

THE LUTHERAN

# AMBASSADOR

June 11, 2002

O God,  
you have  
taught me  
from my  
youth ...

and to  
this day  
I declare  
Your  
wondrous  
works

Psalm 71:17



# THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

June 11, 2002  
Volume 40, Number 8



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:** Ruth Gunderson

**Editorial Board:** Rev. John Mundfrom, Oryen Benrud, Rev. Jerry Moan, Rev. James L. Johnson.

## CONTENTS

**The least of these** page 4

**Single-parent ministry** page 6

**The best thing ...** page 8

**Christ must increase** page 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, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441; 763-545-5631; fax 763-545-0079; e-mail [craigj@teleport.com](mailto:craigj@teleport.com) [ruthg@aflc.org](mailto:ruthg@aflc.org)

### **For subscription changes and information:**

*The Lutheran Ambassador*, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441. 763-545-5631 or e-mail at [luthamb@aflc.org](mailto:luthamb@aflc.org)

### **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

### Coming to our senses

I've always admired the tight-rope walkers and their incredible sense of balance. I know the pole helps, but still, could you so gracefully stroll along a skinny wire without a hint of uneasiness? Or how about on a unicycle 30 feet in the air with three people on your shoulders? I have a tough time staying on the curb just walking out to get the mail!

Your sense of balance is accomplished through a very complex series of organs in the inner ear called the vestibular labyrinth. These organs help keep you upright, in balance and aware of your surroundings. Since it takes place in the inner ear, many people with hearing problems face a difficult challenge in maintaining balance. It is possible, however, to fine-tune and improve your balance with specific exercises. In the same way, I would like to encourage you to fine-tune your sense of balance as you exercise each of the senses we've discussed up to this point.

What is your perception of balance in your daily Christian walk? A few years ago I joined some men for a lunch meeting at a restaurant. Before entering, I noticed what appeared to be a homeless person sitting on the sidewalk next to the building. When we were done eating, I purposely left before everyone else to see if the man was still there. He was gone. So I went over and sat in his spot on the sidewalk. As my friends came out of the restaurant, they looked all over for me. I was right there. Why couldn't they see me?

At that moment I had what some people call a paradigm shift. If even for just an instant, I saw life through the eyes of someone else and gained an insight into my Christian walk. I hadn't been looking at life with a balanced perspective. I

had been experiencing things through my eyes only.

Jesus Christ has become my only true source for discovering what a balanced life is all about. He is the One who can reveal to us how to hear, smell, taste, see and feel life to the fullest. His examples to us throughout Scripture demonstrate a symmetry, which, if imitated, will take us on a journey of joy and fulfillment that cannot be matched. By following His example, you will obtain a sense of balance that will keep you walking upright and more completely aware of your surroundings. He wants to give you that today.

Listen to these closing encouraging words from I John 1:1-4, "The Word of life existed from the beginning. We have heard it. We have seen it. We observed and touched it. This life was revealed to us. We have seen it, and we testify about it. We are reporting to you about this eternal life that was in the presence of the Father and was revealed to us. This is the life we have seen and heard. We are reporting about it to you also so that you, too, can have a relationship with us. Our relationship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. We are writing this so that we can be completely filled with joy."



— *Paul Kneeland*  
*Youth Pastor*  
*Faith & Stillwater*  
*Free Lutheran*  
*Kalispell, Mont.*

# SOUND BITES

**T**eens today are worried, stressed, not sure there will be a future. We can give kids an environment where they see positive, life-affirming adults enjoying life. That attracts kids to the Christian faith.

— **Ray Johnston**

**T**he Bible refers to generations nearly 200 times, repeatedly underscoring the responsibility of the older to the younger. Authentic faith must be transmitted personally from generation to generation if it is to live on.

— **Fred Wevodau**

**I** suspect that it would be a great deal easier for you to avoid relationships with us younger believers than to initiate them. I suspect we ask annoying questions and make questionable decisions. However, we need authentic relationships with you just as you do with us.

— **Sarah Snelling**

**D**on't just ask God for a lifestyle of comfortable church-going for your kids; ask Him to use their lives (and yours as well) for His purpose in fulfilling the Great Commission.

— **Cheri Fuller**

# THE LEAST of

"Supper time! Xavier, come and join us."

"Thanks, you guys are great. You're like my parents."

"When did we see  
You a stranger and  
take You in, or  
naked and clothe  
You? Or when did  
we see You sick, or  
in prison, and  
come to You?"  
And the King will  
answer and say to  
them, "Assuredly,  
I say to you,  
inasmuch as you  
did it to one of the  
least of these  
My brethren, you  
did it to Me."  
Matthew 25: 38-40

**N**o one had ever really said it before, but certainly that was true. Xavier was at the Swanson's home more than his mom's apartment. Her apartment seemed just like that, *her apartment*. Yeah, he had a room, but his mom was gone a lot, and when she was there it seemed like they never got along. When her boyfriends came over, he felt even more unwelcome. It was always tense at his mom's place. It was a place to live, but it wasn't home.

The Swansons had a home — not just a house, a home. It was a place where anyone was welcome and made to feel accepted. It was always busy, but it seemed so much more peaceful than at his mom's. Even when Mark had to discipline one of the kids, it was done firmly in love rather than with yelling and anger. At his mom's, Xavier had all the freedom in the world, but he didn't want freedom, he wanted love.

Everybody laughed the first time that Xavier called Mark "Dad." It was especially funny because Mark and Sharon were both Caucasian and Xavier was a Philippino. Xavier's best friend, Mike, was his introduction to the Swanson family. But lately it didn't matter if Mike was there or not. Xavier still felt at home.

There were a few things that they each had to get used to with this strange family addition. Sharon noticed the food disappeared really fast with two teenage boys in the house. Xavier was surprised when some movies and TV programs were not allowed since he had total freedom at his mom's. He found it strange that the whole family would stop everything and read the Bible together at night and that going to church was a part of the weekly routine.

The difference was obvious, and it was no wonder that Xavier would choose to spend time at the Swanson's. There was little that would draw him back to the apartment and everything that made him want to stay at the Swanson's.

This story is true, but the names have been changed. The *Swanson* family welcomed a boy into their home and treated him as a part of their own. That was the way that *Xavier* came to know about the Lord and accept Christ into his life.

Our towns are filled with Xaviers who have little or no home life. They are longing for anyone to care about them. They are wondering if there is a God, and if there is, does He know that they even exist? They are looking for people who will welcome them, share their faith and live what they believe. It is not a need that the church can fill with weekly meetings or new programs. It is a one-on-one ministry. It is one person taking time to invest in someone else.

This past week I received a call from a pastor telling me about two girls from his town who had died. One of them came from a home where her parents were drug dealers and had recently been arrested. She moved in with the only friend that she knew, her lesbian girlfriend. She committed suicide last week. She was 14. The other girl died of AIDS. She was 15. Can you hear the need screaming at you?

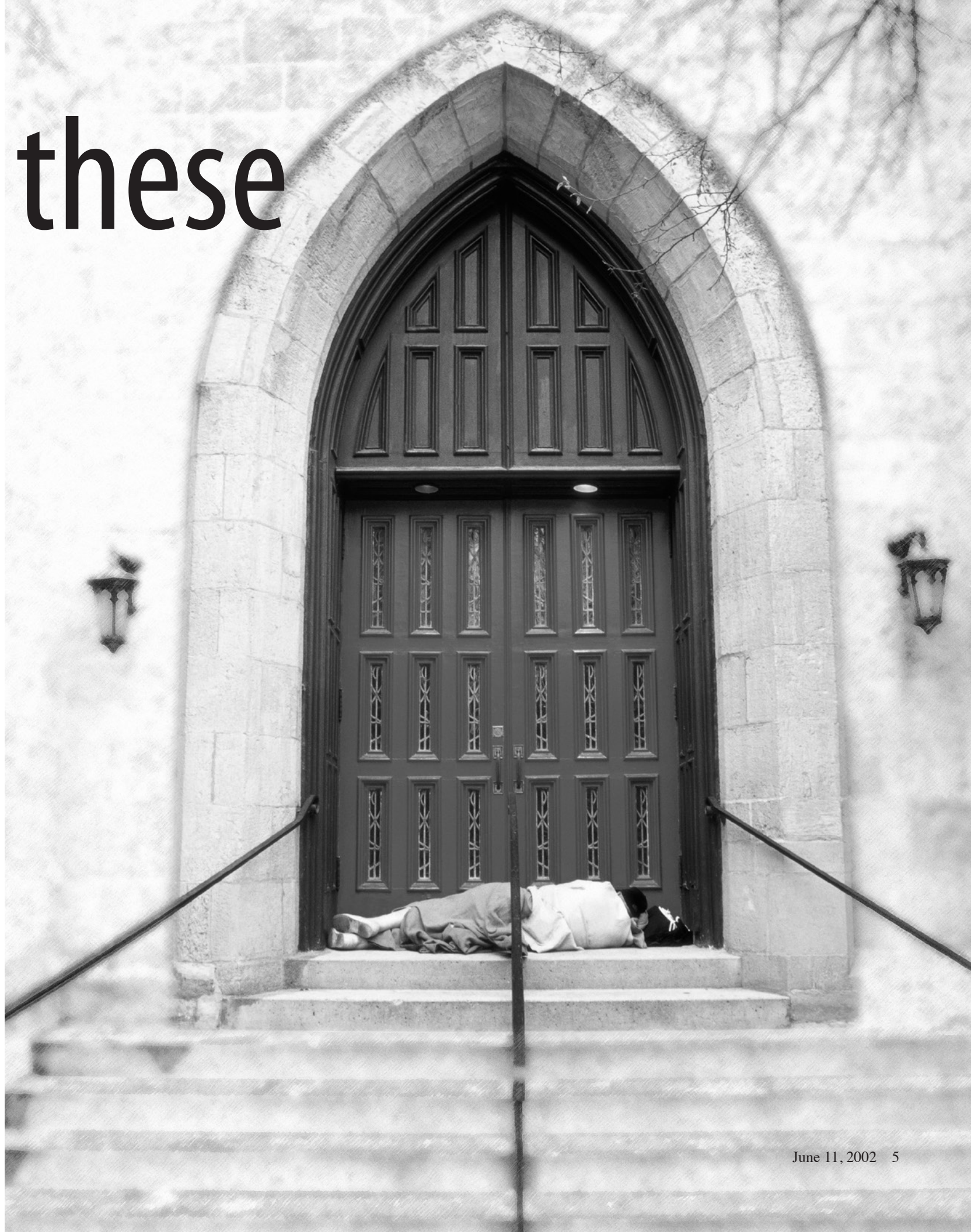
You will not fix all of them, but you can make the difference for one. By the way, a woman invested her life in the girl with AIDS, and she prayed to receive Christ the day before she died.

— Pastor Kevin Olson  
Youth Ministries director

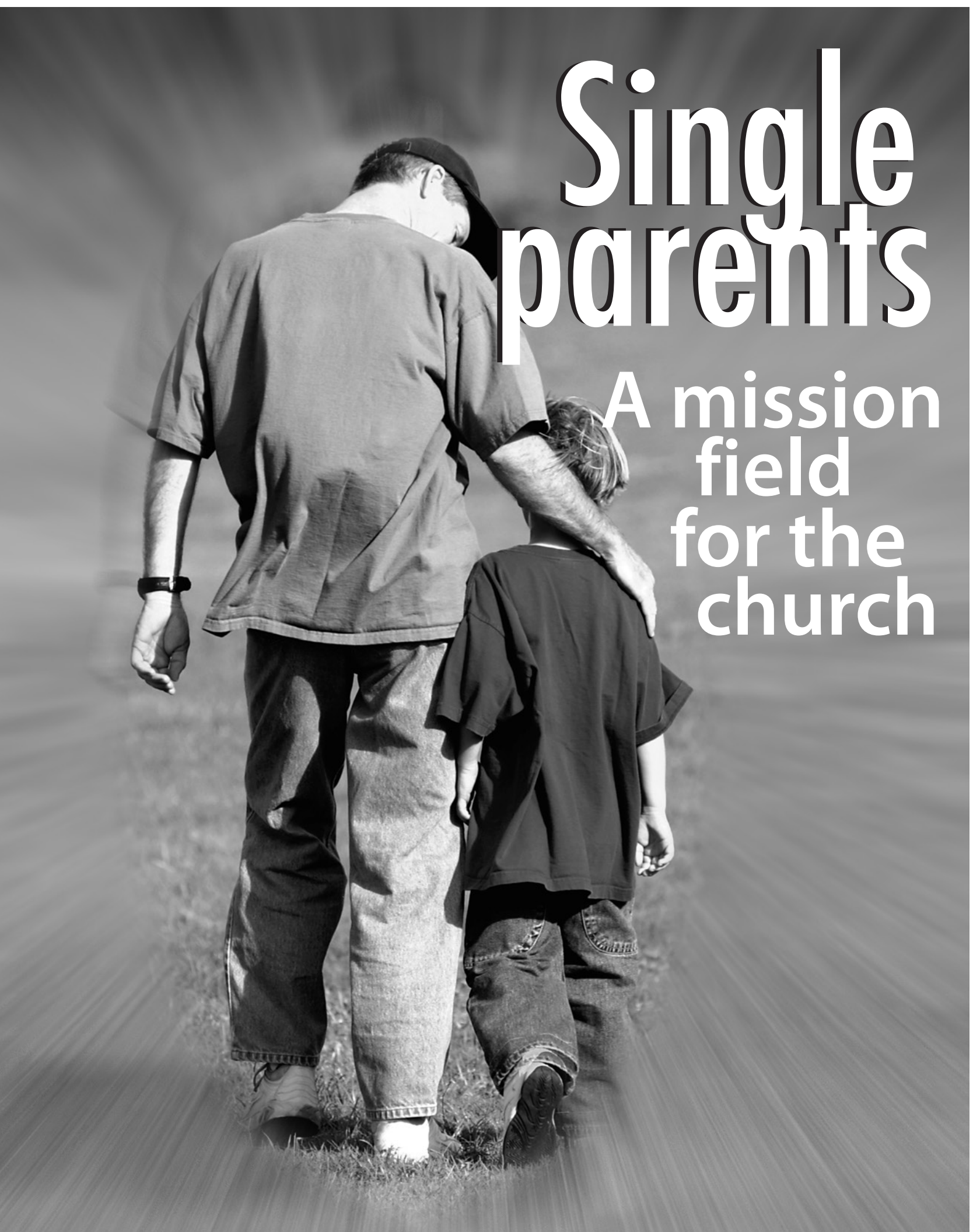




# these







# Single parents

A mission  
field  
for the  
church

**F**ifteen years ago, I became a single parent. It was not a role that I or my children would easily adapt to. Being a Christian and heavily involved with our local congregation, I worried about the “sure-to-come” reactions of the congregation to this unforeseen development in my life — and there were many. One reaction that I remember distinctly, and that held the most meaning, was a big hug that I received one Sunday morning. An elderly lady told me to be strong and do what was best for the children, letting me know that I was loved and a valuable person and parent. It held tremendous meaning to me at a time when I was vulnerable and weak. I felt accepted, loved and encouraged.

The church has an opportunity — a true mission field — in reaching out to single-parent families, an enormous group of hurting and searching people. El Shaddai Ministries reports that in the United States single parents head up 31 percent of all American homes. Married couples are only 25 percent of all households. Twenty-two million children in the United States go home to one parent. Of those single parents who profess to be Christian, only 5 percent attend church.

When a family first finds themselves in a split-up home, they are wounded and weak, and many times at a spiritual low. If the family is involved in a church, and are sensing that they have become a stigma amongst the congregation, this can add to an already heavy heart. We need to remember that not all single parents have chosen this lifestyle. Even so, for those who have chosen — refrain from judging. Only God knows the heart.

Single parents long for fellowship, acceptance and encouragement. Acceptance by the church, and the need to be validated by the body of Christ, is foremost in a Christian single parent’s mind. Knowing that God has forgiven them, it is important to remember that the church also forgives them. In accepting single parents, the church will allow them to fit in within the congregation, encouraging them in their walk with the Lord and their need to know that God is with them.

Encouragement can be shown in many practical ways. One of the most overwhelming circumstances of becoming a single parent is facing the reality of duties once shared by two parents that now must be done by one. The other parent is not there to share the workload, the worries, the sick children, nor the joys and successes of each day. There is a sense of needing to be strong at all times. This can lead to an unbalanced life for the parent.

I am fortunate to have extended family nearby who are a wonderful help. We have also been the recipients of many social gatherings at the home of a couple within our congregation who has made it

their calling to work with “singles.” Not all single parents have family close by. Many need the help and encouragement of the congregation.

The children of single-parent homes have many of their own hurts, heartaches and disappointments. Most children live with their mother, and many of these children do not have a close male role model involved in their lives. There are numerous ways for a congregation to become mentors to these children. My children have had strong role models in their grandfather, our pastor and our youth advisors. Each one of them has influenced my children by their tremendous involvement and encouragement to each one of them individually — through a card being sent in the mail; going for ice cream at Dairy Queen; praying for them; talking with them; teaching them how to drive; spending time in the “woodshop;” e-mails; buying them inspirational readings; attending school programs and concerts; and numerous other ways too many to mention.

A small gesture can make a huge impact on a child, helping them to feel special, making them feel validated. It is so important that a congregation is accepting of these children, encouraging them, “blessing” them as Jesus blessed the children, letting them know that God loves them and that He has a special purpose for them.

“And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against any one; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. And beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity” (Colossians 2:12-14). I have experienced this kindness, compassion and the love of God within our congregation. My children have felt the impact of this congregation within their lives, and they will carry this legacy with them and cherish it. For this I am grateful.

**The church has an opportunity - a true mission field —in reaching out to single-parent families, an enormous group of hurting and searching people.**

— Susan Boyovich  
Bethany Free Lutheran  
Astoria, Ore.



# What my parents did RIGHT

**“H**ow did you do it?” That’s a question I’ve asked my parents now that my husband and I are raising our own kids. It is with much gratitude that I remember the godly heritage and example my parents have given me.

There are so many wonderful things that my parents did for me, but I think the BEST thing was to have a consistent quiet time with the Lord. As I was growing up, my memories of arising in the mornings and coming into the living room or kitchen to see my parents reading their Bibles or praying and then again in the evening made a big impact on me spiritually. You see, they didn’t have to “preach it” because they lived it. I knew from the way they lived each day that they loved the Lord, and He was Lord of their lives every day, not just on Sundays or when others were watching. May God grant me the grace to pass on to my children the godly legacy that was given to me!

— *Joyce Erickson*  
*Minnesota Valley Lutheran*  
*Lakeville, Minn.*

**“T**he Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face shine upon you. I love you Joanna, good night.” Those are the words I heard whispered in my ear every night. My wonderful parents declared blessings upon me each day, not only through this biblical declaration, but through their lives — their love for God, for each other, for me and others.

Growing up on the mission field and seeing my parents’ day-to-day godly example of selfless service to God and others has really impacted me. I have been given the opportunity to learn with the best, to work alongside the best and have been encouraged to always give my best, my all to God.

I praise the Lord for blessing me with such wonderful parents. All my parents have done for me is the best, because they are the best. I know that their love, prayers and example are vital to who I am today.

— *Joanna Abel*  
*Curitiba, Brazil*

**T**he scenario was nearly always the same. Mom and Dad would tell us that we were going somewhere (a funeral, a Memorial Day service, church, the home of grieving friends, etc.) and that it was time to get ready. Discussion about the merits of the trip was not a part of the preparation. If asked, the reply from my parents was always the same, “Because we need to be there.”

For all the years it was possible for my parents to attend, they came faithfully to untold funerals, memorial services, and visited and brought meals to the homes of many grieving families. They never took time to explain why they saw it to be necessary. I believe that their commitment to “be there” was as natural as breathing.

When we buried my father last year, I expected a fairly large number of people would be in attendance. When I walked into the church that day I saw a very large building nearly full of friends and relatives. It was difficult for me to speak because of the emotion that I felt when I saw that so many people would care enough to come. I know that many came because my parents had “been there” for them over the years.

One thing my Dad did express to me and to my brothers years ago was his concern that veterans would not be properly honored at their funerals by a military honor guard because so few veterans were active in the VFW and American Legion. His concern befitted his lifestyle. Although it is difficult for me, I have made attempts to “be there” for family and friends when it has been less than convenient. I think Dad would approve.

— *Pastor Brian Davidson*  
*Hopkins, Minn.*





**O**ur adult lives are greatly influenced by our family settings and values. As the familiar verse, Proverbs 22:6, tells us, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”

My mother passed away when I was 11 years old. This left a void in our lives. My father, who had seen battle-field action as a Marine in World War I, carried the responsibility of raising my older sister, older brother and me. His war experiences brought him close to God, but his strong Christian faith was not something that he “wore on his sleeve.” Unspoken, it was a deep inner faith that we felt. His values and his strong convictions had actually zero tolerance in many areas of our social lives. His personal journal gave us insight into the depth of his faith. His values became ours. When I was 18, he remarried. I appreciated my stepmother, and her values complimented my Dad’s lifestyle. They were also role models for our children. A deep faith with high expectations filled with joy — that is what my parents had and that is what they did right. I am thankful for that rich heritage!

— *Marlin Benrud*  
*Our Saviour’s Lutheran*  
*Goodhue, Minn.*

**T**he best thing my parents did was to live out their walk with Christ in everyday conversation and tasks. They lived His love all of the time, not just when they were in front of others. My dad is a pastor, and I remember one of the men in the church once saying that he felt he could be himself with my dad because my dad did not judge him. He loved him as he was, and I watched that love flow from both of my parents’ lives in working with a congregation into their home.

We had devotions every night together as a family after supper. At the time, I didn’t always appreciate the intrusion on my playtime, but those times are now precious memories. I now look forward to having those times with my own family someday. What an incredible blessing it is to have godly parents who serve the Lord and who lead by example! Galatians 5:22-23 says, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”

— *Tara Hill*  
*Grace Free Lutheran*  
*Plymouth, Minn.*

# Christ must INCREASE

**In serving a family there is no greater need than for Jesus' character to be increased in the life of the parent**

**“I** don't know how you do it!” With a family of five — and soon-to-be six — children, this is an expression I hear often. And while I'm sure most people have no intention of “doing it,” I think there are those who would if they knew there were answers for all the roadblocks ahead.

Instead of calling them roadblocks, it might be more accurate to say speed bumps. Any parent who is seeing to the needs of even one child needs some speed bumps in life. We must slow down from the fast pace of adult life and, like Jesus did, welcome the little children: welcome them to climb on you, to sit on your lap, to ask the many questions of childhood.

In serving a family there is no greater need than for Jesus' character to be increased in the life of the parent. The challenges of parenthood are great enough, but added

to that are the untold personal changes and the occasional crisis we go through as we are being perfected in Christ. In order for Christ to increase in us, we must decrease.

In his book, *The Divine Conquest: God's Pursuit of Man*, A. W. Tozer wrote: “We might well pray for God to invade and conquer us, for until He does, we remain in peril from a thousand foes. ... The strength of our flesh is an ever-present danger to our souls. Deliverance can come to us only by the defeat of our old life. Safety and peace come only after we have been forced to our knees. God rescues us by breaking us, by shattering our strength and wiping out our resistance. Then He invades our natures with that ancient and eternal life which is from the beginning. So He conquers us and by that benign conquest saves us for Himself.”

My strength and resistance is diminished and Christ's nature is increased as I give myself fully to the

raising of children. I believe this is part of what makes children a blessing and not a burden to those who would be relinquished of their old life. However, if we persist in preserving our sense of self and all the cravings, ambitions and desires of our old nature, children do become a burden. But not only children — life itself becomes a burden.

My seemingly simple answer to those who would seek to know how it can be done: allow yourself to decrease while Christ is increasing in you and through you as you serve your family joyfully and in Christ's love.

“He must increase; I must decrease” (John 3:30).

— Mary Nauha  
Bethany Free Lutheran  
Astoria, Ore.





# RESOURCES: PARISH EDUCATION



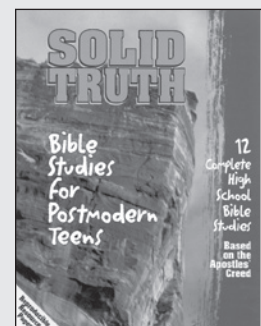
## Faith Alive Student Bible (NIV)

Includes study notes, a concordance, and full-color maps. "Let's Live It" activities help students apply God's Word to their lives, and the practical "Where to Turn" index is an important reference for finding just the right Scripture for all kinds of topics. Durable hardcover binding. *\$14.00*



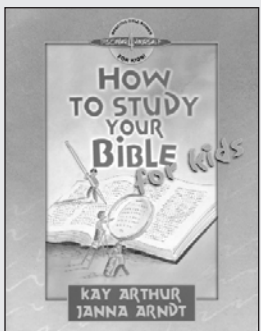
## Bible Activities for Every Day

From word games and puzzle forms to mazes and fill-in-the-blanks, these reproducible Bible activity sheets for varied ages will provide hours of creativity while teaching important Bible truths. *\$7.20*



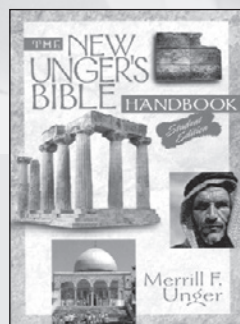
## Solid Truth: Bible Studies for Postmodern Teens

Postmodern thinking challenges many of the basic assumptions of Christian young people, influencing their education, entertainment, music, and approach to life. This study helps guide youths to the right path, including notes for leaders that deal specifically with understanding those raised in today's highly relativistic culture. Reproducible student pages, 12 lessons. *\$13.50*



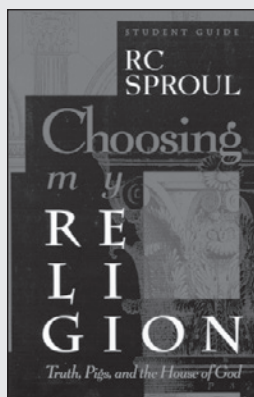
## How to Study Your Bible for Kids

Join M and M Detective Agency—Max, Molly, and Sam the Beagle—in an "inductive detective" training course to discover God's Word and learn basic skills of studying, understanding, and applying the Bible. Six chapters and worksheets. *\$8.00*



## New Unger's Bible Handbook: Student Edition

Condensed for easy use with any version of the Bible, this edition includes a commentary, diagrams, charts, and hundreds of color illustrations and photographs. *\$13.50*



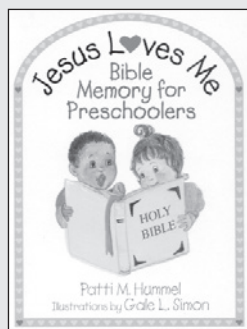
## Choosing My Religion

The alarm sounds to rouse members of the MTV generation out of their spiritual slumber. Prepare young adults for the false philosophies that come from every direction. Five 30-minute sessions on two tapes. *Study Guide \$4.95, Leader Guide \$4.95, Video Set \$24.95*



## Bible Adventures Video Series

Mr. Fixit's famous shop is a haven for kids with troubled hearts and real-life problems. Mr. Fixit uses his captivating storytelling skills to convey relevant Bible truths from his "big red book." Each of the six videos in this series contains two 10-12 minute stories. *\$9.95 each*



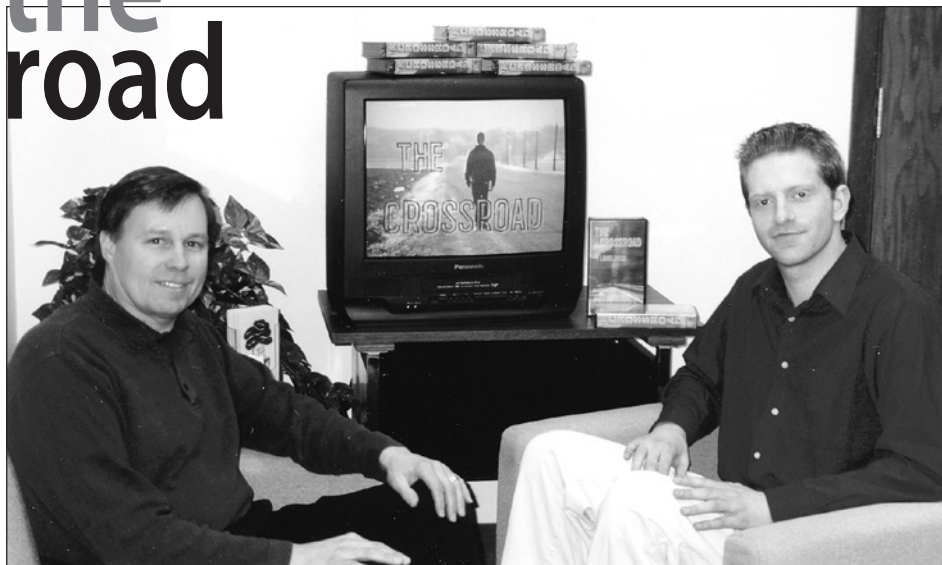
## Jesus Loves Me

Preschoolers enjoy language and can memorize easily. They also need a solid biblical foundation for life. You and your child can memorize one verse a week for a whole year. Each NASB verse is accompanied by an application with pictures, giving the child a visual presentation to remember. *\$6.00 each*



# C at the crossroad

## Youth ministry video asks the tough questions



Pastor Bruce Kotila, director of Lutheran Evangelistic Movement and part-time instructor at AFLBS, and David Hoffeld, LEM's director of Young Adult Ministries.

**W**hat is the purpose of life? You'd be surprised at the answers given in on-the-street interviews of college-age people.

The meaning of true love, loneliness, and the purpose of life are topics that pervade our daily existence. In response to these sometimes troubling issues, Lutheran Evangelistic Movement (LEM) launched a new video series geared toward 18- to 28-year-olds. Six AFLBS students were recently asked to voice their opinions for the series. Their interviews are now a part of the video project.

With funds from an AAL Innovations Grant, Pastor Bruce Kotila and David Hoffeld produced *The Crossroad*. Kotila is the director of LEM, a para-church ministry with offices in New Hope, Minn., and a part-time teacher at AFLBS.

"We knew we'd have to be creative and wanted to make use of both video and the Internet, media that are familiar and trusted forms of communication for this age group," said Kotila. "Otherwise, anything we did would be

perceived as boring. Most people, especially those under 25, won't listen to 'talking heads' for more than a couple of minutes."

Kotila and Hoffeld, director of LEM's Young Adults Ministries, hope to air the project on TV and make it available to churches.

"I quickly realized how big a project it would be to start a television show for young adults," said Hoffeld, a graduate of Trinity Theological Seminary.

The project grew when a local cable access station, Northwest Community Television (channel 12), allowed the group use of their studio and equipment free of charge.

"I chose *The Crossroad* as the name for the project," Hoffeld said, "because it symbolizes the decision point a person reaches when they encounter the hard choices in life. The programs are evangelistic and call the viewer to a faith response to the person of Jesus Christ."

Each half-hour show consists of on-the-street interviews, personal testimonies and teaching from Scripture. "True Love," the first in the series, deals with the

Bible's definition of genuine love and where a person can find it. The second and third programs are titled "Loneliness" and "The Purpose of Life."

AFLBS alumni Jo-Jo Spencer ('01) and Amy Hecker ('02) are two of the students interviewed at length on the videos. As for the purpose of life, Hecker concluded, "I wanted to have it all together, but I kept thinking, 'Is this enough?' I finally surrendered my desires to God and came to realize that the purpose of life was not just to do good things and help people, but to have a relationship with Him."

Visitors to [thecrossroad.org](http://thecrossroad.org) will find state-of-the-art graphics, answers to commonly asked questions, and contact information. There are also reflection questions for use in small group discussions, forming the basis for an in-house class or overnight retreat when the videos are purchased.

— Sharon M. Knudson  
Lutheran Evangelistic Movement 



# M inistry for moms

Reaching out  
to a young  
generation  
of moms

Young moms at Abiding Savior Free Lutheran in Sioux Falls, S.D., visit the Sioux Falls Outdoor Campus to learn about outdoor wonders.

**T**he scriptural mandate to Christian women in Titus 2 tells us that older women are to teach younger women how to love their husbands and how to love their children. Doesn't this seem unusual? Who needs to be taught how to love the man who chose you above all the rest to marry? Who would dare to tell you that you need teaching about how to love the child you birthed and nurtured? Yet the scriptural mandate remains very clear.

Believing God's Word to be relevant to the 21st century and remembering the need in my own heart as a young wife and mother, we introduced two Bible study classes for women: "Loving Your Husbands," by Cynthia Heald, and "MotherWise," by Denise Glenn. We have not been disappointed in the response. It is true. Christian women of all ages feel needy. They are still eager to learn about and follow God's principles for marriage and mothering. God's mandate to Titus centuries ago is still very relevant and necessary.

The class instructors need to meet the "older woman" qualifications of Titus 2, including a solid faith in Christ and a lifestyle consistent with that faith. "MotherWise" is primarily an in-depth Bible study, but it is also "a refuge for mothers to come for refreshing, restoration and retooling as they seek Biblical and practical answers to their mothering questions" (Glenn). Class time includes Bible study, prayer, discussion of mothering skills and exercise

(optional). The studies focus on foundational principles for mothering found in God's Word.

Mentor-moms in small groups lead the prayer time. I will never forget one of our first sessions. I was nervous about the intimacy of prayer time because the mothers were young and they were not all acquainted with each other. Expecting to carry the prayer conversation, I volunteered to begin praying. Squeezing the hand of the mom on my left to either pray next or "pass" the squeeze to her left, I was overwhelmed by the brief, tearful outpouring of her heart. Tears flowed all around the circle and instantly the mothers were connected. Another mother took responsibility for supplying tissues for the remainder of the classes! How precious were the fellowship and the earnest desire to be a godly mother.

We learned simple mothering skills: those presented such as family devotions, friendly food, beginning organization and necessary discipline and also those we learned from one another during discussion time. Due to the limited time frame, we opted out of the exercise. Mothers and mentors were all blessed, and our only difficulty has been keeping up with those wishing to continue classes. "Loving Your Husband" has been just as eagerly embraced.

— *Jeanne Brandt*  
*Abiding Savior Free Lutheran*  
*Sioux Falls, S.D.*





# VISION 2004

**But who am I, and who  
are my people, that we  
should be able to give as  
generously as this?  
Everything comes from  
you, and we have given  
you only what comes from  
your hand.**

**I Chronicles 29:14**

## **What's happening**

The city of Plymouth requires that all remaining site work (according to master plan, civil engineering and city specifications) be in progress before any actual building is constructed. Raw costs for this site work are \$606,000. A preliminary appraisal of the AFLC property is now being done to help in securing any needed loans and the permit process for site work is in progress.

## **Building committee recommendations**

The Vision 2004 building committee has reviewed our schools' critical needs for classroom and dormitory space. Their recommendations to the Schools Corporation include:

- Complete the site work infrastructure for \$606,000.
- Pursue a dormitory/classroom combination building as the first structure and obtain funding as needed through loans or other means appropriate as deemed by the Schools Corporation.
- Use a timeline of 28 months to look at the student center funding and financing with a goal for completion on or before September 2004.

## **Special Schools Corporation meeting**

The Schools Corporation met for a special meeting May 18. Upon reviewing the recommendations the building committee presented, the Schools Corporation voted to:

- Remove the 80 percent cash requirement. This will allow for more pledges to be used in the fund-raising needs of our schools.

- Accept and begin the site work.

A motion to proceed with construction was tabled until the AFLC Annual Conference meets June 12-16 at El Campo, Texas.

## **The need is great**

Our students in seminary and Bible school are such a blessing. They don't complain about the crowded conditions in their dorms, classrooms, cafeteria, library and study areas. However, they need more space: more dormitory rooms and more classrooms to provide the best conditions where the Word can be studied and the love of Christ shared. What a privilege to be a part of the great commission in these students' lives.

## **What to do?**

Praise the Lord! As of May 24, we have more than \$1 million in cash and pledges — \$730,000 in cash and \$270,000 in pledges. The cost for a dormitory/classroom combination is estimated at \$1.6 million. Cost for a student center is estimated at \$2.8-\$3 million. With the 80 percent cash requirement removed by the Schools Corporation, pledges can now be used to achieve the needs of our building project. If you haven't sent in a gift to Vision 2004 or a pledge, won't you consider doing it now?

*For more information, contact the Vision 2004 office at  
the AFLC headquarters: 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.,  
Plymouth, MN 55441. Phone: (763) 412-2004.*



# a national day of PRAYER

**Vision of Glory  
hosts breakfast**



Former Minnesota Viking John Campbell was guest speaker at the May 2 National Day of Prayer Breakfast at Vision of Glory, Plymouth.

A group of volunteers from Vision of Glory Lutheran Church, Plymouth, Minn., began planning months ago for the National Day of Prayer. For the fifth year, the church, which recently joined the AFLC, hosted a breakfast and prayer service for the west metro area of the Twin Cities.

More than 250 area residents and politicians attended the event, which featured guest speaker John Campbell. A former Minnesota Viking, Campbell gave his testimony and spoke on the game plan for prayer.

"John has the ability to reach everyone in the crowd, from youths to seniors," said Dar Sjostrom, chairwoman.

Officials in national, state and local government were remembered in prayer during the service, which began at 6 a.m. Vocalist Purita Edson, a member of Vision of Glory, led the special music. Matthew Herringshaw, 8-year-old son of Dr. Mark Herringshaw, Vision of Glory's pastor, recited "The Gettysburg Address."



A group from the AFLC headquarters building in Plymouth were among the more than 250 attending Vision of Glory's National Day of Prayer breakfast on May 2.



Local radio personality Joyce Harley served as Master of Ceremonies. She is pictured along with her husband, Bill, and Vision of Glory Pastor Dr. Mark Herringshaw.

# end of an eugene era enderlein



**Pastor Eugene Enderlein will step down from his position as World Missions Director this summer. Replacing him is Pastor Del Palmer.**

— *Pastor Eugene Enderlein*

**W**hen I stepped into the AFLC Mission program 30 years ago, our focus consisted of the vast nation of Brazil. We were so blessed by the pioneer missionary efforts of John and Ruby Abel and Alvin and Frances Grothe. The Lord added wonderful laborers in George and Helen Knapp. I remember in seminary having the joy of meeting the new young missionaries who would soon leave for Brazil. Pastor Connely and Carolyn Dyrud would become beloved friends. Through the years, the Lord added to that number of faithful laborers for various periods of time: Pricilla Wold, Karen Knapp, Charles Knapp, Tom Baker and Janet Gray.

The Lord enlarged our boundaries and brought to us Christians from Mexico who were eager for biblical Lutheran fellowship. What a joy it was to have the friendship with Pastor Samuel Flores, his wife and adult children who served in the ministry there. And now Pastor Milton Flores and his family, Pastor Raul Hernandez and his family and our own missionaries who have trained here and gone to Mexico: Dan and Deb Giles and Todd and Barb Schierkolk.

Shortly after this, the door for our involvement in a ministry to India opened. We assisted in establishing a church-planting ministry, supporting at one point 35 national pastors and Bible women. We also assisted in developing a children's ministry that provides educational and health care services. The fellowship with them has been sweet.

In recent years, the Lord has brought interest in

the nation of Portugal and biblical Lutheranism has been the goal for Pastor Artur Villares. Now our own David and Sarah Nelson are laboring there with him.

What a joy it has been within the past few years as our horizons have expanded and the Lord has brought across our path wonderful Christians in Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya and the Congo.

The last quarter of a century of my life has been spent in the realm of God's world mission outreach. It began with my own personal surrender of my life and my future to Christ as a young dad in Cleveland, Ohio. God broke through to my life and burdened me to serve Him in a full-time capacity.

My field in the Air Force and in business was radio/electronics. First, I explored that possibility with Christian radio, but there were no openings at that time. My wife, Beverly, and I were led to Wycliffe missionaries who were home on furlough. God used those contacts and the prayers of many beautiful Christian friends to lead us to Wycliffe Bible Translators. What a wonderful time of service that was for me and for us as a family. It enlarged our vision to see the need around the world for people to have God's Word in their own language.

It was then that God used personal family needs to humble us and change our pathway as we realized service on the home front was going to be His plan for us. Through the precious mentoring and shepherding of Pastor Herbert Franz and Pastor Harvey Carlson, God led me to the AFLC seminary. I remember Pastor Strand's personal encouragement to me. Oh, the beloved fatherly leadership of Pastor Fritjof

Monseth, our challenging dean at the time, Dr. Iver Olson and our precious friend, Pastor Amos Dyrud.

My heartfelt thanks go to the beautiful people I have served as pastor. In my seminary years I was assigned to Mason and Drummond, Wis. After seminary I pastored in the heartland of North Dakota and then I became pastor to the congregations in the Thief River Falls, Minn., area.

I could name so many who have blessed and encouraged my life over the years. The missionaries who have come and served with our AFLC have been a special joy in my life and an answer to our prayers. Their joys and sorrows have been my own joys and sorrows. The men who have served on the World Missions Committee and the men and women who have willingly served on the Missions Corporation have been wonderful co-workers, confidants and laborers in prayer and in the work of ministry.

Although my time as the missions director officially ends in May, there is a bond to this ministry and its people that can never be severed. Therefore, it is and will always be the prayer of my heart that I can continue to participate in this ministry in some small way.

There are not enough words to tell how meaningful and precious these years have been as your World Missions director. To each of you, I thank you most sincerely from the depths of my being for allowing me to serve my Savior and Lord Jesus Christ as well as His church and you. For my failures, I humbly ask forgiveness from God and my fellow servants. For any success or joys there may be, we give God all the glory and praise.

May God bless you and all of us as we seek to live, serve and exalt the Lord Jesus Christ. May the grace of God be with us all. (I Corinthians 15:58)



## Pastor Del Palmer

### an interview

**Q. When and how did you develop an interest in missions?**

A. I remember as a child hearing the great commission being read in a sermon. I had the strong impression that God was speaking directly to me. An interesting note is that I was standing during the sermon and my head came up to about the top of the pew. It reminds me that God's Word is active and working in the lives of children even when we think they are too young or not listening.

Shortly after Karen and I were married, we traveled to Brazil. During the trip we saw first-hand what went on in missions. About the same time John Abel came to our church. God spoke to my heart as Pastor Abel described the change Jesus made in the lives of people on the mission field.

My interest grew when I was the pastor in Thief River Falls. Connely Dyrud's mother-in-law lived across the street

from the church. They would spend much of their free time while on furlough at her house. Connely would come over many mornings and describe the joys and frustrations of being a missionary. My heart was drawn to help the missionaries and their work during those years.

**Q. What has been your involvement with missions?**

A. My hands-on experience with missions has been limited to our time spent on the mission field in Brazil. It should be very clear to all that I have much to learn about missions and various cultures.

**Q. What are your priorities in the position going to be?**

A. It is my plan to work very closely with the World Missions Committee. I will need to spend time with them making sure that their goals and priorities become mine. In my letter of call, they spelled out

See PALMER, page 20



# GOD provides

## Colorado congregation votes to buy property

**I**t was the kind of thing you read about happening elsewhere, but you don't expect to experience yourself. That was the way people in the AFLC congregation in Parker, Colo., reacted after their worship service and business meeting on April 28.

Living Water Christian Church has existed for four years. The congregation, located in a suburb of Denver, came into the AFLC three years ago. They are served by Pastor James Ritter. They currently meet on Sunday mornings in an elementary school and rent office and storage space for use during the week. They have dreamed about having their own property and wondered when, where and how God might provide.

After their April 28 worship service, the congregation met to discuss, pray and consider how God was leading them and what the next step might be for them to take. Some land in their growing suburb was available. It is 18 acres on top of a hill with a house on it. The expectation is that within three to five years subdivisions full of homes will surround the property. That kind of growth will cause the price of property to grow as well.

As the congregation met, Pastor Ritter spoke of his belief that the Lord was calling them to stretch and move boldly ahead. "God says to take steps of faith. This is a time for pioneers, not passive pew sitters."

The congregation broke up into small groups to discuss and pray and seek the Lord's will in the matter. Then they voted. On the slip of paper the members were given they were asked to put down, along with their vote, how much they were willing to pledge toward making the monthly payment on the property. Nearly half of the projected costs had been committed, but a difference of \$2,300 between what had been committed and what was needed remained. The congregation discussed how God had been faithful to them in the past, even in those times when they had not been able to see how He would provide.

The vote to buy the property was 40 yes and 3 no. The amount pledged beyond what had previously been committed was \$2,300 — the exact amount needed. God had done it once again. The congregation now goes forward with even greater confidence and eagerness to see how the Lord will provide and what He will do in the days ahead.



**TOP:** Members of Living Water Christian Church meet at Pine Grove Elementary to pray in small groups for direction on purchasing property.

**MIDDLE:** Pastor Jim Ritter and his son stand outside the house purchased as part of property for new church.

**BOTTOM:** The congregation voted to purchase more than 18 acres.

**A**s you have studied the Scriptures, have you come across a passage that brought you to question how it applies to you and how you can respond? It has happened to me on several occasions. As I was reading the book of Isaiah where God said, “Whom shall I send?” And Isaiah answered, “Here I am, send me” (Isaiah 6:8), I thought of how others have responded to this call. I recall the many missionaries and missionary couples who answered that call and went to the mission fields and the pastors who heard God’s call and went into full-time service. Then there are those who have dedicated a large portion of their lives to teaching our youths at Bible school and seminary.

Where does that leave me, and where does it leave you? What is God calling me to do, and how willing am I to be a part of God’s plan to reach the lost for the Lord Jesus Christ? This is the goal of all the ministries of the AFLC.

Even though every one of us may not go to the mission field or become a pastor or teacher, we are all a part of God’s plan. Working together, we can make it happen. AFLC ministries depend on you and me. I know there’s a large body of believers in the AFLC who have answered God’s call and are a crucial part of the progress toward the goal.

I think of how people came through with the necessary funds to build a Bible school, to purchase a retreat center, to build the administrative office, etc. So I know that many have heard the call, “Whom shall I send?”

The AFLC’s budget of more than \$1 million will most likely increase when the number of churches increases and the outreach grows. Does this mean that those who are giving so generously need to give more, or is the answer that more of our membership hear the call and become part of the overall team reaching out to the lost in the world today? In Mark 10:21-31, Jesus gives us tough advice. He doesn’t hedge around the truth. Christ loved us enough to die for us, but He still gives us tough advice. He gives us life-changing challenges. He says the person who has everything on earth could still lack what is most important — eternal life. He assures us that anyone who gives up something valuable for His sake will be repaid 100 times over in this life, but not necessarily in the same form.

We are at a place in the AFLC where we have been before. There is a need for finances to build additions to the Bible school above and beyond meeting or exceeding the budget. Together we can make it happen. But we all need to be a part of the solution. Like one of the saints of the AFLC used to say, “Give ’til it feels good.”



— *LaVern Thompson*  
*AFLC Stewardship Board*

**Give  
'til it**

**FEELS GOOD**

# AFLBS summer teams prepare for ministry

More than 30 AFLBS students have begun a summer of ministry in music, VBS, local congregations and summer camps. The teams met on campus in early June to finish training and preparing for three months of travel throughout the United States. The teams include:

**Ambassadors:** Hope Lombardo, Laura Finstrom, Michael Borg,

Ben Jore, Sarah Franz and Jake Parsley.

**Majesty:** Lisa Baxter, Kari Caouette, Jarod Langness, Christian Talley and Lynda Quam.

**Foundation:** Chad Friestad, Peter Martin, Kayla Ramse and Liz McCarlson.

**Cornerstone:** Travis Zimbelman, Micah Sheldon, Cambria Hoops

and Betsy Parsley.

**Zion:** Micah Russum, Justin Kantonen, Emmy Swenson and Becca Lewis.

**Barnabas North:** Ryan Patenaude, Miriam Novotna, Joel Rasmussen and Abby Wentzel.

**Barnabas South:** Mike Anderson, Sam Nash, Becky Rudebusch and Shannon Mundfrom.

## PALMER, from page 17

several administrative objectives that I should focus on in the coming year. These objectives would help the World Missions department operate effectively and efficiently. I would also like to provide the leadership to get others excited about missions so that they would participate in missions by praying, funding the work and going to the field.

**Q. What are some of the ways that people can pray for you?**

A. I would appreciate it if people would pray for God to do a great work in my heart, constantly changing me from within. Pray that God would keep me from pride and allow me to work with people in the gentleness that Jesus would have used.

Pray that God would use His Spirit to work through me supernaturally. I'm tired of working naturally; there's no power in it and no success that lasts.

Pray that God would enable me to be successful in my congregation and in the Missions Department. If I am able to do both jobs, it will have to be the work of God.

Pray that God would give me an understanding of missions and culture.

**Q. How do you hope to encourage missionaries and what are ways people in the congregations could encourage missionaries?**

A. I believe the missionaries would be greatly encouraged if people will pray, communicate and give

to the work they are doing. I have often wondered what I would feel like if I was on the mission field. It could be a very lonely and frustrating experience. If we are constantly begging God to help them as well as communicating with them and providing for them it will go a long way to encourage them.

**Q. How do you hope to encourage future missionaries?**

A. First, I would want to get to know them personally. This will involve spending some time with them, getting to know their dreams and how God has called them.

Second, they need to be encouraged that God can and will do supernatural things through them. He will provide for them. He will empower their ministry so that they can reach the lost.

I also believe that we need to do the behind-the-scenes work so that we can indeed send them out when they are ready. What good is it to encourage them to go if we don't have a place for them?

**Q. What do you hope to see happening in AFLC World Missions over the next 10 years?**

A. Existing Missionaries: It is my hope and dream that we will stand behind our missionaries and fully fund their personal support.

Africa: The AFLC has a number of exciting opportunities that are opening up in Africa. I hope we will be able to go through some of the doors of opportunity.

Islam: God has been laying on my heart the need to reach people

trapped in Islam. It is my desire that we start praying and preparing for God to open doors that now seem to be locked tight.

**Q. What drew you to this position?**

A. This is not a position that I sought. More than a year ago one of the missionaries approached me about the position. I pondered the possibility of being mission director and decided that I wouldn't need to pursue it if it was God's will. If it was not His will, I would not want the position because His hand would not be with me. Therefore, I made it my goal to talk to almost no one about it and pray for God's will to be done. During those times of prayer, God gave me the calm assurance that it was His will and that He would work it out.

Last year in late fall the World Missions Committee asked me to come talk to them about the position. After meeting with them on several occasions they sent me a letter of call that allowed me to continue working in my congregation while taking on the responsibilities of World Missions director.

I believe that God has given me gifts in administration and that He will allow me to accomplish what He has called me to do. I will not be able to do it alone, but there are a number of talented people in the Missions office who I will have to depend on. It will be a team effort.







**The women of St. John's Free Lutheran Church WMF in Duluth, Minn., created new enthusiasm when they met as a Study and Stitch group. The ladies met every Monday morning for a Bible study followed by a work time when they made polar fleece lap robes for nursing homes and the mission box. Pictured are (standing) Lois Johnson and Louise McAllister; (seated from left) Ardella Salin, Midge Peterson, Cam Swor and Virginia Eastvold.**

**Pastor Phillip Hooper** has accepted an interim call to serve as director of youth ministry for St. Ansgar's Lutheran Church, Salinas, Calif.

**Pastor Harris VanSomerén**, Princeton, Minn., was removed from the AFLC clergy roster by the Coordinating Committee at his request.

**Pastor Emerson Anderson**, Broadview Heights, Ohio, has been removed from the AFLC clergy roster by the Coordinating Committee as his request.

**Pastor Kenneth Ellingson**, Mesa, Ariz., died on April 11. Many in the AFLC remember him for his years of service with the Lutheran Evangelistic Movement and for his ministry as pastor of Helmar Lutheran Church, Newark, Ill.

**Jon Galland**, Everett, Wash., has accepted the office of AFLC Director of Development and will begin July 1. This position, previously held by Ernest Miedema, will now be directly responsible to the AFLC Foundation Board, which represents all of our common endeavors. Currently employed in the banking industry, he is a son of Pastor Les and Jan Galland.

**David and Sarah Nelson** can now be reached at Rua dos Moinhos 44, 2765 Manique - Alcabideche, PORTUGAL.

**Darwin and MaryAnn Jackson**, AFLC missionaries on loan to WMPL in Puebla, Mexico, are now on furlough. They can be reached at 2221 248 Ave. SE, Sammamish, WA 98075. They returned to the States after confirming adoption papers with the Mexican government for Anna Grace.

## OUR PRESIDENT WRITES

### Lessons from a little one

**T**here are powerful kingdom lessons to be learned from our little ones, and my first grandchild has been teaching some of them to me anew.

"Let me hold you, Grandpa!" This meant that he wanted me to lift him up and hold him in my arms. He thought that he was holding me, when in reality I'm the one who was doing the holding. It seems to me that we often talk like him in our relationship to the Lord. Like I'm holding Him, when in reality the important thing is that He is holding me.

Tightly. Securely. Lovingly.

"Let me help you, Grandpa!" Oh, my, those words usually meant more work for me! One day he wanted to help me fix lunch. I was boiling macaroni and let him help with the stirring. (Parents probably wouldn't do something so foolish.) He held the large spoon in one hand, while I held him as well as his hand and carefully guided the stirring. "Grandma," he announced happily, "I helped Grandpa make lunch!" Not really. But I allowed him to have the satisfaction of sharing in what I was doing.

How like little ones we often are when it comes to the work of God. "Let me help, Lord! Let me do it!" How sad it is when we take credit for what He accomplishes. One special portion of Scripture that will help us keep the proper perspective is I Corinthians 3: 6-7: "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth." Yet amazingly we are called God's fellow workers (v. 9).

How good and gracious of God to let us become a part of what He is doing. Sometimes it's like fixing lunch with my grandson, I'm afraid. We don't do a very good job of it. We get in the way. We try to take too much credit. He still is willing to use us, though. Really! And this is not due to our exceptional giftedness, but because He is our loving Father, who is carefully, patiently shaping us for His service. Teaching us to be faithful in little things. For His glory.

— **Pastor Robert L. Lee**



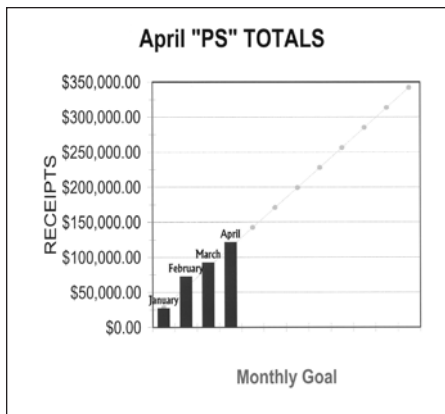
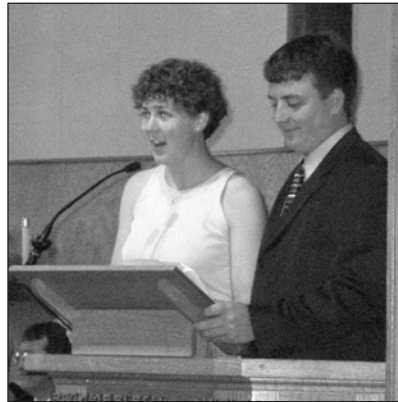
## Graduation

**Top Left:** Pastor Jerry Holmaas congratulates MTI student Paul Blom while junior John Larson shakes hands with Zigmars Evamois.

**Top Right:** Seminary graduates included Clint Hoff, Dana Coyle and Alvin Sather.

**Bottom Left:** Seniors Betsy Parsley and Micah Hjermstad welcome graduates to the service.

**Bottom Right:** The Borg family congratulates Mike Borg, second from left.



## AFLTS plans Summer Institute of Theology

The Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary will host the Summer Institute of Theology Aug. 5-9 at the Plymouth campus. Courses scheduled include "Studies in Ephesians," taught by Pastor Phil Haugen, "The Doctrine of God," taught by Dr. Francis Monseth, "History and Aims of the AFLC," taught by Pastor Robert Lee, "Pre-

paring Expository Sermons," taught by Pastor Jerry Moan, and "Creation and Science," taught by Dr. Robert Kohl.

There is a fee for registration and tuition is based on credit hours. Campus housing will be available. For more information, call AFLTS at (763) 544-9501. Registrations are due by July 11.

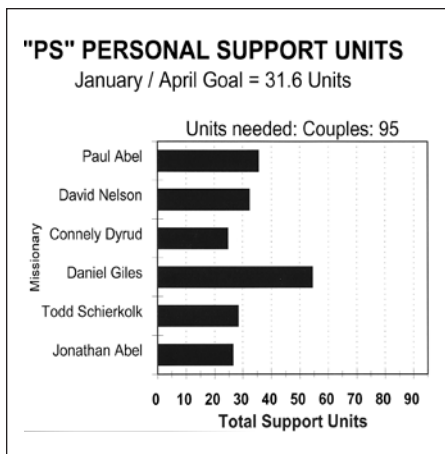
## Sunburg Free Lutheran's Pastor Carl Hort dies

Pastor Carl Hort, 78, of Brooten, Minn., died May 22. He had served as pastor of Sunburg Free Lutheran since 1976.

Born July 27, 1923, in Cherokee, Okla., he was the son of John and Mary (Goeringer) Hort. He married Anita Halverson in 1963. He served in the U.S. Army from 1944 to 1945 under General George Patton as a rifleman during the Battle of the Bulge. He earned a bachelor's degree from Northwestern Oklahoma State University, Alva, in 1948. He attended Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Ill. He graduated from Luther Seminary in 1963. He served at Faith Memorial Church, Detroit, from 1963 to 1972. He then served at King of Glory, Eden Prairie, Minn., from 1973 to 1976. He then moved to Brooten to serve the Sunburg, Our Saviour and Crow Lake.

Surviving are his wife, Anita; one son, Andrew; one daughter, Marie (Andy) Martinson; one brother, Jack; and one granddaughter, Alexa.

The funeral service was May 24 at Hope Lutheran, Sunburg, and was officiated by Pastor Ronald Knutson.





## Let me be with the kids

**S**ometimes at meals there is an adults' table and a kids' table. At times, while sitting at the adults' table, I've looked over at the kids' table and been tempted to sneak over and sit there.

Often there is more laughter at the kids' table. We adults can get so serious. Yes, part of adulthood is dealing with serious matters. We must face them, deal with them and not live in denial of the pain and challenges of life. But at the same time we must not get so busy with the serious matters that we fail to delight in the joys God sends our way.

Michael Yaconelli, in his book *Dangerous Wonder*, writes, "Just because we believe the gospel is a life-and-death matter doesn't mean we have to act as if we're dead."

Yaconelli goes on to write: "Playfulness is not a welcome idea for most of us. It sounds frivolous and shallow, distracting and irrelevant, inefficient and unproductive. That's because we live in a technological culture that worships busyness and activity. ... Play? There's no time to play."

We have no time to play because we're busy trying to gain or accomplish or produce something. Often what we are really busy doing is trying to meet the demands of the law and make ourselves acceptable and pleasing to God. The Bible says, "For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit" (Romans 8:3, 4, NIV).

When we are in Christ the requirements of the law are met. We can relax. We can take time to enjoy the goodness of God and simply delight in Him. We don't have to do more to make up for the bad we have done. We don't have to become something different before the Lord will be pleased with us. Christ makes us pleasing.

It is not a sin to laugh. Yaconelli states, "One clear sign of God's absence in society is the absence of playfulness and laughter." Laughter can be a sign of a life that is aware of and resting in God's goodness.

Often it doesn't take much for them to start laugh-

ing at the kids' table. Because God has been so good to us, it shouldn't take that much for us at the adults' table to start laughing as well.

They are often easily amused and easily amazed at the kids' table. They ask, "why?" They wonder what things are, how things work, what would happen if you did this ...? They find some things "cool" and "neat" that we adults think we have all figured out. "Been there, done that, no big deal" is our attitude.

I went with some friends and their children to a kite festival. The beauty of the kites, their bigness, how they all got in the air and stayed there amazed the kids. They enjoyed just looking and thinking and saying, "Wow!"

Have you spent time lately pondering who God is and what He has done and is doing and saying, "Wow!" Does His grace amaze you or has it become simply a theological term you think you understand? Are you, with childlike curiosity, asking questions of God, or are you attempting to give answers and orders to

God?

I like the honesty that abounds at the kids' table. If kids have a question they ask it. If they don't like something they say so. When stuff happens that one of them doesn't like, the rest of the room will probably soon hear about it. Usually with kids you don't have to wonder, what are they thinking? They tell you. You don't have to worry, will they talk differently about me when I am gone?

As we mature we should keep some things quiet. If the person next to you slurps their milk, you probably don't need to announce it to the world. We should, though, avoid making secret judgments about someone and then spreading them to others when the person is not around. The Bible says, "You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother?" (Romans 14:10, NIV).

I enjoyed being a kid. I had great parents and I knew I was loved and cared for. I'm thankful that, even though my body has gotten a little older, I am still a kid — a loved and cared for child of God.

"How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" (I John 3:1, NIV).

— **Pastor Craig Johnson**

**We can take time  
to enjoy the  
goodness of God  
and simply delight  
in Him.**



---

## SOMETHING TO SHARE

---

### Sharing my faith

**P**rom night: An enchanted evening when girls wear Barbie-doll-like gowns and young men don tuxedos and black shiny shoes. A fairytale night with friends and classmates, filled with expectations of perfection, fun and memories ... except when tragedy strikes.

Last month, April 27, my daughter's friend, Georgia Pemberton, was killed in a car accident at 11:30 p.m. after leaving the prom. No, she hadn't been drinking, neither had her escort. Instead, they were driving northbound on a four-lane road when a 33-year-old man, driving southbound, angrily decided to cross the double line to pass another car, hitting Georgia's white Mustang head on and killing her instantly. Georgia and her date were innocently driving, doing nothing wrong, and couldn't have seen it coming. The 33-year-old had a prior record. And eyewitness testimony revealed that he had been involved in a road rage incident with another car for the last mile or so and was trying to pass that car in a careless fit of anger when he hit Georgia.

Georgia was a sweet and caring girl who was loved by many. Her smile radiated warmth and kindness. Her death shook our community to the core. This is the third death of a

student from Lake Stevens High School this year.

My daughter, Malea, was devastated. Georgia had been her good friend. They had even known each other when they both attended the same middle school in another town. When Georgia moved to Lake Stevens, Malea was proud to introduce her to her friends and escort her through the halls of Lake Stevens High School.

Shortly after the news of the accident became known, Malea was sobbing, and I held her. I tried to explain that grief is so very intense in the beginning, but that it lessens as time goes on. With tears Malea said, "Yes, grief lessens, but regret only gets worse."

I said, "Is there something that you regret about Georgia?"

"I regret that I only talked to her about small things. I wish that I would have talked with her about things that really matter," was Malea's reply.

I was dumbfounded by the truthful words of wisdom coming from my 17-year-old. She's right. Later, I couldn't help but evaluate myself. How much time do I spend on things that don't really matter? How many conversations do I have that in light of eternity seem so very small? How many times have I passed up oppor-

tunities in assuming that there is always later?

James 4:14 exhorts us, "Why you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes." Then in verse 17 he goes on to say, "Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins."

What I've learned through this tragedy is that I shouldn't leave things unsaid, that I need to do today what I should. I want to talk about the big things, things that really matter, such as:

- Telling my children I love them.
- Apologizing when I'm wrong.
- Sharing Jesus with others.
- Finding opportunities to encourage those around me.
- Listening and responding with heartfelt compassion.

Georgia's death is a wake-up call for truly living. I don't know how long I have with the ones near me, but like Malea, I don't ever want to be regretful and think, "I wish I would have." I'd rather think, "I'm glad I did."

— *Cheri Carter Russum*  
*Elim Lutheran*  
*Lake Stevens, Wash.*