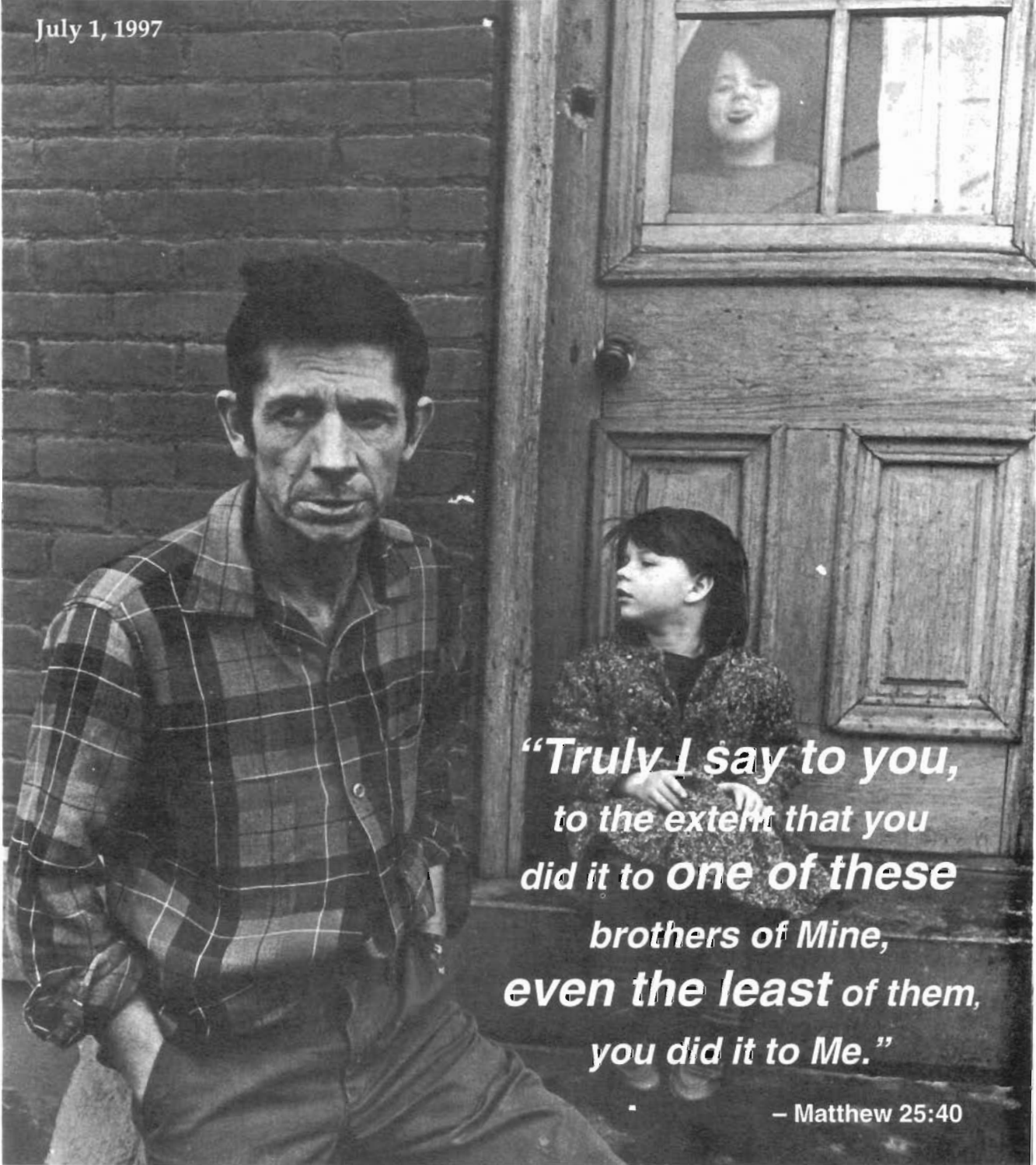


The Lutheran AMBASSADOR

July 1, 1997



***"Truly I say to you,
to the extent that you
did it to one of these
brothers of Mine,
even the least of them,
you did it to Me."***

— Matthew 25:40

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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CONTENTS

Understanding giving	p. 4
A normal part of the Christian life	p. 6
Making a difference in the city	p. 8
We were made a needy people	p. 9

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AN ENCOURAGING WORD

For I am not ashamed of the gospel ...

for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith; as it is written, "The righteous man shall live by his faith."
— Romans 1:16-17

Though a long treatise on Christian theology, the book of Romans is not dry or dull. These verses which serve as a theme for the book are full of meaning. In a few words Paul lays the foundation for the sinner's eternal friendship with Jesus Christ, Son of God, King of kings and Lord of lords. This foundation is called the **gospel**.

Without hesitation Paul warns us of his commitment to the gospel in these clear words, *I am not ashamed of the gospel*. That anyone **would** be ashamed of the gospel is clear indication of the deep depravity of natural, sinful hearts. This gospel tells of the sublimest truths and most awesome facts ever revealed or recorded in history. It is the simple expression of God's love for His creatures. Let God search your heart for any hint of shame regarding His precious gospel.

Why might anyone be ashamed of the gospel?

First, it is **an insult to humanism**, to every thought of human greatness and glory. Paul's background was religious self-help, making the most of his own goodness AND being very proud of it. He started out doing just that until God showed him that he really needed total dependence on Christ. All our goodness is but rubbish before God. The gospel speaks to those who humbly confess their sins and hunger and thirst for righteousness.

Second, the gospel causes shame in sinners because of **its universal scope**. It demands an

audience with each individual. In the gospel we see God's loving reach into every life in which He wants His grace known and experienced. Sinners often see this as an intrusion into their lives. But through the gospel God would reclaim every life that sin has stolen from Him.

Third, some people stumble over the gospel because of **its stupendous claims**. The gospel of Jesus Christ promises to meet the deepest needs of the sinful heart, to hush the painful cries of sin and hurt, to break the grip of captivity and bondage, to impart eternal joy and peace to the troubled, discouraged soul, to introduce the greatest Friend and dearest love that can be known. Satan tempts us to believe that our own personal dilemmas are beyond the reach of the gospel's mighty work. Not so! The gospel's great claims are pure fact and eternal truth for all.

Finally the sinner may become ashamed of the gospel because of **its utter simplicity**. The Word tells us that whoever believes a gospel promise receives it, even the worst sinner who struggles to do what God has commanded in thought, word and deed. Sinners welcomed by the gospel to the very presence of God through Jesus Christ find complete acceptance and everlasting grace. Do not let its simplicity keep you from accepting and believing the promises of the gospel today.

— Pastor Steve Mundfrom
Bethany Lutheran
Sebek, Minnesota

sound bites

1 “Christians know the gospel is for the poor. Yet we often go to less-developed nations with all the baggage of wealthy nations. We must constantly critique our methods and our lifestyle and, by God’s grace, identify with the poor as our Lord so beautifully modeled it.”

— Ted W. Engstrom

“Every time Jesus offers an opinion about riches, it is negative. Every time he teaches about the use of wealth, he counsels disciples to give it away. ... how seriously should we respond to these teachings about wealth? It may be time for more believers to consider the most obvious and least comfortable option: to obey them — to conform our lives to the commands of our Lord rather than the other way around. ... How much of our wealth should we give away? More.”

— Thomas Schmidt

6 “While wealth is a gift of God and intended to be a blessing, it is never a blessing if we keep it for ourselves.”

— Kenneth Kantzer

2 “David Barrett, author of the *World Christian Encyclopedia*, tells us that of the one billion people in absolute poverty, 190 million of them are our brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ. Something is desperately wrong in the international body of Jesus Christ to have a world in which some of us are living palatially while others are unable to feed their children.”

— Tom Sine

3 “This is the final test of a gentleman: his respect for those who can be of no possible value to him.”

— William Lyon Phelps

“I believed I was being a good steward with my money. But I was so possessed by ‘stewardship’ that I forgot I was to be a servant as well. Money has its place, but it should never displace people.”

— J. Isamu Yamamoto

5

The young couple looked with concern at the barrenness of the kitchen cabinets. It looked like it would be oatmeal until payday, or as long as it would last. It was tempting to strike out, at each other, at God, but that would serve no constructive purpose. And besides, it was Sunday morning, a time to meet with God, not push Him away.

The service went much as usual. The couple watched their two young sons sing and listen attentively to the Bible story, oblivious to the depth of their need. The service ended and the family began to leave. Roger, a man from the church, approached the father and asked him to come to his car. He opened the trunk, pulled out two very full bags of groceries and presented them to the stunned young man.

"God told me you might be able to use these," he said with a warm, knowing smile. The young man felt grateful but ashamed at the same time. Roger, recognizing the battle within his young friend continued, "You cannot understand and appreciate giving, unless you first understand what it is to receive."

It was that day that I, the young man,

first began to understand God's heart in relation to giving and receiving.

Over the next several years I researched the Scriptures looking for the balance between rich and poor, work and sloth, giving and receiving. I found over 257 passages. Most of these references are God's instructions for dealing properly with people caught in desperate circumstances. Here are a few general areas I found addressed in God's Word.

1. Though it is God's heart that there be no poor, the realization is that there always will be. Our reaction to this reality is to be generous. We see this exemplified in Deuteronomy 15:11: *"There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land."*

2. This generosity is not limited to our spiritual brothers and sisters only. All those in need are to be the object of our mercy and kindness. Isaiah 58:6a,7 says, *"Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: ... Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter — when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn*



— Pastor David Johnson
Ortley And Calvary Lutheran Parish
Ortley, South Dakota



away from you own flesh and blood?" (See Romans 12:20.)

3. Ministry to the poor and needy is at the heart of true worship and devotion to God. It was a driving heartbeat of Jesus' mission and should be at the core of ours. Our community outreach must include addressing this critical need if we desire to claim our faith is authentic. Jeremiah 22:16 declares, *"He defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well. Is that not what it means to know me?" declares the LORD.*" (See also Isaiah 58 and Hosea 6:6.)

4. Giving to the poor and needy was used routinely by Christ as a proof for, or against, the authenticity of one's faith. Even if all other areas were covered, if this area was not addressed there were consequences. Consider Mark 10:21, *"Jesus looked at him and loved him. 'One thing you lack,' he said, 'Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.'"* Then there is the familiar story in Luke 19:8-9, *"But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, 'Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor...' Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house.'"* (See also Matthew 25:34-40, Luke 11:37-42, Luke 12:32-34.)

5. There are dire consequences for failing to keep the needs of the poor, hungry and destitute as a priority. Scripture is very clear that people will be judged harshly for their lack of mercy and caring. Ezekiel 16:49 states, *"Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy."* And Amos 8:3 says, *"In that day," declares the Sovereign LORD, 'the songs in the temple will turn to wailing. Many, many bodies — flung everywhere! Silence! Hear this, you who trample the needy and do away with the poor of the land.'*" (See also Proverbs 28:27, Matthew 25:41-46.)

6. We are called to be merciful, but not enablers. Most Old Testament passages on aiding the poor were meant as a temporary solution until the Sabbath Year (Deuteronomy 15:1-6), or the Year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25:8-13) when their debts were canceled. This was to redeem their mistakes,

Giving to the poor and needy was used routinely by Christ as a proof for, or against, the authenticity of one's faith.



and give them a fresh start at earning their own way. There are also many verses that speak of the poor working for what had been given them (Leviticus 19:10).

7. To paraphrase my friend Roger, "I am just one beggar, showing another beggar where to find food." Many passages about the poor state that we are to obey these commands because, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt." The psalmist repeatedly refers to himself as *poor* and *needy*. We also must realize the depth of our need and how it has been mercifully filled by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Then we can go and, in mercy, not pity, give to and care for those who are poor, hungry, and thirsty among us. The result will be as it says in Isaiah 58:8, *"Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard."*



The Brazil FLY Team



Heidi Quam, Sonja Olson, Susie Skramstad and Luziane Betzel are working for seven weeks in Curitiba, Campo Mourao, and Campo Grande, Brazil. They are assisting with VBS, painting projects and other ministry needs. They return the end of July.



— Missionaries Paul and Becky Abel
Santa Felicidade, Brazil

A normal part of the Christian life

Jesus said, "The poor you will have with you always." The world has many poor, yet most Americans can go through life without rubbing shoulders with the poor. The closest they get is seeing pictures on the television screen. It can be easy to separate one's self from the real needs facing millions. Yet, the Bible is clear in admonishing us to reach out to the poor. It's a normal part of the Christian life.

Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. He reached out in love and compassion to the rich and poor alike. Christ fulfilled the words of the prophet Isaiah, *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor, He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who*

are downtrodden, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18). Jesus reached out to the poor to not only help them in their immediate need but to help them understand God's love and plan for their lives.

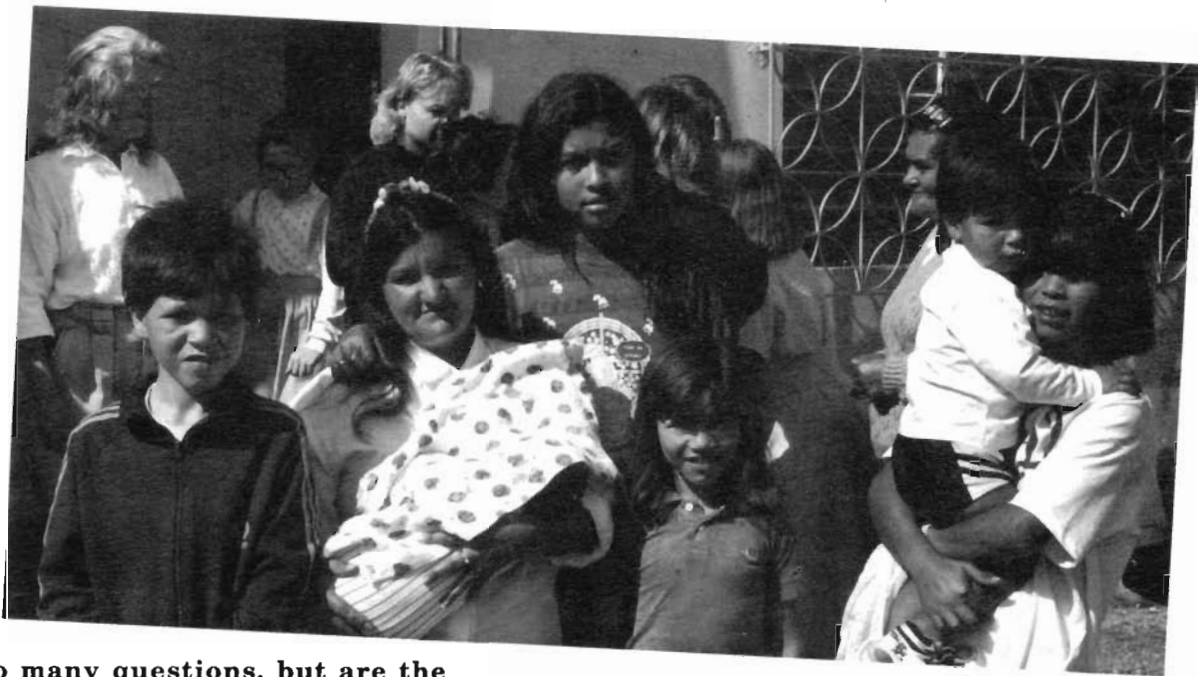
Often times instead of reaching out sacrificially, we justify our own situations and even complain about financial hardships. Yet most people seem to find a way to buy what they really want and to take that vacation they feel so deserving of. If you have ever felt poor, with whom are you comparing yourself to?

Every year at tax time we realize American standards place us near the poverty level, while in Brazil we are in the lower middle class. Then when we look at our own congregation, we realize we are better off than most. Continuing the relative comparisons, we see other Third World countries and we are considered to be rich! Our human nature, the carnal man, tends to act selfishly and we do not "by nature" desire to share what we have with others. However, the Holy Spirit teaches us a new way to think and to live — the way of the cross.

Here on the mission field, we come face to face with real needs daily. Though we can't help all, God gives us opportunities to be a blessing to many needy people as we are willing to open our hand and our home. Every day we face decisions: who should we help, how much, and in what way?

As we are able, we distribute food from our church food shelf and from our own cupboards. We assist in getting people to the doctor and buying medicine. Clothing and sometimes even jobs are given, and always a listening ear. For over a month now we have housed a crippled man and a homeless young man. Can we afford to have extra people around our table plus cope with the inconvenience of dealing with other people's problems? We ask, "How long will this last? Will our help bring lasting results?"





So many questions, but are the answers really important?

One of the most important aspects of our Christian life is obedience. Perhaps it's more important to ask: "Are we willing to live and act as Jesus would? Are we willing to give up some of our comforts to comfort one another?"

Proverbs 19:17 says, *"He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord and He will reward him for what he has done."* It's a venture in faith to lend to the Lord and witness His provision for our own needs. God's Word is full of promises to those who care for the poor and needy.

We reach out in love because Christ first loved us. We reach out in compassion because we long for others to sense the grace of our loving God. We reach out sacrificially because we want to live in obedience.

In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus teaches us an important lesson on what it means to "love our neighbor as ourselves." The lawyer asks, "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus tells a story to illustrate that our neighbor is anyone we can help along the way. He admonishes us to "go and do the same" (Luke 10:17).

Perhaps the Holy Spirit will ignite in you the willingness to be an instrument in reaching out to the poor. Seek His guidance as you offer yourself as a living sacrifice. Ask Him to lead you to real needs and to give you the grace to deal with each situation according to His will. Get in touch with organizations who are

meeting the needs of the poor in our world today. Support your missionaries who have regular opportunities to minister to the poor.

Don't be satisfied with imagining that the poor are really not that bad off or that they deserve the situation they are in. Picture yourself in a shack with no running water, hungry because you can't find a job, illiterate with no opportunity to learn, sick and unable to get medical attention, and without hope because no one has told you about Jesus.

Life is not fair, but we can do something to help relieve the hurt of some. We pray that our visible witness will be helpful in leading people into an eternal relationship with our loving Father. He desires that all be saved and come to Him. Our message is that of hope for the world — a hope for all who put their trust in Jesus.

May our efforts always be done in the name of Jesus and for His glory with the hope that one day we can rejoice in heaven with those brothers and sisters we had the privilege of helping while on earth. One day God Himself "will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain" (Revelation 21:4).

And on that day the poor will no longer be poor. Oh glorious day!





Making ▼ a ▲ difference in the ◀ city

Ruthfred Lutheran Church is a large suburban church in a prosperous area of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. We have all kinds of programs and activities, and have always believed and promoted mission work of all kinds.

So, when some years ago I saw the picture in a large local newspaper of a clergyman standing before children and talking to them, I wanted to know what sort of work he was engaged in. The pastor was the new minister of Trinity Lutheran Church. This church was relocated due to a large city-planning scheme. The new building is an attractive stone structure,

— Pastor John H. Dennis
Ruthfred Lutheran
Bethel Park, Pennsylvania

very spacious and practical. It is situated in a busy city area among apartments, hospitals and government housing units.

For some time the congregation only had a holding position, but with the entrance of this new and energetic pastor, things began to come to life. This man was going to reach the community for Jesus Christ. Pastor John Cochran had served well in a poorer area of Philadelphia, and he remarked that compared to Philadelphia, the North Side of Pittsburgh was a kind of paradise.

John Cochran was a pastor with the old LCA and we were then affiliated with the ALC. When I phoned him, I found a true believer and a real brother in Christ. While his services are rather "high church," believe me, the gospel is clearly preached. Souls are won for Jesus Christ, and a great work is in progress, mostly among black people who are predominant in that area.

Trinity now has an active Sunday school and worship services on Sundays and special days. The church is open. There is a "St. After School" program where children may come rather than to go home alone to a substandard life. They receive food, help with homework and the precious message of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the summers, as many as 400 young people participate in their program. Just nine summers ago, only 13 responded to an invitation to attend this program.

Pastor Cochran has witnessed many responses to the salvation which Jesus Christ has to offer. Many young people have come through the program and have decided upon the best in life. One young man is being graduated from Pennsylvania College of Optometry this year. By the grace of God, great things are happening through the ministry of Trinity Lutheran.

At Ruthfred we have always stressed mission work, even when we were a mission congregation. We knew of the work at Trinity and their financial limitations. We help in any way we can as do other congregations. Pastor Cochran wrote to us, "We are so grateful for your help. You are God's angels." Though he is speaking poetically, we all know what angels are from the Scriptures. At times, people seem to be angels who appear when they are most needed.

Along with continuing financial sup-

We were made a needy people

Sirens went off in the middle of the night last April 17. People, startled from their sleep, heard police bullhorns ordering them to get out of the area immediately. Thus began the evacuation of the cities of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks, an evacuation that eventually included about 60,000 people as the cresting waters of the Red River inundated the communities.

— Pastor Bruce Dalager
Trinity Lutheran
Grand Forks, North Dakota

Within a week the waters began receding, making it possible for people to begin filtering back to survey the damage. Even a month later anyone driving through town at night would find over half the houses dark, either because electric power was unrestored or because the owners were still unable to live in the house.

We faced a mountain of work: pump out flooded basements with gas-powered pumps; remove flood debris; get on the list to have the house inspected; get power to the upstairs with basement circuits disconnected; replace water heater, furnace and appliances; inspect and turn on the gas, clean heat ducts, etc. Thousands of homes need all this attention before winter arrives. Through it all the work continued of removing interior basement walls and cleaning and sanitizing what remained.

It took several weeks for any restaurant to open for service. Red Cross trucks cruised up and down streets distributing hot meals until they were pulled out on

May 28 after having served 1,135,464 meals. Six weeks after the flood over a thousand homes and businesses were still without electricity. Between three and four thousand people have been permanently displaced. Between 1,200 and 1,600 homes and apartments were lost for one reason or another. City officials fear a possible 10-20% loss of population.

By May 26, trucks had hauled away 50,000,000 pounds of personal property (translated "flood debris") from the front

**Will the Spirit
flood our
community
or will the
dikes of our
self-sufficiency
prevent
that from
happening?**

yards of houses and had still gotten to only 51% of the city. The city landfill was taking in more per hour than it usually took in a day. In some cases all that was being spared were memories.

(continued next page)

port, our people provide Christmas packages of one garment and one toy each for 75 children. This sharing at Christmas has been a great joy to our people — an individual effort coordinated by our women. We also provide aid to another congregation in that area where they have a parochial school.

We must serve God wherever we are and with whatever gifts He provides. We do not forget that our own congregation is but a part of the Kingdom of God, and we must do what the Lord asks of us. The time is short. Who knows when Jesus shall come again, or our own lives shall be over?

Romans 15:1 guides us as we try to extend the parameters of our service and responsibility: *"We then who are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak."*

There are so many honest poor in our midst, so many who live in ghettos. There are so many eyes, but often such little sight. From the prairie to the ocean, from the city to the hamlet, we all can play a part in sharing the Good News that Jesus Christ is Lord.

I am sharing about one little corner of the world. What are you doing in your corner? This is what really matters.



(Continued from *The Lutheran Ambassador*, June 10, 1997. The author wrote that our teaching mission, Christian education, faces challenges in contending for the faith, and it is vital that we identify some opposing forces and ideas. He wrote that humanism and secularism are two pervading influences from without the Church to guard against. The needs within the Church were identified as: liberalism, Reformed theology, Roman sacramentalism and feeling-centered theology. The latter is addressed in this conclusion.)

Training our children and youth

the battle to be engaged

In his letter to young Pastor Timothy, the Apostle Paul exposes the dissatisfaction of people with "sound doctrine" in favor of teachings that would make them feel good. They want the "ears tickled," he says, and so they seek teachers that will satisfy that itch. In the midst of such apostasy, the call is to "preach the Word

... do the work of an evangelist (II Timothy 4: 2-3). For want of a better term, we will call this feeling-centered theology.

In recent years, feeling-centered Christian education materials and Bible studies have begun to appear in evangelical circles. Professing a high view of the Bible as the Word of God, the

MADE NEEDY

Both AFLC congregations, Christ the King and Trinity suffered damage to their church basements. The congregations were dispersed and did not meet for several Sundays. When they did begin meeting, it was with smaller congregations but with gratitude to God for His faithfulness.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit," Jesus said, "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." What is it to be in this blessed state?

According to the world's standards, poverty of spirit is not a virtue. It is the self-sufficient, self-aggrandizing person who is wanted and promoted. The person who is poor in spirit is considered weak and inferior. He stands in need. He knows how weak and in need of grace he is. He is aware that something more than he is able to muster himself is needed in his life. Help must come from outside.

Our recent experience made us a needy people. There were not enough city employees to do the necessary preparation. Even when local businesses and schools released people to build dikes, the shortage continued. Neighboring communities sent bus loads of people to help. Together we worked long and hard, sure that with such "self-sacrifice" our preparations would be sufficient.

They weren't.

Now, we are again in need of help from outside and are grateful to friends in the

family of God who have remembered us in prayer and with support.

Are we poorer yet? On the civic level, yes. Large and costly "community improvement" projects have been temporarily shelved, while effort goes into rebuilding the cities' infrastructures and restoring basic necessities before winter arrives. Materially, yes. The flood will cost everyone something.

Poorer in spirit? There is more talk about God but still a lot of trust is being placed elsewhere. Reports indicate that church attendance will increase when churches are back "in business." But the deep awareness of sin and guilt that characterizes the poor in spirit we still wait to see. This can be worked in people only by the Holy Spirit through the Word that reveals sin and grace. That work will always be resisted by the fallen human nature. Pray that we would never return to where we were, that eyes would be opened to see the riches of the One who for our sakes chose to become poor, that this would not have been a waste of good flood water.

Will the Spirit flood our community or will the dikes of our self-sufficiency prevent that from happening? The results of that fight remain to be seen.



— Dr. Francis Monseth
FLTS Dean
Minneapolis, Minnesota

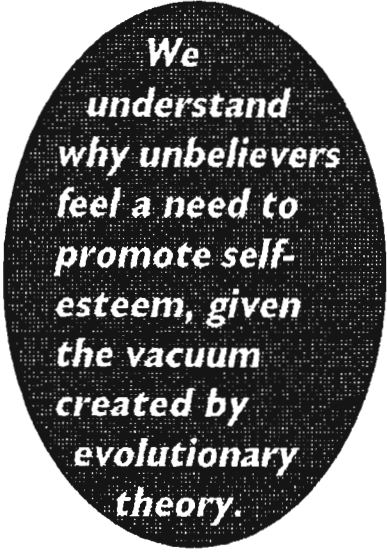
emphasis, nonetheless, is on the student's feelings about what the Bible is saying. Certainly emotions are an important part of our constitution as God has made us. Certainly the work of the Holy Spirit through the Word affects not only our minds but also our hearts, or emotions. But to interpret the Bible on the basis of how one feels about a given passage is to shift the authority from God to oneself. God's Word is true and powerful no matter how one may feel about it. The critical matter is that its objective truths are understood and believed. Feelings may or may not constantly attend the believing and receiving of God's truth.

We are not to be "ignorant of the devil's devices." But how can we discern the dangers described above?

As we examine available Bible study and Sunday school material, what are evidences of feeling-centered Christian education? One of the clues is a constant recourse to questioning the students' feelings or response to the biblical material. Rather than a focus on the facts, the objective truths and their meaning and application, the focus is on how students feel about the particular passage. By minimizing or ignoring the factual content of Scripture in favor of feelings, the teacher or student can make of the Bible a "wax nose," twisting it to conform to whatever preconceived agenda may be uppermost. The authority of the Bible in such an approach is virtually displaced.

Another indication of the subjective feeling-centered model are

new and strange ways of describing time-honored biblical realities. This betrays the unwillingness to accept Bible truth as it really is and the absence of a genuine effort to convey its meaning and application to the student. The primary concern in all sound Christian education material is to clearly teach the truths of God's inerrant Word, in dependence upon the Holy Spirit, so that the students will be enlightened and empowered by the Spirit to understand and receive in faith and obedience what God is saying.



**We
understand
why unbelievers
feel a need to
promote self-
esteem, given
the vacuum
created by
evolutionary
theory.**

Closely connected with the feeling-centered approach in Christian education is an emphasis on self-esteem. We can well understand secular society's desperate attempts to bolster human ego. Unwilling to recognize the logical outcome of evolutionary theory which considers man simply an advanced form of animal life, and reaping the inevitable results in all manner of "animal-like" behavior in contemporary society, it feverishly attempts to remedy the situation by an exaltation of human ability, achievement and potential. Secular

humanism's idealistic expectation that man can lift himself up out of his miserable condition is promoted through an emphasis on self-esteem.

We understand why unbelievers feel a tremendous need to promote self-esteem, given the vacuum created by evolutionary theory. But for the church to pick up this theme is only to expose the drift away from dependence upon the ministry of the Holy Spirit through law and gospel to establish and to create "Christ-esteem." The Word creates a proper "self-esteem" in recognition of every person as God's creation and special object of His grace and love in Christ.

Sadly, a subtle and gradual shift is taking place in the Christian education and Sunday School curricula of once reliable and trusted evangelical publishers. One cannot assume that the curriculum a congregation has used in the past is reliable today. There is need for careful and prayerful review of any materials and resources which are proposed for use in teaching God's Word. Often the bad is mixed with the good. If there is anything that could lead someone astray, it should not be used. Better to write one's own curricula if need be.

Thank God for the availability, however, of biblically sound and effective curricula such as that published through our parish education department (**The Ambassador Curriculum**). Let us pray for one another in these difficult times that God's wonderful and precious Word may continue to be preached, taught and applied in all its truth and purity in our lives and in the lives of all those entrusted to our spiritual care. Even as our gracious Lord commissions us to teach, He promises, "Lo, I am with you, even to the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20).





Maria appreciated the woolen blanket and gloves given to her on a cold day. She and her husband, both sickly, live in a shack with a dirt floor with an open fire pit in the middle, chickens in the rafters and a mattress on wooden crates for their bed.

A Michigan-Mexico connection making a difference

— Alice Kinnunen
Maranatha Lutheran
Hancock, Michigan

This past winter my husband, Eldon, and I experienced our fifth annual trip to the Texas/Mexico border from our home in Hancock, Michigan, to visit our dear friends at a colonia located in a garbage dump in Raynosa. In our five weeks there, we made 25 trips across the border, twenty-one of them with a carload of goods to the people who are so extremely poor.

We are now received as "old friends" and feel comfortable without a translator. The Lord has blessed beyond words. A Christian couple living near the colonia has very sacrificially built a church (looks like a large wood shed), and it is a bit of heaven to so many. Christians from the Texas side of the border conduct gospel services each Saturday. People are saved and healed. Even when my husband and I distribute from our car in the streets, people come asking for prayer for their sick and invite us into their homes to pray. They do not have money for medical help. The name of Jesus is always lifted up and everyone understands that all is done and given *en nombre Cristo*, and that all glory belongs to God. *Gloria Dios!*

Last December 28, the third annual Christmas party was held at the church. About 300 people came to receive gifts and food which were given after the service. Money and supplies are donated by many in Michigan and Minnesota. We've also helped with children's school tuition. (Children have to pay to go to public school and purchase their own books and supplies.) One year 50 children in the dump colonia were helped. Priority is given to children whose families attend church regularly.

After introducing our Hancock, Michigan neighbors to the colonia three years ago, last summer Larry and Beverly Williams moved to the border permanently in order to minister to that area. Our grown children have visited the colonia with us to personally experience the blessings. My sister from the Detroit area flew down to meet the teenage girl she was sponsoring for school. Others, including "Winter Texans" have gotten involved in the ministry. Dan Britz, a '91 graduate of AFLBS, from our home congregation of Maranatha Lutheran in Chassell, Michigan, is now living and working at the border. He attends the all-Spanish

speaking Rio Grande Bible Institute and helps at the church in the colonia as a translator and teacher of the children.

We marvel at the love of God toward us in allowing us this added dimension in our lives each winter. We stand in awe at the chain of events touching the lives of many contributors, visitors, faithful volunteers, as well as the residents, themselves, in the colonia. It is one very small corner of the mission field that is near us and praise the Lord, we can make a difference! *For the needs of the needy shall not be ignored forever; the hopes of the poor shall not always be crushed* (Psalm 9:18).

Pastor Todd Klemme, Wadena, Minnesota has resigned as pastor of Zion Lutheran where he has served since 1990, in order to accept the call from Faith Lutheran in Metropolis, Illinois. He will be Faith's first full-time pastor. The recently organized congregation is one of five congregations joining the AFLC this past year. Metropolis is located near the Ohio River on the border of Illinois and Kentucky.

Fifty years serving God, country, and church

On the fifteenth of June, 1947, a new seminary graduate was ordained into the ministry and faced an unknown future. Dr. T.O. Burndtvedt, president of the Lutheran Free Church, conducted the Ordination Service for the Augsburg Seminary Class of '47. For the past three years, the six graduates had experienced the best and the worst of seminary training and now we realized we would be separated from each other as we left to begin our first calls.

My first call was to Kenwood Lutheran Church in Duluth, Minnesota. This was a Home Mission Church of the LFC started by Rev. D. Walter Lyngdal of Trinity Lutheran in Duluth. When I arrived, he looked at me and said, "The only way for you to go is up!" And so I did.

Little did I know then that my ministry would move me from the parish to the chaplaincy — first to the United States Air Force and later to hospital chaplaincy. Five years after ordination, one of my seminary professors told me, "Mr. Franzen, I hear that you are becoming a military chaplain. I just want you to know that we did not train you to be a military chaplain!" I could see then that my ministry was being cut off from the church. My fellow pastors kept saying, "Franzen, when are you coming back to the ministry?" I always responded, "I never left it."

I traded my black Sunday suit for an Air Force blue uniform. I learned to march in cadence and to fire a .50 caliber machine gun along with my buddies. The core of my ministry was *Faith Alone, Christ Alone, Word Alone* — all I learned from my LFC Augsburg Seminary.



I answered my country's call for twenty-six years, active and reserve duty. It took me into the Korean War and yes, my seminary trained me well for military ministry. "Thank you, God, for a Christ-centered training!"

In 1958, I accepted the call as Staff Chaplain to head a Department of Religious Therapy at Hastings State Mental Hospital in Nebraska. In 1981, I retired but continue to do a calling and Bible teaching ministry.

Now at age 79, I look back over fifty years of ministry. I have seen the LFC merge into the ALC where the LFC lost its identity. By this merger I realized the truths of Sverdrup and Oftedal concerning the primacy of the local congregation and the significance of the invisible church over the visible church. In the church at large I have seen *Faith Alone, Christ Alone, Word Alone* not only diminished, but compromised. Yet, the true Church, the Body of Christ, saved through the blood of Christ, continues with the witness that the cross and the resurrection mean forgiveness and eternal life to the lost. With the merger of the ALC and the LCA, my faithful wife, Gertrude, (whose grandparents were "Friends of Augsburg") and I were ready to go back "home" to the AFLC.

What a privilege to be back after fifty years since ordination on the clergy roster of a **free church!**

— Dr. Howard B. Franzen
Hastings, Nebraska

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences — January 1 - May 31, 1997

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN MAY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$279,330.00	\$18,478.07	86,290.69	31
Seminary	113,300.00	7,205.44	36,037.03	32
Bible School	142,509.00	12,561.06	46,422.27	33
Home Missions	257,432.00	16,589.35	85,572.31	33
World Missions	341,000.00	31,014.64	144,343.54	42
Capital Investment	19,000.00	698.23	3,565.96	19
Parish Education	56,517.00	6,750.73	26,545.47	47
Church Extension	14,813.00	1,293.48	9,190.95	62
TOTALS	\$1,223,901.00	94,591.01	437,968.22	36
TOTALS 1996	1,232,267.00	89,666.68	438,141.04	36
Goal 42%				

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Free Lutheran Seminary's Summer Institute begins July 21 — All Bible students are welcome to attend the Summer Institute of Theology held at the campus during July 21-25. Classes are from 8 a.m. to noon and from 6 to 10 p.m. daily. The courses include: "Studies in Genesis" with Professor Jerry Holmaas; "Christian Ethics" with Dr. Francis Monseth; "Studies in the Book of Hebrews" with Pastor Jim Johnson of Osseo, MN; and "Worship," team taught by Professor Jerry Moan, AFLC President Robert Lee, AFLBS music director Jerry Nelson, and Pastors Holmaas and James L. Johnson.

With more applications possible, five men have been approved to begin their seminary studies in the fall. They are: Lee Meservey, 37, Amery, Wisconsin; Peter Ward, 43, Zumbrota, Minnesota; Steve Carlson, 28, Superior, Wisconsin; Todd Erickson, 30, Thompson, North Dakota; and Dana Coyle, 24, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

The Parish Education Department is producing a new catalog which will be available August 1. A free catalog will be sent out to each AFLC congregation in August. Additional catalogs may also be requested by individuals or churches.

It's time to be planning and preparing for Sunday school for the fall of 1997! We invite you to call or write for **Ambassador Sunday School** curriculum samples to preview with your Christian Education Committee.

Note: Some of our curriculum prices will be increasing in August; you can save by planning ahead and ordering before August 1!

Contact AFLC Parish Education:
(612) 545-5631 phone
(612) 545-0079 fax
hqmail@afcl.org

AFLC MEMORIAL GIFTS April-May, 1997

Name	Given By	Department
Adolph Blumer	Kenneth/Mary Nash	Home Missions
Margaret Hitterdal		
Helmer Amundson		
Roger Thompson		
Kermit Ferden	Greg/Sandy Olson	AFLBS
Nelda Simonson	Esther Larson	AFLTS
Rev. James Asp		
Harold Amundson	Ruda Hanson	AFLBS
Bernice Larson	Mavis Tenneboe	AFLTS
Robert E. Lee		
Sawa Katgirl		
Margaret Hitterdal	Gerald/Jewel Dahl	World Missions
	Marie Hitterdal	
	Rev. Connely/Carolyn Dyrud	
Alice Solum	Donald Solum	AFLBS
	Rev. Tim/Evonne Skramstad	
	Rev. Ken/Barb Moland	
Diane Moland	Sheila Knudsvig	
Vernon Jensen	Irvin/Ruth Hodnefield	World Missions
Helena Ullestad	NW Minn. WMF	
Myrtle Hove	Maxine Yri	AFLBS
Alice Haagenon	Gordon/Doris Newell	Home Missions
Duane Shutter	Paul/Elaine Eliason	AFLBS
Elaine Hoverson	Robert/Carol Dietsche	Home Missions
Gladys Sorkness	Rev. Phil/Hazelle Featherstone	AFLTS
	Rev. Gerald/Margaret Mundfrom	
Irene Arnold	Verona Jacobson	Home Missions
Paul Hager	Robert/Ida Marie Benson	World Missions
Jennie Larson	Rev. Dennis/Marilyn Gray	Evangelist
Rev. James Asp		
George Arsulich	Spencer Creek, Eugene, OR	Flood Relief
Steve Brinkman	Rev. Ted/Dee Berkas	AFLBS
Elizabeth Brooks	Vernon/Dorothy Russum	World Missions
Don Schmidt	Rev. Tim/Evonne Skramstad	AFLBS
Lillie Teal		
Rev. James Asp	Dave/Shirley VanHoven	Home Missions
	Rev. Amos/Ovidie Dyrud	Evangelist
	Rev. Robert/Gloria Lee	
	Dr. Peter/Judy Dyrud	All funds
	Anna Asp	
	Milton/June Thompson	General Fund
	John/Sandra Rieschl	Missions
	Tim/Marilyn Hellberg	AFLTS
	Aini Myking	
	Roland/Louella Meyer	
	Rev. Don/Mavis Richman	AFLBS
	Medicine Lake Lutheran	Schools
	Verona Jacobson	Home Missions
	Robert/Carol Dietsche	
Pam Sundhagen	Edna Skarderud	World Missions
Lila Olaf	Coleen Brickner	World Missions
Johnny Rorup	Kenneth/Mary Nash	Home Missions
Lois Nelson		
Ruby Swenson		World Missions
Tillie Jurgensen	Bob/Helen Miller	AFLTS
Andrew Hegseth	Delbert/LuVern Jones	AFLBS
Bernice Johnson	Hilman Knudsvig and	
	Gerry/Karen Knudsvig	
	Batchelder family	World Missions
Mabel Batchelder	Rev. James/Jane Rasmussen	AFLBS
Ruby Swenson	Alfred/Virginia Haugen	
Torfin Rustad		
Legacies		
Alice Syverson		

Afraid of the wrong thing?

It turned out pretty much like I expected. He didn't pay me back a dime of the money he "borrowed" to cover the costs of a night at a motel and a couple of meals. He did buy me lunch one day, but it was with the money I had given him the day before. Fortunately he didn't treat me to lunch at a very expensive place. I couldn't afford such generosity.

He said he had plenty of money. He just couldn't get to it right then. But as soon as he could he would pay me back everything he had borrowed and more ... or so he said.

Some would say I got taken. "It was all a big scam. He never intended to pay you back anything." That may be the case. But everything he got I expected to lose, although I would enjoy being proven wrong one of these times. What I was looking for was an opportunity to share the love of Christ in word and deed. If it cost me a few bucks, so what? It is only money, which has no value in comparison to the worth of a human soul.

We often get very afraid that somebody will take advantage of us. Our money may get in the hands of someone who will use it improperly. They may not put it to good use and just waste it. Thus, we take great care as to where our money goes, wanting to be sure the cause is deserving.

It is important to manage well the money God has entrusted into our care. We are not to spend it or give it away frivolously. It is wise to check that we are not giving to individuals in a way that simply permits them to perpetuate a destructive, sinful habit. Is that, however, to be our greatest fear?

Hebrews 13:2 says, "Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it." I expect most all of us would find room in our schedule to have lunch with an angel if we were given such an invitation. That stranger in need may be extending to us just such an invitation. What a shame if we were to miss the opportunity!

Another call for help came on a day when the to-do list was long and time was short. It also was a day, however, when I had read in my devotions that morning from Matthew 25 where Jesus says, "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I

was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me. ... whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."

I didn't have a great interest in serving that day, but Jesus' words were ringing in my ears and pulling at my heart. I was convicted and encouraged that I'm not just giving a ride to the laundromat and plugging quarters in a machine for someone who never seems to be able to get their act together; I'm giving a ride to Jesus. I'm doing it for them, but even more so I'm doing it for Him. It was a chance to be a chauffeur for Jesus. What a privilege!

Instead of simply being afraid, "Am I being taken advantage of? Is this money going to be wasted?" we should be concerned about, "Am I going to miss an opportunity to serve the Lord?"

Handling well the resources God gives to us is important, but it is not to become an obsession. A more pressing concern, a much higher priority should be taking advantage of every opportunity to serve that God presents us.

Those opportunities may be disguised as things like a call from a man with an unlikely story, a request from a gal who very rarely keeps her word or a demand that comes with little appreciation for what has been previously done. Our physical eyes may look at them as undeserving and serving them as a waste and an ineffective use of limited resources. Yet Proverbs 19:17 says, "He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will reward him for what he has done."

Let us look beyond the outward and see that Jesus is often in that unlikely person and that unexpected place. Serving them is an opportunity to serve Him in a way that He says is significant and worthwhile.

I'm quite willing to miss out on a few dollars and have them seemingly go to waste. What I don't want to waste is the limited time and opportunities I have to serve my Savior.

— Pastor Craig Johnson

**Let us look
beyond the out-
ward and see
that Jesus is
often in that
unlikely person
and that unex-
pected place.**

Been buried lately?

One of my favorite new traditions at Family Camp is when the Vacation Bible School kids bury the director in the sand. The kids are told that if their behavior is good during the week, they can bury me in the sand on the last day of camp. During each of my two years, the children have worked together to dig a deep hole, have me lie down, and then using their little hands, bury me under a load of sand. This experience can be fun and even exciting to look forward to, but if you are buried in stress, anxiety, or worry, there is nothing to anticipate.

Stress comes in many forms. The majority of stress is concerning things over which we have no control such as weather, the future, and even the way other people behave. A research article I read states that 90% of Americans worry over things they have no control over. I disagree with the researcher in that we as Christians can do something about our worries. First Peter 5:7 states, "Give all your worries to Him, because He cares for you." (NCV) What we must learn to do, however, is not only to *cast* our troubles, but to *leave* them with Christ.

The other stresses in our life



come from areas such as work, deadlines and finances. Colossians 3:23 says, "In all the work you are doing, work the best you can. Work as if you were doing it for the Lord, not for people." If we are faithful and work as hard as we can, we should be able to leave the rest with Christ. The problem with stress is that our work becomes less productive and our witness is dismal.

Christ is the Master Designer of all creation. When He tells us He'll care for us, we need not

worry. In Luke 12, we see how the Father takes care of the birds and the lilies and exclaims that we are much more important.

Many have received the gift of eternal life in Christ, but how about receiving the gift of a worry-free life that Christ offers to us believers as well? The only cost is trust and faith in the everlasting arms of the Creator of the universe.

—Eric Westlake
ARC Director
Osceola, Wisconsin