

THE LUTHERAN **AMBASSADOR**

Volume 38, Number 9



The magazine of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, 3110 East Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441. 763-545-5631

Editor: Rev. Craig Johnson Assistant to the Editor: Solveig Hjermstad Editorial Board: Rev. John Mundfrom, Oryen Benrud, Rev. Jerry Moan, Rev. James L. Johnson.

CONTENTS

Only the heart understands His true identity

p. 4

Beyond compare

p. 6

Seeing His beauty

p. 8

Interview with MTI director Todd Schierkolk

p. 10

The Lutheran Ambassador

(USPS 588-620 ISSN 0746-3413) is published every three weeks except monthly in June and July (16 issues per year) by the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations.

For editorial inquiries and information: The Lutheran Ambassador, Box 446. Bruce, SD 57220-0446; 605-627-5188; fax 605-627-9254;

e-mail craigi@teleport.com wshierm@brookings.net

For subscription changes and information: The Latheran Ambassador, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441, 763-545-5631.

Subscriptions rates:

\$15.00 a year, Group Rate, U.S.

\$16.00 a year, Individual, U. S.

\$18.00 a year, International

Periodicals postage paid at Minneapolis, MN and additional mailing office.

Postmaster: Send address changes to The Lutheran Ambassador, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55441

AN ENCOURAGING WORD

n article in National

Under His wings

"He will cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you may seek refuge" (Psalm 91:4).

Geographic magazine several years ago provided a penetrating picture of God's wings. After a forest fire in Yellowstone National Park, forest rangers began their trek up a mountain to assess the inferno's damage. One ranger found a bird literally petrified in ashes, perched like a statue on the ground at the base of a tree. Somewhat sickened by the eerie sight, he knocked over the bird with a stick. When he struck it, three tiny chicks scurried from under their dead mother's wings.

The loving mother, keenly aware of impending disaster, had carried her offspring to the base of the tree and had gathered them under her wings, instinctively knowing that the toxic smoke would rise. She could have flown to safety but had refused to abandon her babies. When the blaze arrived and the heat scorched her small body, the mother remained steadfast. Because she had been willing to die, those under the cover of her wings lived.

Even this picture of the loving mother does not compare to God's love in Christ. God refused to abandon His most prized creation, even though He would have been totally justified in doing so. We all like sheep had gone astray and each of us had turned to his own way. And yet God caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him (Isaiah 52:6). He has never a handoned us.

Even God's Son, Jesus Christ, while being tortured on the cross for the sins of the world, remained steadfast. He could have said, "Forget it! They got themselves into this sinful mess. They can suffer for it themselves. Let them hang here." But His love for you and His faithfulness to you was too great. He willingly died so that those under the cover of His wings (blood) could live.

The little chicks staved under their mother's wings. Had they stepped out from under their mother's wings, they would have been burned. They obviously trusted their mother. And she proved trustworthy. In the same way God has proven Himself trustworthy through His Son, Jesus Christ, so that anyone who will believe in Him will not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16).

Dear reader, it is by faith in Jesus Christ that you are covered with the feathers of God. As a result of such faith, you have a place of refuge; far greater than the refuge of those little birds. Your refuge comes from the Creator of everything. So when trouble and danger come your way, nestle under His wings. There you will find warmth and safety.

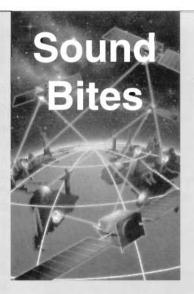


- Pastor Tim Johnson Resurrection Free Lutheran Beltrami, Minnesota

In my spiritual journey I have long lingered in the margins, puzzling over

matters like the problem of pain. the conundrum of prayer, providence versus free will. When I do so, everything becomes fuzzy. Looking at Jesus, however, restores clarity.

- Philip Yancey



Christ with anything would have satisfied me; nothing without Christ would do it.

- Thomas Boston

There never has been and never will be anyone like Jesus. The ideal has lived. ... In Jesus alone

> will you find the One who on the cross took responsibility for your failures and rebellion. Jesus alone rose from

the tomb: no other religious leader has ever done that. Jesus alone can put His unseen Spirit inside your very being.

- Michael Green

When Jesus Christ utters a word, he opens his mouth so wide that it embraces all heaven and earth, even though that word be but a whisper. - Martin Luther

In all the history of Christianity, whenever there has been a new emphasis upon Jesus, there has been a fresh outburst of vitality and virility.

- E. Stanley Jones



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

A. W. Tozer

— Pastor Arlo Feiock Bethany Lutheran Bemidji, Minnesota

Only the heart

he other day I received this "Recall Notice" in my e-mail. "The maker of all human beings is recalling all units manufactured, regardless of make or year, due to the serious defect in the primary and central component of the heart. This is due to a malfunction in the original prototype units code named Adam and Eve, resulting in the reproduction of the same defect in all subsequent units. This defect has been technically termed, Subsequential Internal Non-morality, or more commonly known as S-I-N, and carries the following symptoms;

- a. Loss of moral judgment
- b. Amnesia of origin
- c. Depression of confessions in the mental component
 - d. Prone to idolatry
 - e. Frequent loss of direction.

For your own comprehension and protection, read this entire recall bulletin even though some of the material may be familiar to you."

Jesus understood the condition of people's hearts. And so it was that Jesus left Nazareth, his hometown, and began reaching out to people in surrounding towns in order to show them the way, be the truth, and offer real life. It was hearts that He was looking for. None of the fake, go-throughthe-motions religion that obeyed all the rules but gave only a polite nod to God on the Sabbath. No!

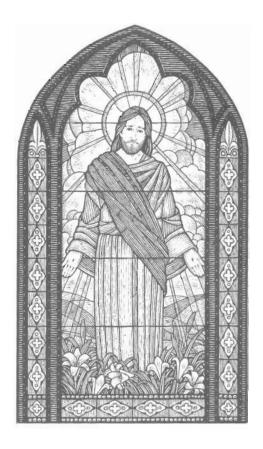
It still is what Jesus is seeking — only our hearts will do. He never has been willing to settle for anything less. Either it's a real relationship or it is irrelevant, bogus "religiosity."

Luke 7 tells of one day when Jesus was invited to dinner by a prominent religious and ethical Jewish man named Simon. In a way Simon was sticking his neck out by inviting Jesus to dinner. While he was thought to be a prophet by some, others viewed Jesus as suspect because of what they saw as a tendency to party and the outrageous company He kept. But Simon wanted a look for himself; thus the invitation.

It didn't take long for Simon to make up his mind about Jesus. During the course of the meal, a woman showed up whose sinful life was well known in town. What they didn't know was that somewhere, standing at the edge of one of those crowds gathered around Jesus, she had stopped to listen. What she heard Him say and saw Him do changed her life.

Having heard about the party at Simon's house she decided to show up with a jar of fragrant ointment to anoint Jesus' feet as a gesture of her gratitude. Her tears of thankfulness were dripping on His feet. Oblivious to everyone else, she wiped His feet with her hair, kissed them, and poured the ointment on them.

Though He said nothing, Simon's disapproval must have been obvious as he thought to himself, "If this man really were a prophet, He would have known who and what kind of women this is who is touching Him." In the midst of the uncomfortable moment, Jesus spoke, "Simon, I have something to say to you." He told a story about two debtors, one who owed much, and one who owed little. Simon was asked, "Were the



understands true identity

creditor to cancel both debts, which one would love him more?"

The answer was evident, but Jesus wasn't finished yet. "Simon, I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has bathed My feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. You gave Me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing My feet." Thus, Jesus drew a pointed contrast between the heart of the woman at His feet and the heart of His host, Simon. With an aloof, cold and objective manner, Simon had extended a dinner invitation but then withheld little gestures of warmth, appreciation, and love.

Simon's religious rules so narrowed his perspective that there never was room to identify Jesus as a prophet, let alone as the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Which one of these two people would you rather share life with as a fellow member of your congregation? Which one would you rather sing hymns with and pray with? Which one would you rather have in your Bible study group or go out on an evangelistic call with? Which one would you rather ask to pray for you at one of those critical times in you life? Would it be Simon the

devout or the passionate believer at Jesus' feet? That would be an easy

choice. Yet at times it seems that many of us in the church are Simon-types. Our feelings are locked away and nothing else can be seen but an objective, cold, calculating exte-

I think of how it is different with some of the new believers I've seen in the midst of congregations. Their frequent tears of thankfulness give them away and their open expressions of love for our Savior are a welcome contrast from the more somber and subtle tone of unfeeling objectivity provided by the Simons of the church.

God, please release our hearts to love You and our tongues to praise You. Free us from our Simon-like bondage to intellect, objectivity and what other people think. Don't we who claim You as our Lord belong at Your feet with some ointment in our hands and some tears on our cheeks? Help me to feel the same grateful heart that she felt as she anointed Your feet. Yes, Lord, let me settle in alongside the woman at Your feet. That is where I belong and that is where I want to be.



Beautiful Savior! King of Creation! Son of God and Son of Man! Truly I'd love Thee, Truly I'd serve Thee, Light of my soul, my joy, my crown!

> Münster Gesangbuch Ambassador Hymnal No. 177

Beyond compare

Tonja Nagel
 Newark Lutheran
 Newark, Illinois

small group of teenagers are gathered around a table.
Together they worship, not in song, but by choosing words that they would use to describe Jesus. Adjectives begin to fill the room with a sweetness — one says "faithful," another says "loving," and yet another says "righteous." They continue on. When one student says "beautiful," my train of thought stops for a moment and I think, "what an interesting word for a young person to use to describe Jesus: beautiful."

In a world where beauty is measured by outward appearance, it would seem strange to call anyone beautiful if you had never seen him or her. We live in a world where beauty is equivalent to shape, size, hair color and complexion. You see it on covers of magazines and on television.

So how would one use such a word to describe the Savior that we have yet to meet face-to-face? The answer is in the realization that His beauty has little to do with what He looks like, and everything to do with who He is.

We come to understand the beauty of Christ as we move beyond Sunday morning Christianity and begin to walk with Him from day to day. It is then that we become familiar with His personality and get to know His character. We experience the love that sees us not as we are, but who we will be. We are filled with an unspeakable joy when we are in His presence. His grace and mercy cover us, and His faithfulness leads us through the valley and into the high places.

There are so many words that could describe Jesus, yet they only touch on one of His qualities. But when we can call Him "beautiful," we have truly known Him in every way. And the more we get to know Him, the more we desire to seek Him. There is nothing that can compare with a life lived in pursuit of our heavenly Father, a pursuit that begins with a surrendered life and ends when we finally gaze into His eyes.

My great-grandma Josephine knew the beauty of that final moment. My mom stood by her bedside, as she was about to cross over into the Kingdom when she began to describe what she was seeing.

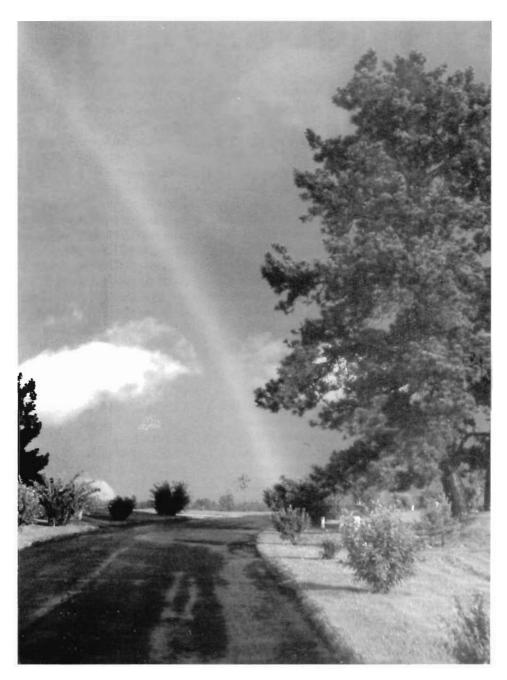
"Look at 'em, just look at 'em! Can you see them? Oh, here they come! The angels!" And then a moment later she said, "Oh, and there He is. He's coming! Isn't He beautiful!"

Minutes later, Great-Grandma Josephine met her Savior face-to-face. She saw His incomparable beauty from a whole new perspective.

Psalm 27: 4, 8 describes a heart that longs to see His beauty: "One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple. ... My heart says of you, 'Seek his face! Your face, Lord, I will seek."

Don't miss out on the beauty of a life surrendered to Him. Love Him, seek Him, trust Him, chase after Him with all that is in you. It is a life far beyond anything you can imagine.





"We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is."

- 1 John 3:26

Seeing His beauty

Pastor Paul E. Jecklin
 Zion Lutheran
 Silverhill, Alabama

just had a nice visit with Aunt Mildred on the phone. She lives in Illinois. Uncle Fred went to be with the Lord yesterday afternoon. He has been in a nursing home for six years - Alzheimer's.

Aunt Mildred sold their home and moved into an apartment at the nursing home complex, so she could be near Uncle Fred. She wanted to be able to feed him his meals. He had difficulty swallowing. Solids had to be mashed; liquids had to be thickened. With each spoonful Aunt Mildred would say "swallow." When Uncle Fred did, she was reassured that he could hear and understand. He hadn't spoken to her for six years.

"Poor Mildred, I don't know how she does it." Friends and family have said this often these past six years and we talked about that today. "It wasn't that bad," she explained. "Every day the Lord always gave me all the strength I needed." Even when Uncle Fred went to be with the Lord. "It wasn't as hard as I thought it might be. Your mother and our pastor sat with me those last hours — and then Fred was gone."

Is that the beauty of Jesus?

Of course, "He had no beauty ... to attract us to Him, nothing in His appearance that we should desire Him" (Isaiah 53:2b). And He still doesn't. Sure, Jesus may be the best known person in all of history. Buildings are erected in His honor. Books and movies retell His story. Nevertheless, most people don't know Him. When the glitz is scrapped away, the real story about Jesus sounds like "foolishness" (I Corinthians 1:18). Isaiah was right: "He had no beauty ... that we should desire Him."

On the other hand, His beauty is there — beyond the externals. And a few, with the eyes of a child, see it. Six years of sitting with and feeding someone, with whom you have shared the ups and downs of life, is not easy,

yet a lot of people do such things. However, to do it day by day, not in our own strength but in the strength Jesus gives — that's the beauty of Jesus.

Friends and loved ones die. Everyone experiences that. It's part of life. However, to sit with that friend or



loved one as he or she dies and know it's okay because he or she went to be with the Lord who was delivered over to death for our sins, raised to life for our justification and has gone to prepare a place for us (Romans 4:25; John 14:2) — isn't that the beauty of Jesus?

The breath-taking beauty of creation declares God's majesty and power. No one is without excuse; everyone should know that God exists. However, where do we see the beauty of Jesus? "He had no beauty ... to attract us to Him, nothing in His appearance

that we should desire Him." The Lamb was slain for the sins of the world. That is not a pretty sight. It is absolutely offensive to declare that we cannot take care of our own sins. However, for those in whom the Holy Spir-



it has graciously bestowed the gift of faith by means of The Promise, it is a beautiful sight.

He had no beauty — yet Jesus' beauty is there in the not-so-pretty things of life. In the filth of sin, there is the beauty of Jesus in whose blood there is forgiveness for all of our sins. In hopeless predicaments, there is the beauty of Jesus, who is with us always even to the end of the age. In the death of a believing loved one, there is the beauty of Jesus, the risen Savior, in whom there is eternal life.

I see it in my congregation

- Helen Smette Ny Stavanger Lutheran Buxton, North Dakota

s I left church yesterday, I overheard two women talking. The one was scheduled for surgery today. The other asked, "Can I come over to your home to do something for you?" I smiled and was again reminded how grateful I am to be a part of a church family who love one another.

Six years ago, my husband and I joined Ny Stavanger Lutheran. There were four families who joined that day and the pastor admonished us when he said, "With membership comes responsibilities." I have never forgotten that and for the first time in my life I am experiencing that Christianity is giving, not just receiving. Colossians 3:13 says to bear with one another and I Peter 1:22 talks of the sincere love of the brethren. It's a joy to be a part of that light, that perfect beauty of Jesus which shines through our congregation.

The dictionary includes a definition of beautiful people: wealthy or famous individuals who have extraordinary lifestyles. The people I call beautiful are those who love the Lord. It is evident by the way they live; the

way they greet me. For many years I wanted to experience this indescribable fellowship.

I see Christ's beauty in our congregation's fantastic singing, a truly joyful sound to the Lord. The love of Jesus shines in their commitment to missions; how they give so that others may have, within the congregation, community and around the world. After joining Ny Stavanger, I realized their prayer chain was different. It is not a gossip line but a genuine reflection of a prayer life. I watch the youth in our parish want to lend a helping hand without seeming to be pushed. And yes, our pastor went to seminary after his retirement and now at age 70, is an inspiration of service and love for Jesus.

My grown son lives in a city and attends a large congregation. After seeing the loveliness of Christ shining in our small country church, he said how blessed we were to be a part of a family like that. I pray that the light of Christ will continue to shine as a beacon to those in our neighborhood and point those who are dead in their sins to Jesus, the Giver of life eternal.

F.

"Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." - Matthew 5:16

Shine and share for Jesus

Our Savior's Free Lutheran Sunday School of Stanley, North Dakota, gave their offering for the past two years to Leon, Mexico. That is not so unusual but what was unique was the way they collected the offerings.

To help the children understand how their offering helped the church in Leon construct their building, the Sunday school constructed their own church with half-gallon milk cartons. For each five dollars of offering the superintendent wrapped a carton in brown paper to look brick-like. Fifteen dollars collected "purchased" one of five dowl



sticks which served as rafters. When thirty dollars were raised, the tagboard roof went on.

For the second year the children chose to put windows with 44 panes

on their model building. At a dollar a pane, a class would be responsible for coloring the panes. Pictured is the model church with some of the children.

Interview with MTI director Todd Schierkolk

Pastor James L. Johnson AFLBS Dean

When you first read about the plan to start Ministry Training Institute at the Bible school, what were your initial thoughts?

I originally heard about the program from my fellow missionary Pastor Dan Giles. We were very impressed with it because of the way the courses were designed and because it looked challenging. I remember smiling with Pastor Giles and wondering if I could apply for the program myself, it looked so good.

How difficult was it for you and Barb to consider delaying your return to the mission field to help start the missions training program?

It was very difficult. We had been completely focused on returning to Mexico at the end of our furlough. When the idea was originally presented to me it seemed like a drastic departure from our work there. But as intent as I was on returning to Mexico, I really wanted to see this program get off the ground, too. Among several things that influenced me, two stand out:

One was the timing. In Aguascalientes, Mexico, we are in the middle of a wonderful transition to the first Mexican pastor the congregation has had. The Giles were planning on moving to a new location to begin working on planting a new church. So if I were ever going to take a few extra months to help out with this program this was the time.

The second thing was a change of perspective. I was originally thinking that I would have to stop being a missionary for a while in order to work as the director of MTI. I knew I couldn't do that because the part of the Great Commission that calls me to work with people from other nations was still very personal to me. God hasn't released me from that. The change came in the course of discussing this possibility with other people and getting the perspective of the

AFLC World Missions Committee on it as well. When I was able to see being the director of MTI in the context of my work as a missionary, I felt released to accept the position. It is really only an extension of our furlough for a few months.

The training is aimed for what kind of people?

The training is designed for Bible school graduates who have an interest in three possible areas. They might be interested in serving in the future as a foreign missionary. They might sense God's leading to work in a bilingual ministry here in the United States. Or they might want to get cross-cultural training to equip them to work with people from different backgrounds even though they speak English.

What will the survival training be like?

Well, we very briefly considered having the students catch a chicken and prepare it to eat with their bare hands but I had serious doubts as to whether I could do it myself so we threw that idea out. What we will be doing is taking the students up to the Boundary Waters for a week in the fall. We'll spend time learning about living outdoors as well as having fellowship together and encouraging one another in God's Word. In the winter we'll be going camping in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, where, basically, we'll be learning how to stay warm when we're really

Why is the survival training necessary?

It's necessary for practical and personal reasons. We want to help students prepare for serving Christ in a wide variety of climates and geographical situations. Learning how to respond when you are lost in the woods or your vehicle breaks down in the middle of nowhere with the sun beating down on you or in the midst of an Alaskan or Siberian blizzard are important tools for missionaries to have. Personally,

these weeks of survival training will introduce the students to challenging situations and will help them to look at their heart response from God's perspective. It will also them to improve their ability to work with other people.

What will the class schedule look like?

Four days a week the day will start out with physical fitness workouts at 5:30 a.m. Three hours each week will be spent in regular Bible School classes, "Exodus" and "Hebrews," but MTI students will be doing additional assignments with a cross-cultural or missions emphasis added. Other classes will focus on cross-cultural dynamics and communication. One of the classes will be more like a small group format in which we'll talk about life on the mission field and ministry issues and discuss books that deal with missionary life and work. Another course will help students learn how to discover and use their spiritual gifts. Students will also spend an hour each day studying the language of the country they will go to on their internships with the help of computer software used by NASA and the U.S. State Department among other international agencies.

How are the courses different from regular Bible school courses?

They'll be more practical in nature and focused on ministry to people from other cultures and backgrounds.

Why the early morning physical workouts?

Each student will be able to do whatever type of fitness they feel comfortable with but we want to help them develop the habit of doing it regularly. The stress level is very high on the mission field, especially in the beginning, because of the new language, culture and situations they'll be encountering. A regular workout will help them deal with the stress better from a physical standpoint.

During the study, MTI students are required to be involved in cross-cultural ministry experiences each week. What kind of ministries will students be involved in during their study in Minneapolis?

There are a number of ministries and churches we are in contact with that work with children and youth from lower income backgrounds or whose families have moved to the United States from another country. Participating in these ministries will help the MTI students begin to grapple with the cross-cultural issues they'll be studying about in class. We hope to arrange ministry labs for lowincome or newly migrated people in Minneapolis. The Twin Cities have a large Hmong population, as well as new émigrés from Somalia, Sudan and Ethiopia. Many evangelical works have begun among them. AFLC Evangelist Jim Rasmussen is in charge of this part of the study and is exploring a few options.

What do you envision the experience in Mexico or Brazil to be like?

Beyond getting a better feel for what it's like to be in another culture, I see these students actually participating in different ministries. With the language training they will receive before they go down, I'm hoping they will be able to have an active part in the ministry and not just follow the missionaries around and watch what they do. I don't see this as a short-term missions opportunity. I see it as a time for students who are seriously considering some type of ministry to ask a lot of questions, make a lot of observations and begin to learn how to make disciples of the nations. It will be a training ground. It will be challenging. They'll be very tired and probably get sick once or twice. They'll wish for their own room and their own bed back home. But I trust they will also see Jesus working powerfully in the lives of people around them. And I hope it will be the kind of experience they will never be able

Strong fall enrollment projected at AFLC Schools

The AFLBS office is busy preparing fall class schedules, room assignments and processing applications for the graduating class of 2000. Students are scheduled to move into their dorm rooms on September 2, with a 7 p.m. concert by the Ambassadors, the school's summer gospel team. On Sunday, September 3, the students and public are also invited to a 7 p.m. concert by Evangelist Vern Baardson, Moorhead, Minnesota.

According to Dr. Francis Monseth, FLS Dean, "We are encouraged with our perspective enrollment for this fall. We could see one of the larger incoming class of seminarians that we've had in a while." The FLS currently has five interns out and there were four seminarians last fall who began their studies. Their were no new pastors sent out this spring with the exception of Mark Homp who completed his colloquy studies and accepted the call to Good Shep-

to shake loose from their hearts or minds wherever it is that God calls them in the future.

When a MTI student completes his or her study, what kind of qualities would you like to see in a missions or ministry candidate?

I'd like to see young men and women with a greater heart for fulfilling the Great Commission. I hope they will be more aware of their own weakness and more aware of God's strength. I trust they'll be more appreciative of the material blessings and resources God has given us in this country without having a critical spirit toward those who have not had the same experience they have. I hope they come away with a greater desire to do absolutely anything for Jesus just for the pure joy of serving Him. And I pray they will have a much deeper appreciation for those simple words, "For God so loved the world." SE herd Lutheran in Ponca City, Oklahoma. The seminary begins its new year on September 6.

This fall the Free Lutheran Seminary will begin "Monday Mornings at Medicine Lake." This is a special opportunity for serious study on a part-time basis. The fifteen Monday mornings beginning on September 11, are designed for those who are already in full-time ministry or who are intent on preparing for that purpose. The courses offered are for regular credit and not open for auditing. Classes will begin at 7:40 with Word and prayer and conclude at 11:50 a.m. with the last class hour. Call for more information: (763) 544-9501 or e-mail at seminary@aflts.org.

Summer classes at FLS

Summer Greek classes at the seminary begin on July 17. Pastor Phil Haugen teaches the course which will run through August 25. The annual Summer Institute is scheduled for July 24-28 at the schools' campus. The morning sessions are "Selected Psalms" taught by Pastor Jerry Holmaas and "Introduction to Christian Theology" with Dr. Francis Monseth. The afternoon and evening courses are "History and Aims of the AFLC" with Pastor Robert Lee and "Biblical Education in the Local Congregation" taught by Pastor Martin Horn, a member of the AFLC Parish Education Board, and Marian Christopherson, director of parish education.

Call the school office at (763) 544-9501 for more information.

Seminary confers four degrees

On May 20, 2000, four Free Lutheran Seminary graduates completed their requirements for a Master of Divinity degree. They are: Pastor Timothy Hinrichs, Czech Republic; Pastor Stephen Mundfrom, Sebeka, Minnesota; Pastor Ove Sander, Estonia; and Pastor Todd Schierkolk, Mexico.

An inside look at AFLC youth ministries

fter almost a year and a half working in the AFLC Youth Ministries office. I have had the opportunity to see much of what God is accomplishing through this ministry. Before I came to work for the department, I had little idea of all the ways that God uses this area of the work.

The approach of this ministry to the churches is to come alongside and be a support system. Through resources, events, training, and especially prayer, God's hand is evident. The purpose statement for AFLC Youth Ministries is to "Win youth for Christ, Build them in God's Word, and Equip them to tell the world." It is, of course, impossible for this small group of people who make up our office to accomplish this on our own. It is our desire to equip the churches in this purpose, so that they, in the strength of Christ Jesus alone, may reach youth with the message of salvation and build them up in Christ. Then the youth themselves will be able to share this message with others.

How is this accomplished? The youth ministries office is available to supply resources such as videos. books and ideas. In addition, "The Connection," a newsletter for youth, and the "Youth Workers Contact" are sent out on a biannual basis. We are involved with the Leadership Training Conference and the Free Lutheran Youth Convention, both held on alternate years during the summer. Our office coordinated the Youth Ministries Training Team that traveled around the United States for approximately seven months, teaching youth groups to become a real outreach to the community around them. Many of our AFLC congregations know someone who attended a FLY Convention or met with the training team, and God has worked powerfully in his or her life.

Because of Jesus lives change

In John 20:19-21, Jesus appeared to His disciples after His

resurrection: "When therefore it was evening, on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood in their midst, and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples therefore rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus therefore said to them again, 'Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send vou."

Peace entered the room with Jesus. Jov came because of Jesus. The disciples were no longer afraid because Jesus was there. Their circumstances had not changed, vet their focus was on Jesus. Only Jesus.

The theme for the 2001 FLY Convention is "Only Jesus." The intentions of the FLY board in deciding this were obvious. They long to see youth with peace and joy found only in Jesus. The Free Lutheran Youth board, along with the training team, the AFLC Youth Board, and the office staff, are in earnest prayer for the youth of your church. I have been so blessed to see them meet together and spend a good amount of time before any

business is accomplished, in prayer and praise together, seeking the Lord that our youth would be softened to Him and His Word. In focusing simply on Jesus, youth are being changed for the glory and honor of God.

These prayers and acts of service are not for self-gratification or self-centered recognition. Rather, they are a tool to support the churches with the awareness that Scripture says, "Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men; knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve" (Colossians 3:23-24).

We are here to serve

I would like to add that this desire to serve is extended to you and your congregation. If you are unsure of what the youth ministries department is really all about and how it can assist you, I encourage you to find out what is available to your youth group. Call us at 1-763-545-5631 or check us out on the web at youthmin@aflc.org. 36

Letter to the Editor

In regards to: Is There Danger in Debt? - May 16, 2000

First, I want to say that, in principle, I totally agree with Pastor Rick Long. We would love to be debt free.

However, for farmers, there is simply no other way to operate. The vast majority of farmers simply do not have money saved from "all those good years" to operate in the future. And now, we have had a number of bad years in succession with both low prices and poor yields. Our expenses are high and prices for our grain are low.

And presidents seem to love to make foreign policy at the farm-

ers' expense. There are decisions to sell or not based on reasons like human rights violations, etc., which have nothing to do with foods or farming. Even some of our pastors claim they understand because they grew up on a farm. But for some, that was several decades ago. Times are quite different now. They also remember farm life from a child's perspective rather than an adult's.

Carrying a farm debt does not translate into being "discontented - interfering with God's provision - robbing Him of His Glory," and

> Nancy Tollefson Crookston, Minnesota

New addresses - Pastor Dave and Cheryl Skordahl continue to serve the Dalton, Minnesota parish, but they are now living at 1411 Terrace Drive, Fergus Falls, MN 56537. Their home phone is (218) 998-2131.

Pastor Mark and Dawn Olson and family are now at 308 N. Benson, Box 456, Tioga, North Dakota, 58852. Phone numbers are (H) (701) 664-2164 and (O) 664-2187; e-mail at himark@nccray.com.

Missionaries Paul and Becky Abel and family, Curitiba, Brazil moved into the "Mission Home" at the ARC on the second weekend of June. The home was empty just a few days after the departure of the David Nelson family to Brazil. The furlough address of the Abels is: 2344 - 30th Ave., Osceola, WI 54020; phone, 715-294-3645.

Virginia, Minnesota - Good Shepherd Free Lutheran is celebrating its 35th anniversary on July 29-30, 2000.

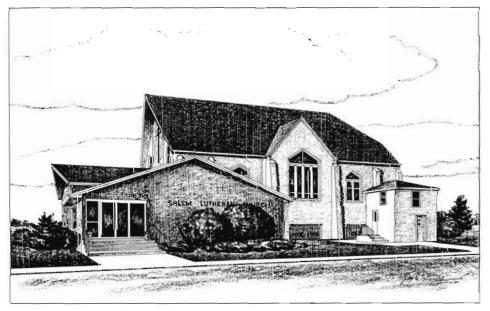


Campo Mourão, Brazil - Pictured is Pastor Iran De Goes and Missionary Jonathan Abel at last spring's conference for the AFLC-Brazil. Missionaries Jonathan and Tamba Abel are seeing their daughter April through her five surgeries to reduce the bone tumor in her arm. The last one is scheduled for

July 6. They praise God for the answered prayers in their congregation in Campo Grande. The women's group is growing and was officially organized recently. The Abels wrote, "It's a blessing to see the Lord work and lives change. One of the men has struggled with drinking and possession but now has been set free and brings his whole family to church."

Missionaries David and Sarah Nelson, Campo Mourão, Brazil, returned to their work at the campus of the AFLC-Brazil Bible school on June 7, 2000, where David will teach for the next semester. They also are making preparations to depart for Lisbon, Portugal late next fall where they will serve Our Savior's, the only Lutheran congregation in that southern European nation. In May the Nelsons visited Pastor Artur Villares and the downtown Lisbon church. "We're excited," said Pastor Nelson. "Now it is to pray for wisdom for the world missions committee and us as we make final plans." Their address now is: Caixa Postal 44, 87300-970, Campo Mourão, PR, Brazil. E-mail is davenelson@start.com.br.

Milford, Illinois - St. John Evangelical Lutheran of Schwer is celebrating 125 years with 10 special events throughout the year. The most recent was a Pentecost/Confirmation celebration on June 11.



Radcliffe, Iowa — Salem Lutheran Church will celebrate their 125th Anniversary on July 15 and 16. The theme is "God's Word is our Great Heritage." The church was organized in 1875. In 1917, two congregations merged to form Salem Lutheran, In 1968 the congregation voted to join the AFLC while Pastor Jay G. Erickson served as pastor. Since that time they have been served by Kenneth Anderson, Terry Olson, Don Greven, Marlyn Kruse, Joel Rolf and Reuben Unseth. Craig Benson is the current pastor. Shown is the pen-and-ink drawing of the church building given by Lutheran Brotherhood's CAP (Congregational Anniversary Program) 100+, which recognizes Lutheran congregations that were founded 100 or more years ago. The churches are eligible to receive CAP 100+ drawings upon their 100th, 125th, 150th etc. anniversaries.

People & Places

Pastor Stephen Mundfrom,

Sebeka, Minnesota has resigned as pastor of Bethany Lutheran where he has served since 1990, and accepted the call from Calvary Free Lutheran in Arlington, South Dakota. He expects to begin his new ministry on September 1, 2000.

Memorial Gifts

Department given to -In Memory of -

Evangelism

Pastor and Mrs. Herb Franz

Home Missions

Violet Froyland Ralph Buey

World Missions

Marie Hitterdal Orville Myron Tallak Farsjo

Parish Education

Beatrice Bilitz

AFLTS

Christ/Emma Knudsvig

AFLBS

Randy Strand Charles Jensen Esther Burton Rudy Berntson Christ/Emma Knudsvig

Vision 2004

Christ/Emma Knudsvig

General Fund

Esther Burton

Financial Report additions

- The evangelism department income in May was \$43,872.04 which includes a \$40,000 grant from Lutheran Brotherhood sent out to nineteen congregations for evangelism outreach events. The parish education board has established a separate budget line for the AFLC Heritage Series (which is not part of the regular gifts from congregations) since this is an ongoing project which will require a large amount of funds each time a volume is printed.



Beltrami, Minnesota — Pictured are some of the nineteen new members recently joining Resurrection Free Lutheran. The young northern Minnesota congregation has recently added an educational and office wing to their facility. Pastor Tim Johnson serves the congregation.

Pray for the Youth Leadership Conference, July 17-22

Pastor Jim Rasmussen, AFLC Director of Evangelism ministered in Tucson, Arizona and the congregations in El Cajon and Palmdale. California this past May. After camps and conferences this summer, which includes the Amsterdam 2000 International Conference for Evangelists, his fall schedule starts at Atonement Lutheran in Arlington, Washington, September 9 to 15 and St. John's Lutheran of Schwer in Milford, Illinois, September 15 to 18.

Louise Burton, Minneapolis, Minnesota, will leave her position as the librarian at the AFLC Schools and manager of the Book Nook on August 31, 2000. She has served in that position for three and a half years. She plans on pursuing graduate studies.

WMF Memorials

Fave James, New Hope, MN Hjelmer Anderson, McVille, ND Esther Burton, McVille, ND In Honor of Agnes Larson, Webster, SD Lee Ferman. Grand Forks, ND

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences (5 months) - January 1 - May 31, 2000

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN MAY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	TOTAL
General Fund	\$252,865.00	\$23,282.61	110,615.26	44
Seminary	118,291.00	9,384.70	41,941.43	35
Bible School	164,270.00	17,112.53	68,846.44	42
Home Missions	262,125.00	25,823.28	108,911.77	42
World Missions	239,968.00	13,336.25	64,854.79	27
Capital Investment	15,226.00	736.14	4,146.09	27
Parish Education	69,480.00	4,925.83	30,927.72	44
Church Extension	25,285.00	1,130.11	12,450.89	49
TOTALS	\$1,147,510.00	95,731.45	442,694.39	38
TOTALS 1999	1,013,386.00	74,853.42	412,115.68	41
Goal 42%		•	,	
Evangelism Departmen	nt received \$43.87	2.04 in May.		

Beauty that is more than skin-deep

he pictures of Jesus that hang in many of our churches are just guesses that people have made as to what He looked like. Some of them, while well meaning attempts, may not be all that accurate.

He was a Jew; born and raised in the Middle East. His appearance probably was not very Scandinavian. He didn't stand out in a crowd because of His looks. The one passage in the Bible that tells us something about what Jesus looked like says, "He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him" (Isaiah 53:2, NIV).

John the Baptist did not consider Jesus' physical appearance to be so impressive that it immediately identified Him as the Messiah. If the Father had not clearly pointed out who was His Son, John said, "I would not have known him" (John 1:33, NIV).

When we talk about the beauty of Jesus, we are not referring to the outward appearance He assumed while He walked this earth. In a display of great humility, Jesus chose to take on an appearance that was rather ordinary. He became someone we can relate to, someone who understands our situation. Yet, in spite of looks that attracted little attention, hymnwriters are correct when they call Him "Beautiful Savior."

Jesus has a beauty that comes from His character. He does what is right and true. "He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth" (Isaiah 53:9, NIV). After examining Him, Pilate had to admit, "I find no

basis for a charge against this man" (Luke 23:4, NIV). He is above reproach. His record is flawless. He is the very definition of integrity.

Some fans of sports will talk about the beauty of watching somebody play the game the way it is supposed to be played. Lovers of music enjoy listening to a piece of music played correctly and will speak of the beautiful sounds. It is a beautiful thing to read in the Gospels of how Jesus played the game of life correctly. The law which we continually break, He kept perfectly. The standard of holiness that we fall so short of, He met. In his character and conduct He displays a beauty beyond compare.

Beautiful is also an appropriate way to describe the compassion of Christ. Compassion speaks of living with passion, with emotion, with feeling. Sometimes we don't think of Jesus in this way. We almost seem

to have this illusion that He spent His time on earth experiencing no highs, no lows; just stoically going through the motions.

That is not the Jesus of the Gospels. He saw crowds and "He had compassion on them" (Matthew 9:36, NIV). He came across a mother in sorrow and "His heart went out to her" (Luke 7:13, NIV). A man with leprosy came to him and He was "filled with compassion" (Mark 1:41, NIV).

He hurt with those who hurt. He also rejoiced with those who rejoiced. He was the type of person who people liked to invite to a wedding feast (John 2:2) and enjoyed having in their home (Luke 19:6). When things went well for His friends He was "full of joy" (Luke 10:21, NIV). People generally liked being around Him.

Jesus is willing to let His joy be known and also His sorrow. He lets His disciples see Him weep (Luke

> 19:41, John 11:35). He admitted to three of them, the night before the Cross, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death" (Mark 14:34, NIV).

Part of Jesus' beauty is found in the fact He has a heart that hurts and a heart that cares. He is touched by our troubles and pleased with our joys. The beauty of His compassion is unmatched.

If Jesus' beauty is found more in the nature of His heart and less in His hairstyle, eye color and clothes; then maybe those things should not concern us as much as they do. So often people feel good about themselves only if they think they look good.

Judgments about others are made on the basis of what the outside looks like, with little consideration to how it is on the inside. "Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (I Samuel 16:7, NIV). Remember that "Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting" (Proverbs 31:30, NIV). Therefore, have a concern for "your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight" (I Peter 3:4, NIV).

Our Beautiful Savior is our role model and our definition of true beauty. As the writer of the song "I Stand in Awe" states, "You are beautiful beyond description, too marvelous for words; too wonderful for comprehension, like nothing ever seen or heard."

It is said, "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder," but when it comes to Jesus beauty is found in Him.

- Pastor Craig Johnson

"Jesus has a beauty that comes from His character."

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd. Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441 Periodicals

His life is matchless, and His goodness is limitless. His mercy is enough, and His grace is sufficient. His reign is righteous, His yoke is easy, and His burden is light.

He is indestructible. He is indescribable.
He is incomprehensible. He is inescapable.
He is invincible. He is irresistible.
He is irrefutable.

I can't get Him out of my mind ...
And I can't get Him out of my heart.
I can't outlive Him ...
And I can't live without Him.

The Pharisees couldn't stand Him but found they couldn't stop Him.

Satan tried to tempt Him but found he couldn't trip Him.

Pilot examined Him on trial but found he couldn't fault Him.

The Romans crucified Him but found they couldn't take His life.

Death couldn't handle Him, and the grave couldn't hold Him.

Just give me Jesus!

- Anne Graham Lotz Just Give Me Jesus, Word Publishing, 2000