT: Pastor Wade Mobley, dean of AFLTS and president of the AFLC Schools, gave the commencement address. ABOVE: AFLBS seniors walk out of Heritage Hall together on their way to the service. LEFT: Graduate Adry Sari of Cuenca, Ecuador, has her picture taken with friend and seminarian Israel Flores Vasquez, of Mexico.

June 29, 1974, was a very hot and muggy day in a small country church in Wisconsin. Only the corn in the fields surrounding the church was happy and comfortable that day. As I stood at the front of the altar with Pastor Phil Featherstone and Pastor Dale Mellgren looking down at me, I understood that God answered prayer. He blessed me that day with a godly wife for whom my parents and I had prayed for many years. It was one of the most exciting days of my life.

In looking back over these 42 years of marriage, one aspect of our lives together stands out above all others: GAP—God answers prayer. Whether it was my prayer, our prayers, the prayers of our parents, or the prayers of the people we served, we have witnessed the faithfulness of a mighty God who answers prayer. Let me share just a few examples from our personal lives:

When we needed jobs to finish college and seminary, GAP. He provided so abundantly that I had no college loans.

When we were told that we could not have children, God blessed us with a daughter and then twins, a boy and a girl. GAP.

When we were burdened down with medical bills, GAP. He miraculously provided.

When we couldn't find housing while serving a boom town for a Home Mission plant, GAP. He led us to find a house built by a school construction class, which we purchased sight unseen.

When we moved to Minneapolis so that I could serve as the Home Missions director, our house that we had just purchased burned to the ground. People prayed for us. GAP. He miraculously provided the home that we still live in.



GOD ANSWERS PRAYER

BY PASTOR PAUL NASH

One of the blessings of my job is that I watch God answer prayers all over the country on behalf of our little Home Mission churches. I have witnessed mighty miracles of a faithful God at work.

When a church had desperately needed a shepherd. GAP.

When a church no longer had a building to rent and funds were low, GAP. He always provided a facility for His beloved bride—His church.

When we needed God's protection during legal battles, GAP. He has miraculously protected us.

When we needed airplanes to scoot across the country, GAP. He has given us four airplanes.

When our summer team vans have broken down far from us, GAP. He has kept vehicles going until our teams could get to safety. He has provided help and mechanics.

When we have had to work with local government agencies for building permits, etc., we have prayed for favor and GAP.

When our funds have been depleted, GAP. He has always provided for our payroll and obligations.

When four of our Alaska team members were driving in Anchorage on June 1, a driver went through a stop sign and hit their borrowed van. None were seriously injured though both vehicles are probably totaled. We are praying, and we know God answers prayer.

Dear friends, I could continue and continue sharing about God answering prayer. He has never failed, not ever.

The God we serve is able.

Nash, a member of Solid Rock Free Lutheran, Anoka, Minn., is the director of Home Missions.



H

ow did your spring district WMF rally go? My district, Western North Dakota and

Eastern Montana, has a unique story to tell.

Our district president, Jeanie Sheldon, attended the fall advisory committee via GoToMeeting's video conferencing technology last fall. Among topics covered, the district leaders shared speaker and theme ideas. Jeanie was intrigued and encouraged to contact the Ambassador Institute's department head Pastor Kevin Olson and his wife, Pam. They agreed to be the spring speakers at a country church whose history predates North Dakota becoming a state.

Jeanie went to Beaver Creek Free Lutheran Church, Ray, N.D., two days before the rally and enjoyed the fellowship and camaraderie of cleaning and decorating in preparation for the event. These energetic ladies had many novel ideas and their hospitality could not have been warmer or more welcoming the day of the rally. One lifetime member who is more than 90 years old crocheted name tags for all the women. Her younger

sister had crocheted bookmarks for each lady, as well. Their meatball lunch was outstanding.

Five days before the rally began, Pastor Olson was ordered by his doctor to have surgery after tearing several tendons in his shoulder. While Olson suggested putting off the surgery to the following week, the surgeon disagreed. Pastor Olson reluctantly called the rally organizers to suggest other speakers who could take his place. His son, Andrew Olson, and his wife, Alexis, agreed to fill in. They had to work on Friday but were able to take off a little earlier than expected. The 11-hour drive must have seemed long to them. When their GPS failed them, they actually got to the church with just minutes to spare.

Andrew had a PowerPoint presentation that clearly showed the heart and spirit of Ambassador Institute. He had been a part of the ministry himself through work in Uganda, and had observed his mom and dad in their work. He did a wonderful job of proclaiming Jesus as the way of salvation and illustrating the multiplication principle used by the Ambassador Institute.

During the short business meeting, volunteers were asked to be a nominating committee for the spring rally. No one stepped up to the plate and board members are still pondering the best way to find women willing to give of themselves and their time. Those who prepared and hosted the rally received a great sense of satisfaction and joy from their service. I hope that on the local, district, and national levels, women don't cut themselves off from these wonderful opportunities.

The spirit of fellowship prevailed during the day. The wide variety of ages of women attending, the times available for catching up with old friends, and rejoicing together in being part of God's kingdom here on earth made for a little slice of what heaven will be like.

Wellumson, Williston, N.D., is the president of the Women's Missionary Federation.

OUR WMF RALLY TIME

BY LYNN WELLUMSON



WATERS IN THE WILDERNESS

JULY 16

"But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing"
(II Thessalonians 3:13).

It is not easy to be a Christian. We may mean well, and try to serve God as best we can; but there are many adversaries. Our work is not appreciated, and our motives are misunderstood. There seem to be so few results from what we are trying to accomplish. We see so much that is sinful in the world about us that we become depressed. The devil comes and tries to beat us to the ground. Then it is easy to become weary in well doing; at such times we need the encouragement afforded by this verse of Scripture.

The Thessalonian Christians had been doing quite well; Paul commends them in the earlier part of this letter. But some of them had been drawn aside on the point of Christ's return to earth. They had become so sure that this event was so near that it was useless to continue working any longer. They had become weary in doing well. Paul had to point out to them certain truths concerning the timetable of Christ's return. He urged them to get busy again with the task at hand—both in Kingdom work and earthly occupations.

The hope of glory should keep us from becoming unduly discouraged. The future is ours. The best is yet to be. Christ has gone to prepare a place for us. He is coming again to receive us to Himself. While we are waiting for this, let us not become weary in well doing.

Delores Kjos, now deceased, was the wife of Pastor Howard Kjos, a retired AFLC pastor.

Waters in the Wilderness is a daily devotional published by the AFLC Board of Parish Education in 1971 with Dr. Iver Olson, editor. All 365 meditations were contributed by AFLC members from many walks of life. "Here, they offer each a glass of cool and refreshing water each day to thirsting souls," wrote Olson in the preface. Reprinted by permission. The volume is out of print.

PEOPLE & PLACES

Pastor Steve Lombardo has resigned as pastor of St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Gifford, Ill., to pursue other ministry opportunities.

Heather Olson has accepted the position of First Impressions/Administrative Assistant in the AFLBS office. Olson is a 2000 graduate of AFLBS, formerly of Astoria, Ore., and Kenyon, Minn.

Members of the AFLC Coordinating Committee received onto the congregational roster **Bethany Lutheran Church**, Viborg, S.D. The congregation is served by Pastor Kent Klawonn.

Joe Larson, a 2016 graduate of AFLBS from Ortonville, Minn., has accepted a call as the youth ministry director of St. Olaf Lutheran, Montgomery, Ill.

AFLC Schools seek academic and student support assistant

The AFLC Schools are currently seeking a qualified individual to fill the full-time position of academic and student support assistant. The position is involved with many important aspects of the AFLC Schools' academic and student experiences. Therefore, the individual must indicate and exhibit a personal faith in Jesus Christ, reflect an attitude of service, and have excellent communication and organizational skills. This position will report directly to the vice president of academic affairs and perform the following functions:

- ♦ **Registrar:** leadership and management of all programs, services, and operations of the registrar's office.
- ♦ **Academic & Office Support:** Provide academic and office assistance to the VP of academic affairs and faculty of the AFLC Schools.
- ♦ **Institutional Effectiveness and Accreditation Support:** Provide assistance for the continuous development and implementation of the AFLC Schools' Institutional Effectiveness Plan.
- ♦ **Student accounts:** Work with AFLBS students on various matters related to their student financial accounts.

For a detailed job description or to apply please contact Dr. Mark Olson at marko@aflc.org. If applying please email your resume, statement of faith, and at least three references. Application materials can also be mailed to: Association Free Lutheran Seminary and Bible School Attn: Dr. Mark Olson, 3134 E Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441. Salary is commensurate with qualifications and experience. Applications will be accepted until the position is filled.



Is it dangerous to live in Brazil? That question has been asked of me on several occasions. My first response is usually, “No, not really.” However, I have had to reconsider my answer as I reflect on the harsh realities of life in Brazil.

I have lost count of how many people we personally know who have been victims of armed robberies—local merchants in our little village, our son-in-law, many missionary friends and other close acquaintances who have been held at gunpoint and had their homes ransacked. Cars are stolen on a regular basis. Drug cartels ruin countless lives. Most homes have walls around them and bars on the windows. Many banks, drug stores, and other businesses have regular armed guards on duty. The political scene is full of corruption. Law enforcement is rarely present when needed. The number of car accidents is shocking. The Zika virus, H1N1 flu virus, and Dengue fever threaten people’s health.

THE ONLY SAFE PLACE

BY BECKY ABEL

We deal with problems of violence, drugs, and abuse right in our own neighborhood. Yes, it is dangerous to live in Brazil.

However, I honestly have to say that I do not live in fear. I believe with my whole being that the safest place in the world is living in the center of God’s will. He is with me in all circumstances to protect me, rescue me if needed, and provide for me. And He uses all situations for His glory.

In John 11:8 the disciples warned Jesus about returning to Jerusalem because they were afraid of the dangers awaiting Him. Jesus understood what His well-intentioned disciples did not: as long as He submitted to God’s plan for His life, no harm could come to Him until the appointed time of His crucifixion. Jesus had no need to fear His enemies.

God has given each one of us a purpose and specific work to accomplish for Him. Nothing and no one on the earth can successfully interfere with God’s purposes. The only truly safe place to be is in the center of God’s will for our lives. As long as we follow where He leads, we’ll be protected—even in situations that appear threatening or

dangerous to human eyes. Letting our decisions and movements be shaped by obedience to God will set us free from fear concerning our welfare and safety

To walk in the character of Christ and share the good news of salvation in Jesus is always the right choice, regardless of the outcome. We may not always be saved from dangers or even death, but we are assured of His mighty presence with us as we seek to be obedient to His plan for our lives.

Support and pray for missionaries as they serve the Lord in dangerous places around the world. Pray that they might help others come to know Jesus and learn to rely on Him so that they, too, might not fear. “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for Thou art with me” (Psalm 23:4).

Abel, Curitiba, Brazil, serves as an AFLC missionary with her husband, Pastor Paul Abel.

AFLC, Schools staff earn post-graduate degrees

Pastor Kevin Olson, department head of the Ambassador Institute, recently graduated from Bethel Seminary in St. Paul, Minn., with a Doctor of Ministry in Servant Leadership degree. Olson began this study to enhance the credibility of the Ambassador Institute for international recognition and acceptability.



"The Ambassador Institute could pursue accreditation in Uganda and India with the greater confidence associated with a recognized degree behind the training." His thesis was titled, "The use of oral training in Uganda to develop biblically trained leaders."

- Dr. Mark Olson, chief academic officer of the AFLC Schools, was awarded a DMin in May by Knox Theological Seminary, Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

- Larry Walker, AFLC Schools librarian, received his Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS) degree in May from the University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee.



Pictured (from left) are Jeff Perleberg, council chairman; Gary Retterath, trustee chairman; and Pastor Steve Mundfrom.

Congregation burns mortgage

Members of Grace Free Lutheran Church, located in Valley City, N.D., recently reached their goal of paying off the mortgage on their church building. On Sunday, May 8, a mortgage burning ceremony was held during the morning worship service. The first service was held in the new building on September 26, 2010, and the construction loan was paid off in less than six years. The congregation has been served by Pastor Steve Mundfrom, who has taken a call as a full-time faculty member at the AFLC Schools. He begins his work on campus this fall. Members of the congregation praise God for providing the means for them to pay off their new building.

MAY MEMORIALS

AFLBS

Lloyd Melby (2)
Percy Strand (2)
Doris Harth
Ruth Claus
Kenneth Rolf (4)
Agnes Rolf (2)
Clarice Burkel
Phil Grothe
John Larson
Ingvald Berdal (2)

AFLTS

Muriel Gebers
Don Jorde

Evangelism

Muriel Gebers

FLAPS

Muriel Gebers

General Fund

Kenneth Rolf

Parish Education

Dr. Mary Lindquist

Home Missions

Kenneth Rolf

World Missions

Sylvia Fatland
Muriel Gebers

WMF

Melvin Hove
Fred Anderson
Sylvia Fatland (2)

... in honor of

AFLBS

Pastor Wade Mobley

AFLC BENEVOLENCES January 1-May 31, 2016

FUND	REC'D IN MAY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$21,863	\$154,758	\$145,849
Evangelism	10,890	47,201	62,383
Youth Ministries	17,704	50,272	49,389
Parish Education	15,317	52,868	53,562
Seminary	14,717	94,318	109,631
Bible School	57,518	216,016	208,182
Home Missions	38,933	206,769	183,432
World Missions	36,089	232,807	149,957
Personal Support	46,603	264,006	202,745
TOTALS	\$259,633	\$1,319,017	\$1,165,131

Contact the individual departments for further information about specific financial needs.

THE GOSPEL OF PRAYER

Neglect of private prayer is the locust that devours the strength of the church.” “Prayerlessness is carelessness.” We have all heard similar words of reproach, rebuking us for a lack of prayer in our lives, warning us of dire consequences if we don’t increase the time spent in prayer. It’s difficult to be too critical of these hard words, knowing that they often flow from genuine concern, and the problem is a real one.

So how does one respond when convicted of the need to pray more? Structure is often the answer of the flesh, the discipline of strict schedules that dare not be broken, the heaping up of words to fill the appointed time slots. Discipline is good, but law-empowered prayer eventually makes us grow weary. Although we may enjoy a spiritual “cloud nine” for a while, it’s too easy to fall back to earth again—and again—with a sickening thud. Then disillusionment and doubt can easily find an opening.

The old nature will never object to more religion, especially when viewed in terms of our doing and striving. It makes sense to us; it’s something that we can understand. And how quickly our religious old nature turns prayer into law!

So what do we mean when speaking of prayer as gospel? Perhaps the words of Martin Luther will shed light on this important truth:

Why would God have us speak to Him as “Our Father”?

God thereby tenderly encourages us to believe that He is truly our Father, and that we are truly His children, so that we may boldly and confidently come to Him in prayer, even as beloved children come to

their father. (*Small Catechism*)

Gospel is hard for us to understand—even impossible—because it goes against the grain of what seems right and reasonable. This is why the old nature struggles so mightily against salvation, still seeking to offer the worthless coins of our own efforts, even the most religious ones, to vainly try to purchase the gift that God purchased for us through the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ.

So it is with prayer. The struggle with the old nature will never end in this life. But enlightened and empowered by the gospel, the Christian now sees the Creator of heaven and earth, not as a stern and demanding monarch, but as his Heavenly Father—and it’s all because of Jesus.

Prayer is the outstretched arms of the child for the Father’s help. Prayer is the child’s cry calling to the Father’s ear, the Father’s heart, and to the Father’s ability, which the Father is to hear, the Father is to feel, and which the Father is to relieve. (E.M. Bounds)

Remember the One to whom you are praying. Remember the price that He paid for you to be granted the privilege of prayer. This is the gospel of prayer.

The articles in this issue of *The Lutheran Ambassador* are based on the petitions of the portion of Holy Scripture that we call the Lord’s Prayer, which Jesus spoke when His disciples asked Him to teach them to pray. Though we include these words as part of traditional worship services, it would seem that the Lord intended it also to serve as a pattern for our words when we come to

Him in prayer.

There should be no doubt that this beloved and familiar prayer can easily be recited by rote without heart or thought. (I was first taught these words by my grandmother in a language that I did not understand.) Yet this writer has known some who

Remember the price that He paid for you to be granted the privilege of prayer. This is the gospel of prayer.

have told him how difficult it was to pray, “Thy will be done,” when facing serious surgery or a major life crisis, and how comforting it was to pray, “Our Father.”

Here is a practical word for some who may be struggling with a sameness and staleness in their prayer journey. It may sound strange, but the solution for you, and for me, could be the use of prayers that have been prepared by others. For example, the daily devotional by Bo Giertz, *To Live with Christ*, includes a prayer with each reading, and at times people have found that these words have become their own heartfelt prayers.

Our prayer condition is helplessness, and our qualification is Christ’s righteousness. Our Father waits to welcome us, for we come in the name of His Son (John 16:24), helped in our weakness by His Spirit (Romans 8:26). So we dare to come boldly before the throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16), and its gospel truth, all because of Jesus.

Friends, let us pray!



Pastor Robert Lee

association retreat center

BEHIND OUR SPIRITUAL POWER

BY PASTOR DAVID JOHNSON

Preacher and author Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892), when asked the secret of his spiritual power said, “Knee work, young man! Knee work” (*Enlisting for Christ and the Church*, Howard Agnew Johnson).

Dr. John Henry Livingston (1746-1825), on two different occasions, preached with such power that in each service that 500 were converted. Both sermons were preceded by a night of prayer.

Pastor Herb Franz (1917-2000), for years the consummate traveling evangelist within our AFLC circles, often exhorted, “There’s no fire in the pulpit, if there’s no prayer in the pews!”

These are not isolated or unique illustrations. When we read the pages of Scripture we see similar examples. Joseph, Moses, Samuel, David, and many others were all known for their lives of earnest prayer. In fact, Jesus spent some of His longest times of prayer in the midst of some of His busiest circumstances. In Luke 6:12-13 we see one such example: “It was at this

time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God. And when day came, He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles.”

Jesus spent all night talking with His heavenly Father, discussing the events of the next day, a day in which He would choose His disciples. We’re told that Jesus “went off to the mountain to pray.” All else stopped in His life during these excursions for prayer and refreshing.

There are so many times when we want an answer from God, yet all we do is shoot up a quick one- to two-sentence prayer and think God should jump to action. We forget that God wants to talk with us. He wants more than anything else to spend time with us, hearing our hearts, and sharing His own heart with us in the pages of His Word. In fact, there are times when He may delay a particular answer, testing our perseverance.

Oh, the power that comes when God’s children pray. How often do we face challenging situations on our own when our heavenly Father is just waiting to give us the

necessary wisdom and power to confront them victoriously? Don’t forget, God loves you and hears every word from your lips. But He wants to be more than a vending machine. He is a loving heavenly Father, and He wants a relationship with you. Give Him your time today, and if He hasn’t answered your prayer yet, let the Holy Spirit cultivate patience and perseverance in your character.

Get away, retreat. Seek out a quiet place, a place for regular Bible study, prayer, and reflection—like our own Association Retreat Center. They have a wonderful prayer walk that will greatly enhance your intercessory goals.

Remember, nothing worthwhile comes without investment. As the apostle Paul challenged his readers, “Rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer ...” (Romans 12:12).

Johnson serves Disciple Lutheran Fellowship, Reading, Pa., and Living Faith Lutheran, Boyertown, Pa.