



I KNOW IN WHOM I BELIEVE

BY LIZ TONNESON

ometimes I am afraid. I look at all the violence, hate, and death in the world and fear for the safety of my family and friends. I wonder if, a few years down the road, my pastor

husband will be in jail for his faith. I think about Sabina Wurmbrand and Corrie Ten Boom and wonder if I will suffer for my faith as they did. Every day, Christians around the world are being tortured and killed. Countries like Syria and Iran and Nigeria seem so very far away. It is easy, and comfortable, to pretend that all is well. I wonder how soon our "peaceful" lives here in the States will be torn apart. Will we be spared? Will I have to watch awful things happen to the ones I love, just as wives, daughters, and fathers watched 21 Egyptian Christians be beheaded not too long ago? Maybe I will. I hope that I will live a long life in peace and not suffer extreme persecution. But there are no guarantees.

In times like these, when my heart is gripped with worry and I fear the future, great hymns of the faith are an encouragement and relief. Lately, I have been drawn to the hymn I Know Whom I Have Believed, written by Major Daniel Webster Whittle. I encourage you to pick up a hymnal or go online and read the verses. Written more than 130 years ago, the words are still just what I need in these uncertain days. Stanza four particularly faces the reality of an unknown future, and it is this one that draws me:

I know not what of good or ill, May be reserved for me,

Of weary ways or golden days, Before His face I see.

Oh, how I pray for good and golden days. But even if the future turns out to be full of ill and weary ways, we can still proclaim the triumphant words of II Timothy 1:12 in the chorus:

... I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

What a wonderful promise. Yes, my heart still twists in dread when I think about what could happen in future days. But our God is able to keep us, and will save us, no matter what comes our way. It may not be the path we wish to tread, but He is there with us. That is why Christians throughout the ages have been willing to give up their lives rather than their Savior. If the worst thing you can imagine were to happen, can you say with the Apostle Paul and with Major Whittle that you *know* Whom you have believed?

If your heart ever fears the future as mine does, take comfort and find peace in these words. May God grant us the courage to face whatever comes with boldness and without shrinking, and may the current evils of the world give us a greater longing for heaven.

Tonneson, a former missionary kid in Ecuador, lives in Cloquet, Minn., where her husband, Ryan, is the seminary intern at St. Paul's Lutheran.



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soundbites

Let the last psalm my dying voice can raise, extol Thy loving kindness, hymn Thy praise: Let the first notes my waking lips can frame amid th'eternal glory laud Thy name.

—Hallgrimur Petursson

We must both, I'm afraid, recognize that, as we grow older, we become like old cars—more and more repairs and replacements are necessary. We must just look forward to the fine new machines (latest Resurrection model) which are waiting for us, we hope, in the Divine garage!

-C.S. Lewis

The older a person becomes the more valuable he becomes, if in health. He possesses the same mental power as previously, plus a wealth of experience and knowledge.

—Dr. Irving Lorge

I confess, therefore, frankly that I am in no hurry to go to heaven; and when the time arrives that I must go, I am still ambitious to leave behind me operating forces and influences that will enable friends and followers to say: "Though dead, he yet speaketh."

—W. B. Riley

If you young fellows were wise, the devil couldn't do anything to you, but since you aren't wise, you need us who are old.

—Martin Luther

BY ELOISE KNUTSON



omedians regale us with life examples we quickly identify as our own dilemma. We look in the mirror and see our elder parent staring back, the hair loss, the memory gaps. We notice sagging chins

and chests that require us to find creative ways to cover up; we drop our belt lines. We chuckle as we identify ourselves in a comedian routine. But real life is not that funny—we struggle with the challenges of aging.

As an undergraduate social work student, I participated in an exercise designed to help us understand the aging process. It had a deep impact on me. Each student was each given 10 little slips of paper. On each paper we identified something of value in our lives. One slip was my independence represented by my car and my driver's license. Another represented my health, my vitality, my energy; another represented key relationships: friendships I cherished, times of wit and laughter, ability to gather with friends as I desired. Another represented my earning ability.

The instructor carefully set the stage and slowly defined one life-changing scenario after another that slowly depleted my independence, my health, and freedoms. She said I had developed a health condition that sapped my energy, and then took away that slip of paper. The loss of health cut into my income and resources—another slip gone. Now it was harder to reach out to friends and enjoy outings. Over and over she described the process of aging and how it would impact my life. Finally I was down to one slip left on the desk in front of me. My gut reaction was strong and intense. I was being robbed. I was angry—how could this happen to me? Tears welled up.

When my instructor came to take my car, which represented my independence, my sense of freedom, I was hostile and angry.

Grief and loss are very real challenges of the aging process. Some of these are clearly defined ordeals such as reduced health and income. Some are more ambiguous, subtle, and harder to define. One of the more difficult to define is a loss of respect. Western culture is quite unique. We are one of the only cultures in the world that do not embrace and respect the wisdom and experience of the elderly. This leads to a subtle marginalizing of the aging individual in our homes, our churches, and community. With the loss of value, we—the aging—lose opportunities



to be relevant to those we are called to impact. We begin to lose our sense of purpose and calling.

Where is the good news in all of this? God sees aging differently. He calls us to be like trees planted by streams of living water bearing fruit in every season (Psalm 1:3). God calls us to change the tide. We are called to be counterculture. Consider II Corinthians 4:7, which relates to this challenge: "We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our power is from God, not from ourselves." We need not settle for being defined by the world.

Here are some suggestions to counter our culture and combat the challenges of aging.

• You must have your sense of identity firmly planted in who God says you are, not your family, your job, or your health. He holds the key to your sense of self, dignity, and worth. He covers your mistakes with His mercy. He forgives your sins. His grace is sufficient for you. You were created in His image, bought with His blood; now



walk in new life. Work at absorbing these powerful keys of the faith until they are firmly planted in your soul. God defining you will change your outlook and demeanor.

- Clean out any debris that continues to trouble you. When an 80-year-old woman came to see me, she told me that in all her years of being an active Christian she had never had victory over her anger toward others who offended her. We worked on healing toxic memories to gain victory. She went home and diligently worked on forgiveness exercises, dealing with each situation. Several years later, she is still walking in victory. Victory is sweet at any age. If you struggle, call for help.
- · Practice walking in the peace and presence of our living Savior moment by moment. This mindfulness of His work in us and through us and His help in every situation keeps us moving in the Spirit. It makes us pliable to His design. We become purposeful and God-directed.
- We gain respect as we give respect. I earn the right to speak to a hurting soul by first being a good listener. Ask

important questions. How did that impact you? Clarify core issues. If I am to be relevant I must be able to identify a point of need and speak to that need. I cannot do that if I do not listen well. Here again, I am not alone; the Holy Spirit is there guiding the conversation. Speaking truth in love at a teachable moment is a beautiful thing.

Let us be the ones to turn the tide, bringing respect to our elder years. Let us commit to walking worthy of His calling, bearing fruit in every season of life for His glory.

Knutson (MSW/LICSW) is a Christian counselor, having founded Knutson Counseling & Seminars, Inc., serving Willmar and West Central Minnesota. She is a member of Scandia Free Lutheran, Glenwood, Minn., and lives in rural Kerkhoven, Minn.

BY PASTOR CRAIG JOHNSON



lga was watching her sister's casket being lowered into the grave. I was watching Olga. It was an unforgettably sad sight. For more than 50 years the sisters had lived only one block apart from each

other, but they never spoke. They went to the same church and the same women's group. Many people had tried unsuccessfully over the years to get the sisters to reconcile.

One time they both asked my mom for a ride to the women's meeting. She didn't tell either of them the other sister was going to be in the same car. When she stopped to pick up the second one the sister froze as she saw who else was in the car. My mom told her, "Get in the car. It's not that long a trip. You'll survive." They both made the trip to the meeting and back in the same car and kind of talked to each other a little bit. My mom was hopeful her attempts at reconciliation made some slight progress.

More attempts at reconciliation were made before the sister's death, and there was some communication during the last few days. The feud started when they were young and nobody seemed to know for sure what it was all about. They maybe didn't even remember themselves.

Olga's face at the graveside had a tragic look of regret. It was more than the sorrow of losing a sister. There was sorrow over all the lost years. In a way she had lost her sister 50 years earlier. Now there was regret over all those years of feuding, all those years of a broken relationship, all that had been lost and could no longer be recovered.

I heard somebody say once they had no regrets. I didn't believe them. If they truly had no regrets they were living in denial about sins they had committed.

Our regrets maybe aren't as tragic as Olga's, but we all have them because we all have sinned and fall short (Romans 3:23). We all have memories of things we wish we hadn't said, or times we wish we had shared words of encouragement but we kept silent. We remember foolish sins we did and good we failed to do. If we did an honest examination of our past history and held it up to the light of God's holiness, it would lead to regrets that would overwhelm us.

Judas Iscariot was one who was overwhelmed by regret. "When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and the elders. 'I

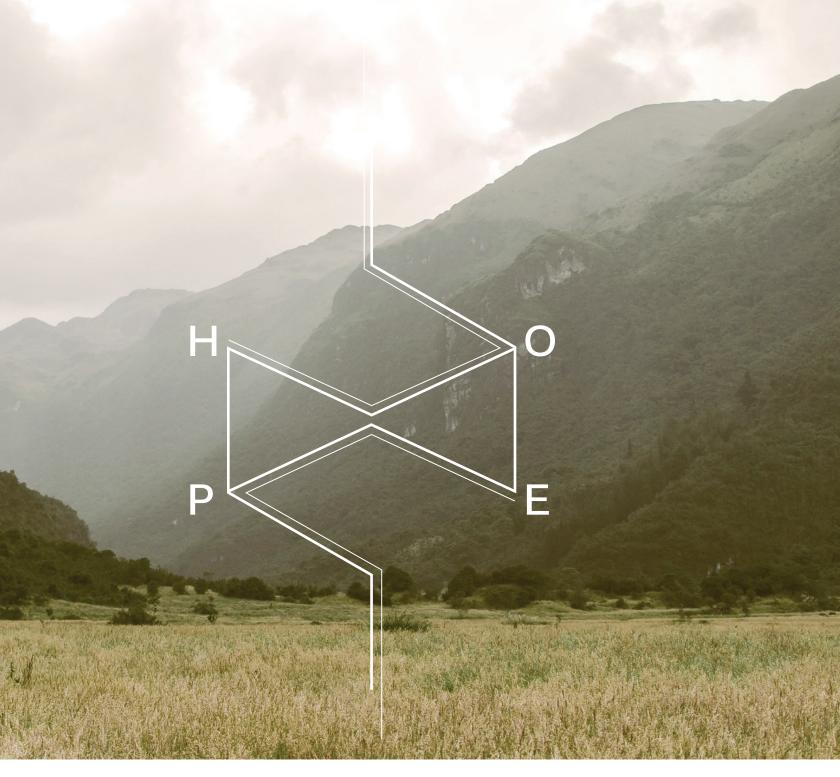


have sinned,' he said, 'for I have betrayed innocent blood'' (Matthew 27:3-4). He tried to deal with his regrets by doing what he thought was a good work of returning the money he had been given. It didn't help. His regrets and guilt were too much for him and he hung himself.

Simon Peter had tremendous regrets, as well. After Jesus was arrested, three times Peter denied that he knew his best Friend. The rooster crowed and the Lord looked at Peter. "And he (Peter) went outside and wept bitterly" (Luke 23:62).

Peter's story, however, ended much differently than the life of Judas. His regrets did not lead to despair. He became a leader of the early Church and a man full of faith and hope.

On the morning of the resurrection, the angel told the



women who had come to the tomb that Jesus had risen. "But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you" (Mark 16:7). Even though Peter had denied knowing Jesus' name, Jesus had the angel say Peter's name. He wanted Peter to know he would get to see Jesus again. The Lord showered Peter with mercy and forgiveness. Peter didn't have to live as a slave to his past regrets. The Lord's grace set him free to go forward with hope.

We don't deal with our past regrets by doing good works in the present to make up for them. It didn't work for Judas and it won't for us. Our good works can't cover our regrets. But the blood of Jesus can.

Because of the cross the Lord declares: "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more. And where these

have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin" (Hebrews 10:17-18). The Lord does not dwell on our past sins when we have faith in Christ. He calls on us to not dwell on them either, but to focus on the good news of what Christ has done. We overcome our regrets by receiving and resting in God's incredible grace.

People like Olga, who regret years of a fractured relationship, aren't going to find hope by working harder and trying to make up for what they've done. Hope is found in the good news of Jesus. Christ paid for our sin at the cross. We have the hope of healed relationships with God and His family for all eternity. The regrets of the past are overcome by the hope we find in Jesus.

Johnson serves Bethany Lutheran, Astoria, Ore.

"DO NOT CAST ME OFF IN THE TIME
OF OLD AGE; FORSAKE ME NOT WHEN
MY STRENGTH IS SPENT ... SO EVEN TO
OLD AGE AND GRAY HAIRS, O GOD, DO
NOT FORSAKE ME, UNTIL I PROCLAIM
YOUR MIGHT TO ANOTHER GENERATION,
YOUR POWER TO ALL GENERATIONS"
(PSALM 71:9, 18).

BY PASTOR DAVE FRUEHAUF



repare for retirement" is the prevailing advice given to those in their working years. This advice mostly refers to financial well-being. Magazines promote the best places to retire to, listing the amenities available for the good life. In reality, there are far more important factors involved.

The deepest and most profound factor is being spiritually grounded in the strong conviction of the truth and security of the gospel. Preparation for retirement (old age) is primarily found in our Father God, becoming grounded in His Word, prayer and worship, and being reminded of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ in the sacramental communion with the body and blood of the Savior.

Each one in the body of Christ is given a set of gifts to be used in ministry to others. When you serve others with your gifts, you are blessed in return and your faith-walk with Him is strengthened.

I have found music to be an avenue for blessing others. Presenting the melodies and messages of old-time classic songs touches hearts with pleasant memories of days gone by. For the past 20 years, I regularly see audiences encouraged by music, and I close each playing engagement with "God Bless America," "America the Beautiful," or "What a Wonderful World."

When opportunities come to serve others, accept them. It will take effort, you may get tired, but you will be blessed during your journey in the sunset years.



The most common event in aging is change. As our physical body ages, limitations set in. Activities once enjoyed become more difficult or nearly impossible to do. Friends move away or pass away. Our world seems to grow smaller. Health concerns increase and conversations with others frequently include personal descriptions of our current ailments. Adult children now have their own lives to lead; blessed is the parent who sees and is involved with them. Blessed is the senior whose grandchildren call or text to have a conversation, which encourages and creates understanding.

Adjusting to change in the senior years is not easy. Seniors want to hang on to the past. One of the key ingredients to success in old age is to think of others:



giving "a cup of cold water" (Matthew 10:42) to those in need, keeping lists of individuals and ministries to pray for, and getting out of a self-focus to seek God and come alongside others in need. I sometimes wonder about the spiritual and emotional well-being of seniors who expect perfect service for themselves.

Discovering the four-string banjo under the guest bed at age 12 was the beginning of my journey to use music as a way to bless others. Have you found and are you using your key to a meaningful, satisfying, God-serving old age?

It took four trips from my SUV to the senior facility to haul all the music and sound equipment for an engagement last February. The wind was so strong it blew the doors shut, and the wind chill was way below zero.

"Why do I do this every winter?" I thought. "I'm getting way too old! This is suffering!" At the first down beat, I knew once again why I do this. This is the most satisfying and rewarding activity to encourage others. We opened with "Zip A Dee Doo Dah," "When You're Smiling," and "The Best Things In Life are Free."

Isaiah 46:4 says, "I will be your God through all your lifetime, yes, even when your hair is white with age. I made you and I will carry you along and be your Savior."

Fruehauf, an AFLC pastor and adjunct instructor at the Free Lutheran Seminary, plays with the Banjo boys. He lives in Maple Grove, Minn., with his wife, Charlotte.

BY RHODA NILES



y sister recently said to me, "You looked just like Mom when you did that." It was a silly little thing, and we laughed together about it. But in all honesty, I am honored whenever someone tells me I did something just like my mom. Now celebrating in heaven with Jesus, both Mom and Dad had so many godly traits that I

long to emulate.

Leviticus 19:32 tells us to "Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God. I am the LORD." There have been many older people who have very much influenced my spiritual life, and it's easy

for me to honor them.

My husband and

I HAVE BEEN ABUNDANTLY BLESSED BY SO MANY GODLY PEOPLE.

I spent many years working with the youth in our church, and we realized early on that even though we could teach and encourage these young people as they navigated life, ultimately the greatest influence in their lives is their parents and family.

I was blessed to grow up in a loving,

Christian home, with parents who greatly loved the Lord, and spent all their lives living for Him and sharing Him with the world around them. Some of my earliest memories of my parents are of them reading their Bibles first thing in the morning, and communing with Jesus. As missionary Jonathan Maraj would often say, "Pickle yourself in God's Word." My mom and dad did that.

Another routine in our home was the daily family devotions, shared usually after the breakfast meal. Even if we had company staying at our home, including friends from school, we still had devotions. As adults, some of these childhood friends still remember with fondness my parents reading their Bibles and the family devotions.

My parents loved being in God's house spending time in worship, prayer, and listening to God's Word. They both were actively involved in the church in many ways, like teaching Sunday school, or even lay-preaching. I remember Mom even holding a private Sunday school class at one time for some neighborhood children who wouldn't come to regular Sunday classes because they were extremely shy and didn't feel their clothes were nice enough.

Mom and Dad lived out Romans 12:13, "Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality." They often had guests in their home for a meal or overnight.

Not wanting any praise, both would say that they weren't perfect, just sinners saved by grace. But what I saw in my parents was an active, living faith that affected everything they did in life. They pointed me to Jesus, and showed me by how they lived what faith in Jesus Christ could do in my life. And they were not the only ones who did that.

I could mention Sunday school teachers, vacation Bible school teachers, our youth leaders, and missionaries. I watched the older women take an active role in the church, calling themselves the "Do What We Can" society, and doing whatever they could to further God's kingdom. They raised funds for needs within the church, and also supported missionaries abroad.

Another group of women began a Women's Prayer Hour, gathering faithfully to pray every Monday morning for our church, our missionaries, our pastor, and our nation. They no longer meet, since most of them are in heaven now. I have learned, however, that God just moves on to the next plan. I heard recently that some of our younger women meet to walk together on a regular basis, and as they walk, they pray. Isn't God great?

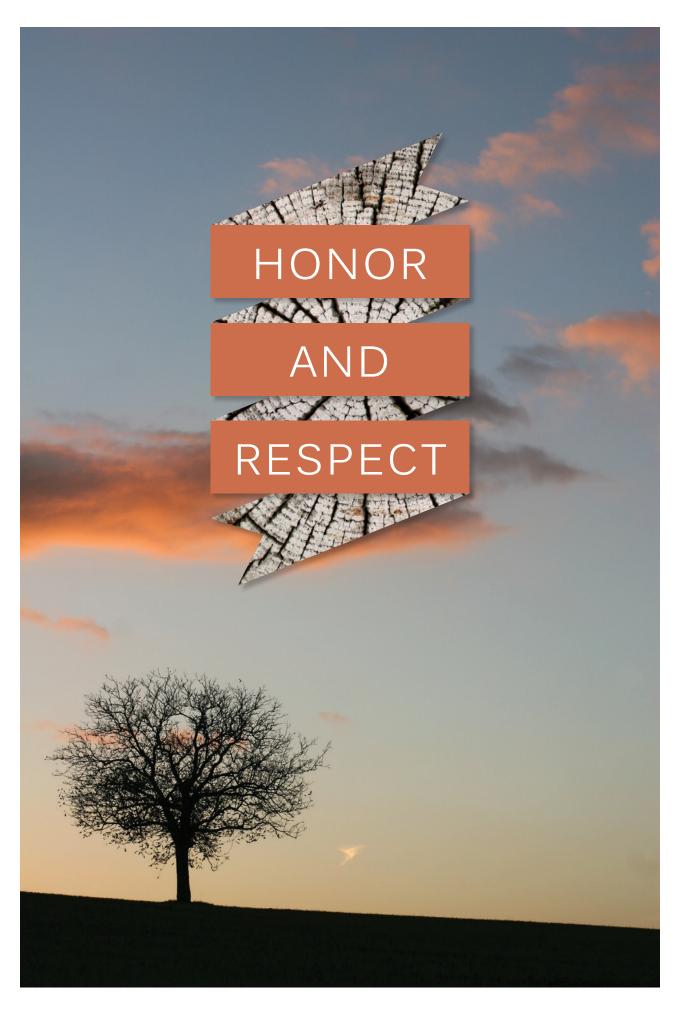
I have been abundantly blessed by so many godly people. Many of these sweet older saints are very dear to me now, and I thank the Lord for them. A few years ago, our church council decided to offer a Wednesday afternoon Bible study to our seniors so that they wouldn't have to come out at night. This has been a good example of showing honor to our older generation.

I pray that I would be found faithful, as those who left such a legacy for me. I love the lyrics of Steve Green's hymn, *Find Us Faithful*:

Surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses
Let us run the race not only for the prize.
But as those who've gone before us
Let us leave to those behind us
The heritage of faithfulness passed on through godly
lives

Oh, may all who come behind us find us faithful. May the fire of our devotion light their way. May the footprints that we leave Lead them to believe And the lives we live inspire them to obey.

Niles is a member of Helmar Lutheran, Newark, Ill.



FINDING PURPOSE IN RETIREMENT

MY STORY

BY PASTOR JAMES GERDEEN



y life has been one with two careers, but with one overall purpose. I have worked as a professor of engineering and a pastor of churches at the same time, and the challenge has been to glorify God in all that I do (I Corinthians 10:31). It has been 12 years since retirement from the full-time faculty position I held in

Colorado and our move to Missouri. The places and situations have changed, but the purpose remains the same. As the late Pastor Sidney Swensen used to say, "I am not retired but refired!" I am still doing some of the same things but at a slower pace.

Living with a purpose in the will of God brings peace and joy. Let me share some advice from the Scriptures that have guided me and hopefully will help you who are in a similar stage of life. It is assumed that you have a personal living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We should learn that being a Christian is more important than *doing* Christian work. The Apostle Peter emphasizes that we should make every effort to be sure that certain virtues are evident and growing in our lives, namely these: diligence, faith, moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, friendship, and agape love (II Peter 1:5-7). He writes, "For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (vs. 8).

I began to realize the importance of living out my Christian faith when a former student gave me a gift of a slab of lode copper with this verse inscribed that he said reminded him of me: "I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart" (Psalm 40:8). I always remember what my mother underlined in my Bible and challenged me with when I left home from college in 1955, "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (II Peter 3:18). And before that in 1952 my confirmation pastor, Pastor Ringstad, had challenged me with Matthew 6:33, "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." A commitment to these Scriptures was made early in my adult life and by God's grace will continue.

So far these principles can apply to any Christ follower. But who are you? How do you fulfill God's particular calling in this stage of your life? How has God prepared you for the next step?

Personally I am a professor and a pastor. I am a father, grandfather, and husband. Some relationships have remained the same as I age, but there are some new applications now as life has changed during retirement. The applications are to fulfill my current vision of what God calls me to do. This includes:

- To reserve time for prayer, worship, Bible study, exercise, hobbies and rest to keep body, mind and spirit refreshed.
- To seek to have a Christian influence with faculty on the University of Missouri campus. This includes weekly Bible studies and discussions.
- To focus my efforts on the international scholars here. God has given me the desire to see them come to know our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To build bridges by hosting free conversational English classes and offering academic advice to graduate students.
- To continue to preach on a part-time basis and being on call to fill in at the international church here in Columbia, Christ Lutheran in Stover, and at New Hope Lutheran in Laurie, Mo.
- · To continue to love my wife as Christ loved the Church.
- To continue to love and support our children and grandchildren as God our heavenly Father loves and supports us.

God calls each of us in different ways. How has God prepared you for this HOW HAS GOD

time in your life? Carpenters and handy men can help build churches. Many go on short-term mission trips. Others prayerfully and financially support those who go. We have a 91-year-old lady here who takes delight in baking cookies for our internationals during the time for refreshments.

The book, The Call, by Os Guinness has helped to keep God's call fresh in my mind during these recent years. There are 25 chapters and at the end of each chapter he adds: "Listen to Jesus of Nazareth; answer His call."

Some of us may think of retirement as only relaxation on the beach. However, think of how God called and used Abraham, Moses, Caleb, and others in their old age. If you are feeling restless maybe God is calling you. On a family trip, the restless child asks his father, "Are we home yet?" God is our heavenly Father. Some of us, His children, are not home yet. There are people yet to reach and places for

Gerdeen, a member of the AFLC clergy roster, lives in Colombia, Mo.



BACK IN ECUADOR

Cross Cultural Ministry class gets hands-on experience in missions

Free Lutheran Bible School has traveled to Cuenca, Ecuador, during spring break. The trip is not a typical college vacation. Instead, students gain a wealth of experience in culture, language skills, outreach, evangelism, and ministry.

This year, 17 students from AFLBS—the majority of them juniors—and five adults visited Cuenca April 6-18. They worked with a team of young adults from Paz de Dios church, as well as teachers and leadership at the Bilingue Christian school to host a Spiritual Emphasis week for students in elementary through high school. The students led worship, helped with crafts, shared their testimonies, and presented skits. They also had a chance to work with AFLC missionaries Justo and Tricia Pillman, who work with the youth at Paz de Dios church. In their own words, five students share about how the experiences impacted their lives.



TOP: Taty Parra and Janaya Crestik chat curing a Sunday get together with college-age students from Paz de Dios church. ABOVE: Students at the Biligue school.







TOP: Sarah Bellefy hugs a student from the Bilingue school at the end of the Spiritual Emphasis week. MIDDLE: Jayce Hall, Alex Woodworth, and Aislinn Fogarty play a game of pickup basketball with students from the Bilingue school. BOTTOM: After the closing program, the AFLBS team and the leaders from Paz de Dios church posed for a group picture.

JOSEPH LARSON

ever before have I seen God's hand work in such a visible manner. Be it protecting us from all types of dangers, providing for every need that arose, or leading hearts to His grace, His Word went out and moved within all of us. The only way to describe our experience is that God picked us up in His hand and put us exactly where He wanted us with His Word in our mouths. Lamentations 3:24 says, "The Lord is my portion, says my soul, 'therefore I will hope in Him." Now the key to being back in the U.S. becomes keeping our hope in Him, our perfect portion. If He wants us, He'll use us.

Larson, a junior at AFLBS, is a member of Abiding Faith Free Lutheran, Ortonville, Minn.

NICOLE PERSSON

■ hile in Ecuador God allowed me to see many of His glorious works. He especially allowed me to witness His strength and power in people. In Isaiah 40:31 it says, "Yet those who wait for the LORD will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary." I believe this verse well illustrates what He did for our team and the other volunteers while we were there working. We were weak in our lack of knowledge in the language and culture, but instead of becoming tired and unwilling, God gave us the strength and motivation to continue to bring the His good news to the children of the Bilingue School and to the people of Ecuador.

Persson, a junior at AFLBS, is a member of Emmanuel Lutheran of Aspelund, Kenyon, Minn.

AUDREY KNUUTTILA

n Ecuador, God impressed on me the familiar words of II Corinthians 12:9, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." I was asked to give my testimony in Spanish—something that terrified me because I don't speak Spanish. In front of a gym full of teenagers I was nervous and kept messing up, but the students were so encouraging. Each time I made a mistake they would clap, which God used to involve them in my story and make me more comfortable speaking with them. God showed me that He is bigger than my weakness and can work through them, that I cannot do anything on my own, but that every success comes from Him. "Such confidence we have through Christ. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God" (II Corinthians 3:4-5).

Knuuttila, a junior at AFLBS, is a member of Grace Free Lutheran, Pelkie, Mich.



year, Hermon became paralyzed due to an accident, but when a group from our team came to visit he spoke with a true peace and reliance on God. He encouraged us with passages of Scripture and spoke of the fact that God uses pain in our lives to bring us closer to Him. It brought joy to my heart to be able to pray with this brother in Christ who I had just met and tears to my eyes as I saw how God had worked through his life.

Crestik, from Wrenshall, Minn., finished her junior year at AFLBS.

NATHAN GUNDERSON

hile the team was in Cuenca helping at the Bilingue School during their Spiritual Emphasis Week, I learned one of my biggest lessons during one of our days off. It happened on Sunday morning during the worship service at Paz de Dios Church. The only part of the service that most of the team was able to understand was when we sang two songs in English for the congregation. During the second song we sang, which was "Holy, Holy, Holy," the congregation recognized the tune and started singing along in Spanish. This had a pretty big impact on most of the team, that both Ecuadorians and Americans sang in two separate languages, but were worshiping the same God. It showed how God loves both peoples and understands both perfectly when we don't understand each other. This definitely expanded my worldview and gave me a glimpse of just how big the Kingdom of God really is.

Gunderson, from Brush Prairie, Wash., finished his junior year at AFLBS.









CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: The elementary team, including Kevin Rico, Scott Quanbeck, Alisha Kneeland, and Christian Gplaza, lead worship. The guys volunteered on a house work project. Sarah Hoiland talked with people during an evangelism event in a local park. Giovanny Romero led the evangelism event. Diana Alverson helps a student with crafts.



HE IS WILLING

BY HEIDI NELSON

"Isn't this that man with that gross disease? Are you really healed? How did you know this other man would make you clean? He not only healed you but touched you while you had that awful disease. Who is this man who touched you? I wonder if He would heal me ..."

Can you imagine people's thoughts when they heard what

him" (Luke 5:13).

had happened?

Jesus not only gave this diseased, outcast man attention, Jesus healed him. He could have said the word and the man would have been as good as new. But Jesus shows a whole new level of compassion and kindness by actually touching this contagious man. Isn't the love of Jesus amazing? There is nothing too gross on the inside or outside of you and me that Jesus is not willing to touch and make clean. "While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

We all want to fix ourselves, but Jesus just wants us to admit we can't do it. Whether it's for the first time today or you just need your heart to be reminded, bring that struggle, that sin, before Him. It's not too gross. He is willing to help you. He wants to forgive you and make you clean. Yes, we still sin. And it is discouraging

if we keep our focus on ourselves. Instead, "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy

set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2). And take hope that "He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6).

Jesus is our life and breath, hope and joy. In Him we find freedom and direction. Only in Jesus do we find our true identity. He not only cleans (or forgives) us, but He also fills us up with His Holy Spirit and sets us on a mission to share with others that He "is willing." He is willing to forgive the sin and call us His own children.

FLY 2015 is just a few weeks away. There's still time for you to encourage those teens in your life to join us. If you are reading this article, please stop right now to pray and continue praying. Praise the Lord for the ways He is already working

in hearts. Pray that every student would fall in love with Jesus. Pray for God to open up the heavens and pour out His Spirit.

Pray that as many lay down and exchange their disease and sin for a new identity in Him, His Spirit would move in mighty ways, speaking to each heart with a calling and passion to share that Jesus "is willing."

Keep your eyes on Jesus. He loves you.

Nelson, the devotional life secretary for the FLY 2015 committee, is a member of Hope Lutheran, Minneapolis.



Dear mighty women of the AFLC,

With the exuberance that pours out of missionary Jonni Sliver, she greeted the WMF by video saying, "To the mighty women of the WMF." As I consider the prayer and financial support of the WMF for our missionaries, I reaffirm that you truly are mighty women of God. The WMF donates \$500 per month to each missionary's personal support. Your efforts put feet to the Great Commission around the world. Let me give you a glimpse of what you are doing in each country by supporting missionaries.

- Brazil—Jonathan and Tamba Abel plant churches and guide the work of our Bible school and seminary. Paul and Becky Abel plant churches and oversee the work of the ARCA retreat center. Jonni Sliver watches over the spiritual and physical lives of the children at the Miriam Children's Home.
- Mexico—Todd and Barb Schierkolk plant churches and specialize in reaching and discipling children.
- Uganda—Nate and Rhoda Jore and Micah Berger have started a training program for pastors with the Ambassador Institute. This training has grown to more than 250 students.
- Ecuador—Justo and Patricia Pillman disciple youth and people of all ages.

To the mighty women of the WMF, I offer my heartfelt thanks. Your prayer and financial support of our missionaries is making a difference in our world that needs Jesus more every day.

Thank you.

Del Palmer, Director of AFLC World Missions

WMF response:

The "M" in WMF stands for missions. It has been our priority and privilege to help support AFLC missionaries on the field for more than 50 years. Keeping AFLC women informed of the prayer, physical, and support needs is an ongoing process.

At the June 2014 WMF convention, our members acted in faith to budget \$42,000 for missionary support, to include a newly commissioned missionary to Uganda. So far in 2015, donations have kept pace to fulfill this planned support.

Two new missionaries will be commissioned at the annual conference in June. This would add an additional \$12,000 a year to our budget if we continued the \$500/month pledge to support each missionary family. There are also five new families that are in the process of becoming AFLC missionaries in the next couple of years. The budget to support these families would then increase to \$84,000.

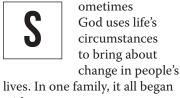
Members of the WMF national board asked that Pastor Palmer and members of the World Missions Committee direct the WMF on how its members could be of the most help to them. At their April meeting it was decided that the money directed to World Missions through the WMF, *unless designated to a specific missionary family*, would be dispersed at the discretion of the World Missions Committee. Both Palmer and members of the committee have personal information on support and needs that each missionary family daily encounters.

Through faith budgeting, we press on with God's work.



GOD USES AN ORANGE

BY PASTOR JONATHAN AND TAMBA ABEL



lives. In one family, it all began with an orange.

One morning, baby Joel began choking on a piece of orange. In a panic, his mother, Lucia, ran to their neighbor Maria for help. Maria was a member of our AFLC church in Iretama, Brazil. She had invited Lúcia and Octávio Ingles many times to go with her to church, but they always found an excuse not to go. In fact, when Pastor John and Ruby Abel, AFLC missionaries, came to the neighborhood with Maria to visit door-to-door, Lúcia would close the shutters of her windows and pretend no one was home.

But now Lúcia needed

Maria's help. That morning, Maria had been getting ready to go to church but dropped everything to help her neighbor. Upon arriving at Lúcia's house, Maria's first response was to pray. Immediately, Joel coughed out the piece of orange.

As Maria left for church, Octávio said to Lúcia, "A great thing just happened here. We must go to church."

So they went to church and came to know Christ as their personal Savior. Octávio and Lúcia became active Christians and brought up their children in God's ways. Their boys grew up going to Bible camps hosted by the mission work and spending time working with the missionaries. Those who had a great impact on their lives were Pastor George and Helen Knapp, Pastor Connely and Carolyn Dyrud, and the Abels.

Eventually the Ingles family moved away from Iretama, though they always participated in our churches. The three sons got married and became policemen. They finally all settled in Maringá, where they began to meet for Bible study in their homes. That is when our family had the privilege of moving to Maringá in answer to their prayers to establish an AFLC church here.

It has been exciting to see how the Lord has worked in this family over the years, through the development of Otávio and Lúcia in their faith, then working with their sons in their teen years, and now teaching confirmation to their grandchildren, who are helping out in the kids' club, etc.

Already new people are being reached through friendships, invitations to home meetings, and a kids' club.

That little orange incident ended up rendering some real spiritual fruit that keeps on producing. To God be all the glory.

God's Word never returns void. "For in this the saying is true: 'One sows and another reaps'" (John 4:37), for He is faithful, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase" (I Corinthians 3:6).

The Abels are AFLC missionaries serving in Maringá, Brazil.

Eleven confirmed at Newark Lutheran



Eleven students were confirmed in April at Newark Lutheran, Newark, Ill. Pictured are (from left) Faith Hart, James Martin, Austin Fletcher, Jacob Slivka, Evelyn Martin, Tanner Kunkel, Karter Kunkel, Rachel Jacobson, Corey Jacobson, Mackenzie Fletcher, Pastor Luke Emerson, and Bailey Fletcher.



Goff hired as business manager of AFLC

Emily Goff has accepted the position of Director of Business Management for the General Fund of the AFLC. Goff, who began her duties on May 11, has considerable accounting and human resources experience. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in accounting from the University of Northwestern, St. Paul, in 2010. Goff is also a 2003 graduate of the Association Free Lutheran Bible School and a 2005 graduate of the Ministry Training Institute. She is a member of Hope Lutheran, Minneapolis.

Alaska VBS, The Net ministries begin

John and Hannah Lee and Anja Ferkinghoff will travel to the Alaska Mission in June to present vacation Bible school programs to remote villages. The VBS team will land in Naknek and quickly gather their supplies to head out for six weeks of ministry. Please begin praying for their ministry and the children of these villages:

The schedule: June 8-12 in Ekwok, June 15-19 in Igiugig, June 22-26 in Egegik, June 29-July 3 Kokhanok, July 6-10 in South Naknek, and July 13-17 in Naknek.

Kenn Graham and Bobbie Overgaard will manage The Net ministry over the summer months. The Net is a coffee house ministry that focuses on building relationships with visitors from around the world who descend on Naknek during the summer months to work in the fishing canneries.



BRAD NOVACEK Angus, Minn.

was born on Jan. 26, 1982 in Crookston, Minn., to Darrell and Darlene Novacek. I grew up on our family farm outside Angus, Minn., and attended a small country church a few miles away. At age 12, I began attending Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Thief River Falls, Minn., where I was confirmed.

I joined the Minnesota National Guard during my senior year and left for Basic Training late the following summer. Upon completion, I enrolled at AFLBS for the spring semester of 2001, completing a total of three semesters there. In 2003, I was deployed to the Balkans with the military and received the inward call to ministry during that time.

When I returned home, I completed my final semester at AFLBS where I met my good friend Sara Russell. After a military deployment to Iraq, I enrolled at Northwestern College, seeking a Biblical Studies degree, and grew closer with Sara. We were married in July 2008. After graduating from Northwestern College, I enrolled at AFLTS in 2010, where my training was interrupted by a deployment to Kuwait. I then returned to my studies at AFLTS.

My internship has been at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Canton, S.D., and Skrefsrud Lutheran Church in Beresford, S.D., under Pastor Perry Bauer. It has been an eventful year with the death of Pastor John Mundfrom at Skrefsrud Lutheran, severe community flooding in Canton, and the birth of our first child, Madison Lee, in February of this year.

We have accepted a call to Mt. Sion Lutheran Church in Kasson, Minn., and Zion Lutheran Church in Dexter, Minn. We will greatly miss our brothers and sisters in South Dakota with whom we have both laughed and cried, but we are excited to see what God has in store for us as we enter the ministry in His kingdom.

AFLBS Proclaim Choir travels to Minnesota, SD during tour



embers of the Association Free Lutheran Bible School Proclaim Choir visited churches in Minnesota and South Dakota during a recent spring tour. The choir traveled April 24-26 and visited Abiding Faith Free Lutheran, Ortonville, Minn., Redeemer Free Lutheran, Canton, S.D., Living Word Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D., and Emmanuel Lutheran, Kenyon, Minn. Traveling with the choir was Pastor Wade Mobley, dean of the Free Lutheran Seminary and president of the AFLC Schools. The choir is pictured at Falls Park, Sioux Falls. The 31-member choir is led by Andrew Hanson. (Photo submitted by Robin Weiner, a member of Living Word Free Lutheran.)

AFLBS Concer

The AFLBS Concert Choir toured the country during a two-week spring break April 2-19. Video of the choir's preconcert is available online at: vimeo.com/123985551.

World Missions News

- Pastor Del Palmer (director of World Missions), his wife, Karen, and AFLC missionaries Pastor Paul and Becky Abel (serving in Curitiba, Brazil) traveled to Switzerland in May to visit a church pastored by Augusto Fiuri, a former member of the Curitiba congregation. The team evaluated how the AFLC and the AILLB (Brazil) can work together to support founding a Free Lutheran work in Switzerland.
- Pastor Andy and Monica Coyle, who have been serving as AFLC missionaries on loan to East European Mission Network (EEMN) in Petrodolina, Ukraine, are returning to the States this month. He has accepted a call to serve the Black Hills Gathering, a Home Missions church plant in Rapid City, S.D., and will begin ministry there in September.

Mercy and Truth publishes new book on the history of the Lutheran Evangelical Movement

Mercy and Truth Publishers has released a new book on the later years of the Lutheran Evangelistic Movement (LEM). Titled, *Arise and Build*, the book was written by pastors Steve Lombardo, Michael Brandt, Kurt Linn, and Gary Alfson, and Wayne Hanson. Containing the history of LEM Deeper Life during the more recent days of the organization, this new book continues the work of Jonathan Anderson, who wrote on the earlier days of LEM in his book titled, *Our Fathers Saw God's Mighty Works*. The goal of both books is to create interest in the work of evangelism, especially through church movements.

Arise and Build contains sermons by various LEM evangelists. It is available through Mercy and Truth Publishers for \$12.50. Anderson's book is available through LEM Deeper Life and Ambassador Publications.

Mercy and Truth Publishers is a ministry of Alma Free Lutheran of rural Arygle, Minn., under the direction of Pastor Dennis Gray. To order a copy of *Arise and Build*, write to MTP, 19594 350th Street, Newfolden, MN 56738. The book is printed by Lakeside Press in Willmar, Minn.

PEOPLE & PLACES

Ryan Tonneson has accepted a call to serve the Gateway Gathering, a Home Missions church plant in Mesa, Ariz. Tonneson graduated from the Free Lutheran Seminary in May after serving an internship at St. Paul's Lutheran, Cloquet, Minn.

Pastor Micah Hjermstad has accepted a call to serve St. Paul's Free Lutheran, Fargo, N.D. Hjermstad currently serves Hope Free Evangelical Lutheran, Ishpeming, Mich.

Brad Novacek has accepted a call to serve Mt. Sion Lutheran Church in Kasson, Minn., and Zion Lutheran Church in Dexter, Minn. Novacek graduated from the Free Lutheran Seminary in May after serving a year-long internship at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Canton, S.D., and Skrefsrud Lutheran Church in Beresford, S.D.

Rob Edwards has accepted a call to Good Shepherd Free Lutheran, Cokato, Minn. Edwards graduated from the Free Lutheran Seminary in May after finishing a year-long internship in December at Bethel Free Lutheran, Grafton, N.D.

Pastor David Nelson has accepted a call to serve Badger Creek Lutheran and Oiland Lutheran, both of Badger, Minn. The congregations were previously served by Pastor Gary Skramstad, who has retired.

Pastor Seth Forness has accepted a call to serve as associate pastor of Christ the King Free Lutheran, Pipestone, Minn., and will begin in early August. Since his ordination Forness has been the associate pastor of Maranatha Free Lutheran, Glyndon and Ulen, Minn.

The Association Retreat Center raised more than \$32,000 during the Give Big 2015 campaign, a community fund-raiser held April 28 in the St. Croix Valley. Donations included more than \$10,000 in matching gifts, and more than \$6,000 in pledges.

Dr. Gabriela Armijos, who attended AFLBS in 2008, will serve for two years at Christian Hospital Tank in Pakistan under the World Mission Prayer League. Armijos, who is from Paz de Dios church in Cuenca, Ecuador, applied for a visa to serve in Pakistan 10 years ago.

David Lusk, a 2015 graduate of AFLTS, was ordained May 24 at Good Shepherd Lutheran, Camarillo, Calif., with Pastor Lyndon Korhonen, AFLC president, officiating.

Pastor Tim Banks accepted a call to serve Our Savior's Lutheran, Cannon Falls, Minn. He was installed May 3, with Pastor Lyndon Korhonen, AFLC president, officiating. Banks had previously served as youth pastor at Our Saviour's Lutheran, Zumbrota, Minn.

Pastor Kenneth Thoreson has resigned from Tanglewood Community Church in Seabring, Fla., after serving there 11 years. He is available for interim or full-time work.

Pastor Kent Sperry will be installed July 19 at Prince of Peace Lutheran, Beulah, N.D., with Pastor Lyndon Korhonen officiating.

Nathan Olson, a 2015 graduate of AFLTS, will be ordained July 26 at Ruthfred Evangelical Lutheran, Bethel Park, Pa., with Pastor Lyndon Korhonen officiating.

Nate Nash, youth pastor at Ebenezer Lutheran, Northwood, N.D., has accepted a call to serve as senior pastor of the congregation. Nash is a 2005 graduate of AFLBS and has studied at the Lutheran Brethren Seminary.

Licensed Pastor Clayton Wilfer has accepted a call to Word of Life Free Lutheran, Upsala, Minn.

Pastor Joel Walde has resigned as pastor of Our Savior's Lutheran, Dillon, Mont.

APRIL MEMORIALS

AFLBS

Ruth Claus Larry Olson (3)

AFLTS

Joseph Iverson Evie Schneider Adeline McCarlson Larry Olson Faye McGinnity

Evangelism

Arthur Arneson Adeline McCarlson

World Missions

Arthur Arneson Harold Palmer

FLAPS

Darlene Davidson

Home Missions

Darlene Davidson Gerald Madison Arthur Arneson Edwin Hershel Etlar Jacobsen

Miriam Home Stowe Lenderman

Vision

Arthur Arneson

Adeline McCarlson **Youth Ministries**

AFLC BENEVOLENCES January 1-April 30, 2015

FUND	REC'D IN APRIL	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$30,044	\$122,190	\$114,967
Evangelism	20,422	49,658	52,775
Youth Ministries	17,897	42,234	51,009
Parish Education	15,048	46,871	42,291
Seminary	18,094	89,211	82,276
Bible School	49,581	139,834	146,865
Home Missions	34,743	154,583	138,691
World Missions	31,510	121,007	151,443
Personal Support	42,653	162,624	151,689
TOTALS	\$263,992	\$928,212	\$932,006

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

A FEW THOUGHTS ON FUNERALS

unerals have changed. One cannot point to a particular time when the changes started; they probably developed quite gradually. The obituaries even suggest that funerals are becoming fewer; not because fewer people are dying, of course, but because in our secularizing society it seems more fitting to schedule a party at a bar or restaurant to honor the memory of the departed one. Have you noticed that people avoid the word "death"?



Pastor Robert Lee

Even in churches, we're invited to "celebrate the life" of the one who died rather than to attend his or her funeral. Shouldn't the life that we celebrate be the life of Jesus Christ, our only hope and comfort in times of sorrow, as well as the sure hope of

the believing dead?

One of our retired pastors who attends many funerals confessed that he counts ("I know it's not right," he said) the number of times that God or Christ are mentioned and the number of times that the departed is mentioned.

"God never wins," he declared sadly. This writer recalls a service where the pastor announced that the deceased had specifically instructed him to talk about Jesus, not about her, and then he proceeded to use this as an example of what a wonderful woman of faith she was. No, it is not wrong to mention the departed, and one or two will often speak briefly on behalf of the family. But a separate service, perhaps on the previous evening, might be the best occasion to have an "open mic" for anyone who wants to speak. (This writer recalls a funeral director who said that sometimes he was tempted to go and lift up the lid of the casket to see who was there, because the one that he was hearing about didn't sound at all like the one that he put in.)

A funeral service should be a worship

service, with God's Word at the center. Preach to the living, pastors are always reminded. There are appropriate Scripture verses that may be read, reminding us of the brevity of life, of eternity, of God's comforting presence ... and most of all of Jesus Christ, who purchased our pardon on Calvary's cross and procured for us eternal life. Preach the gospel, pastors, for it is God's good news that heals our sorrows, and there may even be someone present who has never heard it before. Let not eulogy predominate.

Perhaps all of us—but especially the oldest—need to leave per-

sonal funeral instructions to guide our families and friends. Think about the following:

- What do you want included in your obituary?
- Are there some special musical selections or hymns that you would select? Many years ago in Zion Lutheran, Tioga, N.D., the organist played *The Hallelujah Chorus* as family and friends marched out at the close

of the service. Powerful! I also recall the man from Cokato who asked that we sing *I Look Not Back* at his funeral, because that was his testimony. Some will remember, too, that Pastor Chris Oswood requested the Bible school choir to sing *God's Son Has Made Me Free* at his funeral in the chapel. Think about what you would include.

- Perhaps there are certain portions of Scripture that you would want read. Write it down, please. Occasionally a pastor will have the privilege of looking through the Bible of the one who died and finding verses that have been marked.
- Leave clear instructions for the pastor that a message of sin and grace would be proclaimed and that the gospel would

predominate. Give them Jesus.

- Have you made arrangements with a funeral director? Have you purchased a cemetery lot? Both my parents and my in-laws had done so, and it was such a relief that the family did not have this burden added to our sorrow.
- Would you prefer cremation? If so, tell your family. We're told that this is the choice of a majority in our Twin Cities.

The last thought is a reminder that involves more than one's funeral planning. What does Jesus mean to you? Tell it now before it's too late. Too many times the

A funeral service should be a worship service, with God's Word at the center.

pastor is told that parents didn't really talk about their faith, but that they lived it. Faith needs to be lived, of course, but faith also needs to be spoken. Consider Romans 10:9, "If we confess with our mouth Jesus as Lord ..." and Psalm 107:2, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so." We don't have to preach sermons, but just break a bit from our northern European formality and say that we love the Lord. And what a comfort it is when we remember the words of departed dear ones who spoke their faith and lived it.

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd. Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

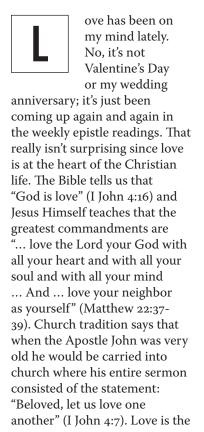
Periodicals

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

something to share

TO LOVE AS GOD LOVES

BY JOAN CULLER



fruit of the Holy Spirit poured out into us (Galatians 5:22) and the identifying mark of all Christians (John 3:35). The New Testament commands us to love more than 50 times.

So why do we find it hard to love certain people? I think the answer lies in the way we define love. For most of us, love means certain feelings: tenderness, affection, and attachment, which we expect (or at least hope) to have reciprocated. Unfortunately, there are plenty of people, even in our own churches and families, for whom we cannot muster up those feelings. We struggle to love people who have qualities that annoy us, who have hurt us or treated us badly, or who disagree with us. How can we love people we don't even like? How can we love people who don't like us?

A careful reading has convinced me that biblical love is not about feelings, but actions. We can't control our emotions, but we can control what we do in response to them. We are to love others in the way we behave toward them. The Apostle John, in his first epistle, tells us to love "not in word or talk but in deed and in truth." The love verses in the Bible are filled with action words: "serve one another in love" (Ephesians 4:2); "speak the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15); "spur one another on to love" (Hebrews 10:24); "pursue love" (I Timothy 2:22); and in fact "do everything in love" (I Corinthians 16: 14). In some verses the instructions are even more specific: "outdo one another in showing honor" (Romans 12:10); "if your enemy is hungry, feed him" (Romans 12:20); "bless those who

persecute you" (Romans 12:14); "pray for those who abuse you" (Luke 6:28).

Next time I am confronted with a person I find difficult to love (and it will be soon), I plan to ask the Holy Spirit to help me behave in accordance with the love qualities described in Colossians 3:12-17: "compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other." The Apostle Paul calls this "walking by the spirit" (Galatians 5:16). Loving actions lead to freedom and peace; and as Paul adds, "against such things there is no law" (Galatians 5:23).

Culler is a member of St. Paul's Evangelical Free Lutheran of Leitersburg, Md.