

The Lutheran AMBASSADOR

June 10, 1997

Hope for the next generation

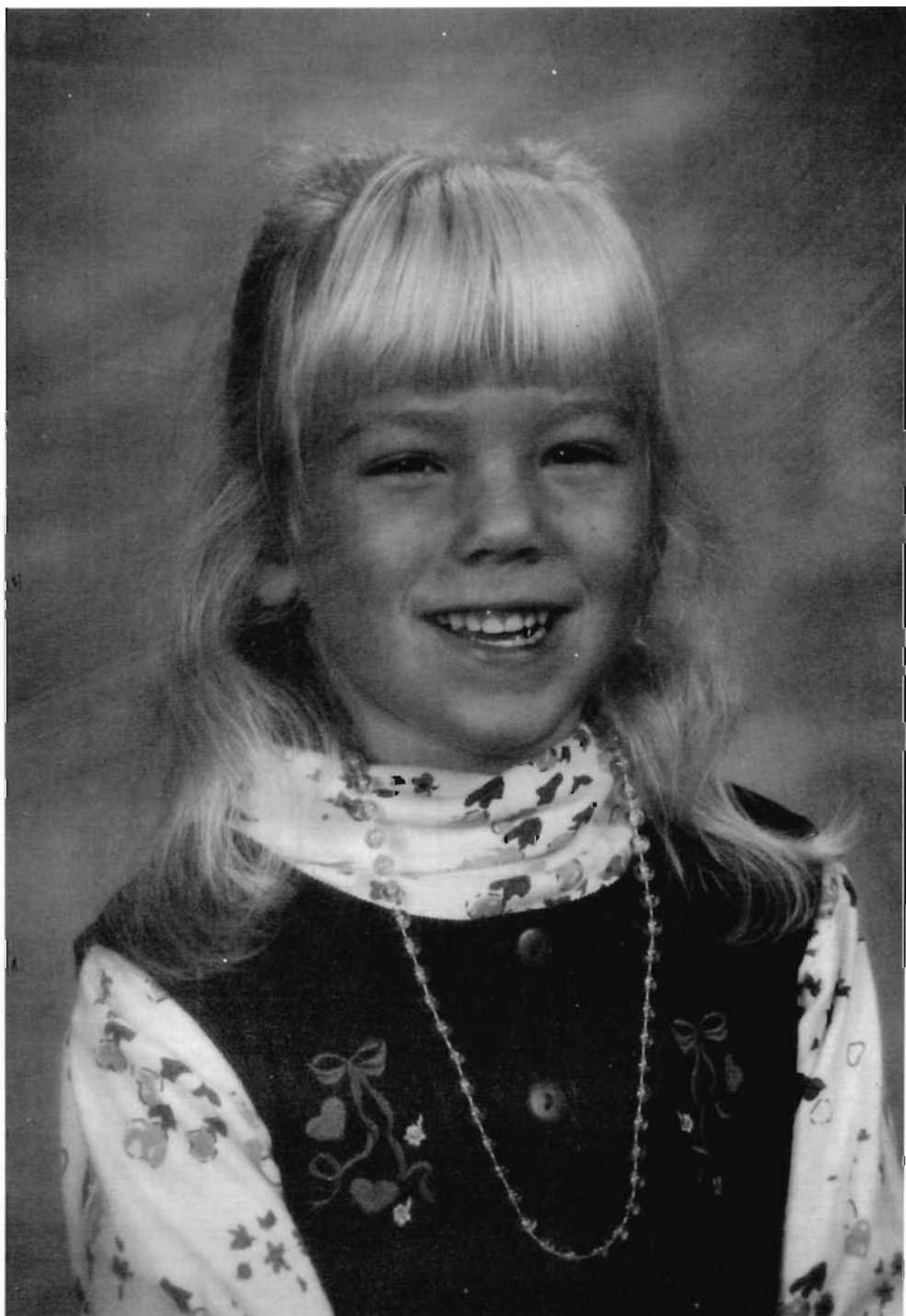
**Making worship
understandable**

**How much
is enough?**

***Setting priorities
in family activities***

**Training our
children:**

***The battle to
be engaged***



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June 10, 1997
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Jesus loves kids

People were bringing little children to Jesus to have Him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, He was indignant. He said to them, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.' And He took the children in His arms and blessed them.

— Mark 10:13-16

When the children were becoming a nuisance to the adults, Jesus was not pleased. He clearly instructed them to let the children come to Him, then picked them up in His arms and blessed them. I wonder if He didn't give them a big hug as well! Children were always important to Him, and He had time for them, even in the midst of the great demands of the adult world.

The story is told of an eleven-year-old boy named Rusty who still had the look of a little boy. He was homeless, not old enough to be hardened, but certainly old enough to be frightened. His mother lived in town, but she didn't want him. Rusty lived in the alley behind a little shop, sleeping in a cardboard box. In an effort to get legal custody transferred to a Christian foster home, a little group met in an attorney's office: Rusty, his mother, the social worker, the attorney and a pastor.

The attorney carefully explained to Rusty's mother what was happening. He wanted to make sure she understood that, in effect, she was losing all rights to her boy. Everyone was on the verge of tears, that is, with the exception of Rusty's mom. Then came the question: "Mrs. Brown, do you understand that when you sign this form, you are signing over all legal custody to the desig-

AN ENCOURAGING WORD

nated children's home?"

She nodded her head in the affirmative.

"Mrs. Brown, do you have any questions?"

She had only one. "Do I get any money for this?"

Everyone seemed a bit dazed with such a self-centered and heartless question. There was a long pause. Finally, Rusty himself pulled out his billfold, extracted a dollar he had earned sweeping floors, and gave it to his mother. She actually took it!

In less obvious ways, all over America, there are parents who are trading their parental responsibilities, and their children for the almighty dollar. Kids shouldn't have to grow up by themselves. Jesus said, "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?" (Mark 8:25). Perhaps we can paraphrase it by saying: "What good is it for a man/woman to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their children?"

It's a wonderful opportunity to help mold the lives of children, whether our own children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews or our neighbors. We can take time for them, love them, play with them, pick them up and hug them, pray for them and be a wonderful example to them. That blesses Jesus too!

When he entered baseball's Hall of Fame, ex-sluggo Harmon Killebrew recalled, "My father used to play with my brother and me in the yard. Mother would come out and say, 'You're tearing up the grass.' 'We're not raising grass,' Dad would reply, 'We're raising boys!'" May God give us love for the children.

— Pastor David Skordahl
Dalton, Minnesota

sound bites

"The motto of the lifesaving station is, you have to go out to rescue them, you don't have to come back. That

1 is a picture of what it will take to save the young people of this generation. It will take people with courage and boldness who hear the cries of the dying young people."

—Ron Hutchcraft

"We desperately need to consider the purpose of what we are doing. We must ask

4 the questions, 'Why do we do youth ministry? Who are we trying to reach? and How are we going to reach them?'"

—Kevin Olson

6 "A lot of people would be surprised at the interest many unbelieving kids have in knowing Christ."

—Steve Keels

"The child
2 **you want to raise as an upright and honorable person requires a lot more of your time than your money."**

—George Varky

3 "When an adult male truly understands the meaning of three words — time, commitment, and responsibility — then, in my opinion, he can call himself a father and a man."

—Wade Horn

"While small church youth ministry has its problems and frustrations, it also has joys and possibilities. I love working in small churches for a number of reasons:

- There are opportunities to create 'family.'
- There are more opportunities for youth involvement.
- There are more opportunities for personal contact."

—Rick Chromey

5



THEY HAVE QUESTIONS

LOOKING FOR REAL ANSWERS

A note was recently found in a church hymnal. The beginning of the note said:

"What am I doing here? I don't belong here, this is all irrelevant to me. I am starting out at the letter 'A' and these people are already at 'X' and counting. I don't know if the Bible is God's Word. I don't even know if God is real. What good does church do me? It doesn't address my questions. It assumes I'm a believer and goes from there. ... Where can you ask questions and find out what you're getting into with this Christianity thing."



— Pastor Kevin Olson
AFLC Youth Ministries Director

Making worship

The pastor found out that a visitor had written this, a young girl visiting her boy friend. As a visitor, she has given us a clear perspective of our unchurched society. As a seeker, she challenges us to consider if we are reaching out to those who come right to our door.

As a youth, she shows us that there are young people with questions who are looking for real answers. How do we make worship understandable to our youth?

I asked some of the Bible School students how they would answer that question and received some good insights.

Shawn Danielson: "Youth need to understand what worship is, thanking God for what He has done, praising Him for who he is, with a sense of reverence."

Holly Roed: "They must know God personally before they can really worship Him, that involves getting to know Him, appreciating Him, and caring about Him."

Come Home

As a young lady was walking one day by the seaside with her hair waving in the wind, she thought about Love and Truth and wondered where they had gone. She sat by the shore sinking her feet into the warm and soft sand.

As she sat, she watched the sun go down. She felt like the sun was slipping into darkness.

Then she started to remember a story her mother once told her about a baby who was born and had come to earth from Love. Her mother said He died on the cross and He did it because of His love for us.

Could a person actually love me so

much that he died for me? A tear dropped from her face.

She tried to remember this man who she had kept out of her life. Jesus, He was the one who had been searching her heart.

She rose and looked into the darkness she had been walking through all her life. As she looked, she prayed, "Please come into my heart Jesus. I need You. I believe in You."

As she prayed, sunlight came to her eyes and she felt the hand of Jesus around her shoulder leading her to where there is no sorrow and pain. And He said, *Welcome my wondering child.*

understandable to youth

I appreciate praise songs at the beginning of the service. It helps me focus my attention on why I am there."

Angie Olson: "Worship needs to be organized, but also very genuine and sincere. They must get involved either by sharing or experience. They must get involved with their heart."

Brooke Schrage: "People need to be challenged to think about what they are saying. It is too easy to coast along without paying attention. Just a simple statement about the next hymn or creed can help draw people in."

Phil Watts and Phil McFarland: "The youth must understand what worship is, it needs to be explained to them. It would help if it is in their style, in ways that relate to them."

Steve Mannion: "The best way for youth to understand worship is to experience it. They might need to start by

watching someone else, then singing even if they don't want to, reading the words and meaning them, and then focusing on the worship. These are the steps that I went through and I could really feel a change take place inside."

As I listened, these youth did not say much about the style of worship, rather what was most important was the sincerity, the meaning, the focus, and the effect it had within their own hearts. Perhaps this is what Jesus was saying in John 4:23, "A time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks."

Is it possible that there are others in our churches that are asking, "What am I doing here? This is all irrelevant to me." If we can make our worship more understandable for our youth, it may benefit all of us.



How Much is Enough?

setting priorities in family activities

We've all probably met them. They're the nice family in our church who are hardly seen except on the run somewhere. The station wagon is now a minivan, but the activities are the same. The family's activities possess their time so that we only see them in church and Sunday school when there is no game or practice, or the weather is too bad for anything else. Or perhaps they make it to church, but come semi-dressed in their team uniform ready to dash out early.

Society places a great emphasis on belonging and to be part of as many activities as possible. It's almost like a contest to see who can belong to the most! And sadly, we easily get caught up in this because, after all, we want what is best for our children. Whether your family is in the small community or large city, there is so much to choose from. Of course our children need to be active, but where do we as Christians draw the line?

— Darlene Hall
Ontonagon, Michigan

Questions to Ask

Certainly our emphasis will vary from family to family, but we all need to address some key issues. The first question to ask is, "Does this activity support our family values?" For example, as parents we may seek something that will help instill in our children a sense of fair play and teamwork. Most sports will do that except where a coach may feel the need to win at all costs.

Another question is, "Does the activity contribute to building a strong mind, body and character?" These are certainly worthwhile attributes and godly ones at that. If your son needs to stay active, it likely is not wise to plunk him down in front of the computer screen and join the computer club.

Doing Things Together

An important consideration is whether or not the family can participate together. What a great opportunity to build communication within the family! Our family lived in Washington state and my husband got the urge to learn to downhill ski. Every Saturday he took our six- and seven-year-old boys to the nearby ski hill catering to families. About every third Saturday I brought our toddler and infant along and stayed in the lodge. Our children looked forward to those days, however, there were times when I questioned why I spent so much time at the ski hill when I didn't even ski! Now we remember those fun times, even the day one of the boys took off cross-country and got lost.

Dropping a child off at practice or a scout meeting may be okay, but consider parking the car and actually joining that activity yourself. If you don't feel you can contribute, you certainly can be there for support.

Our family has been in situations



where we felt we didn't have the necessary talents, but still sensed the need and simply forced ourselves to learn something new. We moved to one town and discovered there was no Cub Scout program. Shortly after that, my husband became Cub Master and, yes, I was a Den Mother. We learned and had fun as a family. We had a similar experience organizing a soccer team. We never considered this as an activity that detracted from our family life since we all were involved in it.

Some activities are beneficial to the individual child. It may lead to a vocation or build skills that can be used later in life. Piano lessons can occupy a great deal of time and may seem to be something no other family member can share in. But then when the budding artist reaches a certain level, it's a delight to sing together around the piano!

Seek first the Kingdom

Before allowing a child to become committed to something, take time and pray about it. Pray together as a family. There may be times when the answer is not clear, but search for God's direction and use it as a lesson to teach your children. God may guide you through input from others or He may answer in more subtle ways.

A key consideration is the impact the activity will have on your family. I believe if the games or practices interfere with family worship time, the answer is a definite "no." God directed us in Exodus 20:8 to "remember the Sabbath to keep it holy." Skipping the fellowship of believers and driving 50 miles to a basketball tournament is not keeping this commandment. There may be times when the activity affects Sunday, but it should be the exception.

Each child is unique and individual interests should be considered when deciding on activities. We need to allow our children to reach and grow. They cannot blossom for God if we do not allow the growth. These decisions are perhaps easier for the family with one child. There are probably few things less frazzled looking than a mother who has finally completed her day-long chores of hauling five children to five different activities and fixed a couple of meals and straightened the house in the meantime. God doesn't want mothers (or dads) to be worn out, but He

does want our families to be fulfilled.

Consider our primary purpose in life. May we fill our lives with activities that encourage ourselves and our children to draw closer to God. Do those things which glorify Him!

Let's enjoy our time with the children and prayerfully prioritize our activities.



The author is a full-time homemaker and the mother of three boys and one girl. Two have graduated from college and two are presently in college. She and her husband, Myron, are members of Redeemer Free Lutheran in Ontonagon.



"Let every student be plainly instructed and earnestly pressed to consider well that the main end of his life and studies is to know God and Jesus Christ which is eternal life (John 17:3). And therefore to lay Christ in the bottom as the only foundation of all sound knowledge and learning."



— Harvard University's
Rules and Precepts, 1636-1796

What is Truth?

Crookston, Minnesota, is home to recent Central High School graduate Eric Pate-naude. He wrote two editorials last November and December in his school newspaper. What follows is an excerpt from his December editorial. Eric is a member of Resurrection Free Lutheran in nearby Beltrami.

I know that the last column made a lot of people angry. I expected it would. However, only one person actually gave the privilege of telling me personally, whereas the rest just chose to not approach me. I was happy that a number of teachers and students did come up to me to tell me they liked the article. Many thought it was a message that needed to be heard. This is basically what I said:

Abortion is wrong (Exodus 20:13). Homosexuality is not a healthy lifestyle (Romans 1:26-27). Premarital sex is wrong (Exodus 20:14). Swearing is wrong, and may I add, stupid (Colossians 3:8). And don't give me that "freedom of speech" baloney. Choosing not to drink or smoke is always the right decision (Proverbs 20:1).

At this point, if in fact you're still reading, you are either fuming mad or cheering out loud. Or, maybe you are one who chooses not to be on either side and feels that if people are "happy" that is all that matters. Maybe you are one of those people who "respect" other opinions at the sake of your own (Proverbs 14:12). Hey, I believe everyone is entitled to their own opinion. I think opinions are great. An opinionated person always adds a little spark to a conversation because they add flavor. There's one thing that is bad about opinions, though. They are only opinions, and that is all they will ever be.

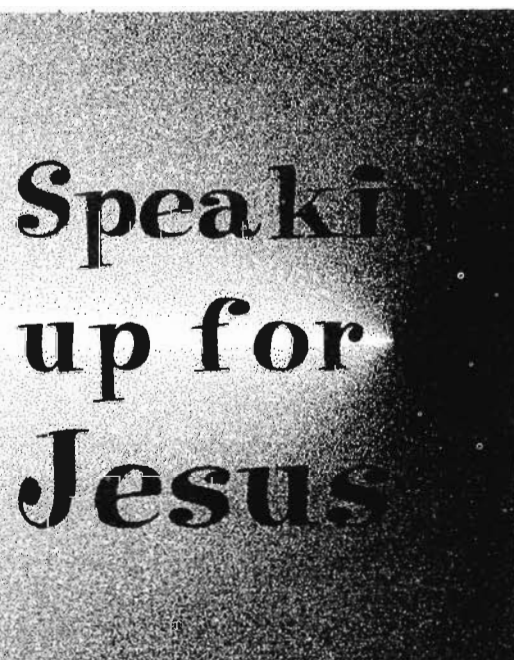
Now, does it surprise you to hear me say that? It should, because up until now you have probably thought all the things I have said are my opinions. Wrong. It's called the TRUTH. It's not my truth, nor is it your truth. It is the truth. God's truth.

I don't believe there is any better time than now to hear this. After all, it is Christmas time. (Note how it is spelled CHRISTmas and not SANTAmas) It is the time of the year that people used to cele-

Pray for

Sarah Keller will be a senior in the fall at Webster High School in Webster, South Dakota. She is a member at Calvary Free Lutheran in nearby Wallace.

How often do you pray? Is it just when you are facing a difficult time in your life? Is it only when good things happen? Or perhaps your prayer time is non-existent. Steven Curtis Chapman sings in *Let Us Pray*,



brate the birth of the Son of God, the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, now in our country we've shoved Christ in the closet, mostly because Santa is more user friendly.

Jesus may not give us any toys at Christmas, but He has given us something greater. He gave His life and He is also ready to give you, yes you, eternal life in heaven if you would just surrender your life to Him. Simple, isn't it? Perhaps too simple for some people.

To me the cards are all laid out on the table. The truth is plain to me, but you don't need to take my word for it. Read Scripture. Start out and read the whole book of John. Hey, it'll only take an hour or so. Read the book of Acts. Then read

one another

"Just because we say the word 'Amen,' it doesn't mean this conversation needs to end. ... And when we finish start again, like breathing out and breathing in, let us pray." Prayer is constant, prayer is life. If you stop breathing, you will die physically and if you stop praying, you will die spiritually.

What is prayer? Is it something that has to be done before meals and before going to bed? Or is it a time when we truly talk to God, our Father? It isn't something a Christian is *supposed to do*. It is a time that brings us closer to Jesus.

In everyday life it is almost impossible to become friends with others if we don't communicate with them. We learn about one another. We build a trusting relationship then we can share openly together. It is the same way with Jesus. He desires to become our friend. He even calls us His friends in John 15:15. All we have to do is take the time to get to know Him. Read His Word and learn more about our Savior. Whether we start with "Our Father, who art in heaven" or "Dear God," we know He is hearing our prayer (1 John 5:14).

James 5:16 gives us another reason to pray. "Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that

you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much." What are we to be healed of? Does that mean we can only pray when we are hurt? Definitely not. When someone gets physically hurt, the recovery almost always includes therapy to make them stronger. I like to look at prayer in the same way. When we pray God is listening and healing us at the same time. He is making us stronger.

That verse also says to pray for one another. Some of our friends may be going through real struggles with family, school, decisions, or maybe even with something they don't dare talk about. To pray for them, we don't need to know what's going on in their lives. All we need to do is turn it over to God and pray that He will give them strength to handle it.

The last part of that verse is very encouraging. *The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.* When we pray, He can work in ways we never dreamed possible.

In reading the book of Psalms, it is clear David had a deep and personal faith in God. He mentions over and over how he had prayed to the Lord and He delivered him from whatever he was facing. In Psalm 66:19, David shows that he **knows** God hears his prayers: *But certainly God has heard; He has given heed to the voice of my prayer.* Though God did not directly tell David that He heard him, David had faith to know that God would never let him down. When David was hated by everyone around him, he prayed — Psalm 109:4; when he faced troubles, he prayed — Psalm 6:9; and when he was excited about all that God was doing in his life, he prayed — Psalm 66:20. David knew his only source for perfect love and peace was from God.

Pray for one another. God can work wonders through us. If there is someone in your life that needs the Lord, pray that He might soften their heart so they can hear about the grace of God. Pray that He would give His children strength to carry on and that He will bless others in ways so that they will come to see His glory. There are countless ways you can pray for others: just keep praying! God will never let you down.

Romans. After that you might be able to understand me and where I'm coming from. If you can't take the Bible's word for it, or mine, then I can't help you. That's the kicker. You have to have faith (Romans 2:22-24 and Romans 10:19).

Well, in conclusion, I know that what I have said here is true. I know it with my heart, soul and mind. It is up to you to believe. Being good doesn't do it. Only believing in Christ and giving your life to Him allows you to attain eternity in heaven. That is the only way. Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes the Father except through me."

One question we all must ask is, "Was He lying or telling the truth?" I'll leave that for you to decide.



Building OUTDOORS Relationships

I have a hard time fitting other people into my busy schedule. I guard what little time and space I have.

Some days I shake my head in confusion: what is going on here? I can't keep up. Other days the Lord slows me down and reminds me that the most important thing I can do in my life is to be with my family, with a friend or just be.

When I reflect on the life of Christ, I see Him taking the time to meet people, listen to people and care for their well-being, physically, psychologically and spiritually. Jesus was a relational person. He took time and effort to build relationships with His disciples and with the people around Him. He wanted to be with people who needed to hear the good news. Most of those people wanted to hang out with Jesus and hear what He had to say.

What about today? Lots of people want no part of Christianity — not even a taste. What do we do about them? We obviously say we pray for them, but sometimes I can use that as an excuse not to stretch myself to build a friendship with them.

I was faced with this situation when I lived in Winter Park, Colorado. I was a Christian man who wanted to make an impact for Christ, not only at church, but at my workplace and in the community. I worked at a ski shop with people not much different from me on the outside, but much different on the inside. Most of my co-workers reacted strongly when they heard I was a Christian. Most said they had been preached at one too many times.

I have loaded my doctrinal guns and shot them at people, not giving much thought of how it would land or if it would come across as an attack. Looking at the Word of God, Jesus does this several times but it was with ones who claimed to

— Brian Remme
AFLBS '96
Long Lake,
Minnesota



be righteous. Those people in Colorado sure didn't claim to be righteous, nor did they seem to give in to the Scripture I would quote to them.

I was confused. I would go home after work, they would go to the bar. Where was the common ground that I could find to show them and tell them about Christ without going to the bar or to their parties?

The common ground was out on the slopes. We loved skiing. We skied together every day.

We talked on the way up on the chair lift, sharing stories of where we came from and where we were at today physically, spiritually and emotionally. As I look back on this experience I realize, that while skiing, the gap was closed between the non-believer and the believer to create lasting friendships that still are strong today.

In the book of John, chapter four, we see Jesus meeting the Samaritan woman where she was — in her brokenness. We too, can be there when the Holy Spirit brings the brokenness to the people we meet.

Today I'm involved in what is called Fellowship Adventures. This is a mountain bike ministry meant to bring brothers and sisters in Christ closer together. We enjoy the fellowship of the Lord and create a safe atmosphere on common

God has entrusted to the Christian home and congregation a most vital and sacred mission. That special mission is to teach and to train young and old in the precious truth of the Word of God (Deuteronomy 6:1-9; Proverbs 22:6; Matthew 28:18-20 and Acts 2:42). Because the Word of God is powerful in its effect, there is happy expectation and promise of fruitful and lasting results as it is faithfully taught and received (Isaiah 55:10-11; Matthew 4:4; John 17:17 and Hebrews 4:12).

The Scripture is also clear in describing the teaching mis-

sion as an engagement in spiritual warfare. The devil, the world and the flesh combine in an effort to blunt, undermine, and destroy the gracious influence the Bible can make upon people's lives. These efforts often are not blatant and obvious attacks on Scripture, but rather may be gradual and subtle attempts to shift the focus of authority from God's truth to man's reason or emotions.

Is this not the original approach of Satan in the Garden of Eden when he whispered, "Has

God said?" Yes, we are warned in Scripture that Satan and his servants will seek to disguise themselves as "apostles of Christ." We are told that "even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light" (II Corinthians 11:13-14).

In view of the tremendous need for the pure teaching of the Word of God; in view of its power to transform lives, we are called to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). We are to engage in the battle in full dependence upon the Lord and all the resources He has provided (Ephesians 6:10-18). →

Training children and youth: The battle to be engaged

ground (others who enjoy biking) for those who have yet to experience Christ. This works no matter what you enjoy — basketball, camping, etc. It's more than an activity. There are many stories of God touching people's lives in these activities with His grace.

Outdoor activities make a good vehicle not only to point people toward Christ, but also to bring us who trust in Him to a closer relationship with God and each other.

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

— Hebrews 10:24-25



(The Parish Education Department requested the author to present different philosophies in the Church today and to encourage us to be on the alert and discern the Truth.)

— Dr. Francis Monseth
FLTS Dean
Minneapolis, Minnesota



TRAINING OUR CHILDREN

As we acknowledge together that our teaching mission, Christian education, faces real challenges as it seeks to *contend* for the faith, it is well to identify some of the opposing forces and ideas. In his message to the Ephesian elders meeting with him at Miletus, the Apostle Paul warned of impending dangers both from within and without the Christian congregation. "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29-30). He exhorts them and us to be on the alert in the face of these destructive influences.

The needs without

Humanism

We are living in an era when modern humanism pervades nearly every corner of society. Evolution has come to its logical conclusion in humanism. Its dominant thesis that there are no absolutes has captivated the *minds of most of our young people*. The late Dr. Frances Schaeffer spoke fervently and eloquently to this situation. He insisted that the Christian Church will not understand nor will it be able to reach the new generation unless

it faces the fact that appreciation of the reality of objective truth in dogma or ethics has largely vanished. To most people, the message of the Bible is merely human opinion.

It is imperative that we recognize and address the danger of humanistic relativism. We do so most effectively not in philosophical argument but in reliance upon the Holy Spirit's ministry through a clear and forthright presentation of law and gospel.

Secularism

A close companion of humanism is secularism. Its distinctiveness lies in its devotion to the material world. It expresses itself in the pursuit of whatever temporal goals appear to satisfy the inner craving for fulfillment. It may even opt for religious affiliation, depending upon the degree of personal satisfaction that can be derived from such an experience. Generally, however, its agenda does not include involvement with the orthodox and evangelical church. The evangelical church has been "weighed in the balance and found wanting" in terms of the kind of personal benefits sought.

Sadly, we observe large parts of the nominal church today seeking to cater to the cravings of unregenerate man for personal satisfaction through preaching and teaching programs and emphases which direct attention more to temporal values than to the spiritual and eternal. Affluence and physical wholeness are often assured those who have sufficient *faith or who seek the right intermediary or who apply the right formula*. The fallout from disillusionment with such ministries has contributed to a growing skepticism and antagonism toward Christianity.

The needs within

Not only does the church face a variety of forces outside its borders which fight against its message as well as its very existence, but we are also painfully aware of many needs within. Perhaps the most obvious to us today are the inroads of liberal theology.

Liberalism

In the name of Christian theology, there are many today who are endeavoring to redefine the historic Christian faith. Fundamental in this redefinition is a new understanding of the nature of the Bible. No longer speaking of the Scriptures as inerrant and infallible, we hear expressions like the Bible is a human "witness" to God's saving acts in history; or that it "becomes the Word of God" at those given moments when its saving message becomes relevant and meaningful; or it "contains" the Word of God. It is not said as the church has been accustomed to saying over the centuries, *the Bible is the Word of God*.

The exaltation of reason as the critical judge of Scripture has led *to the radical conclusions of liberal theology*. The miraculous, the supernatural elements in the Bible are immediately suspect because they do not square with human reason. The historical critical method with its unbelieving

presuppositions becomes necessary in the alleged need to sift the wheat from the chaff in Scripture.

Reformed theology

Not without significance in isolating the needs within is the impact of Reformed theology upon our Lutheran church. Disheartened and disillusioned by exposure to liberal preaching and teaching, many Lutherans have been receptive to the Bible teaching and preaching coming from Reformed circles. While we may appreciate the reverence for the Word of God to be found among many of our Reformed brethren, there is need for constant alertness lest we modify or even sacrifice our Lutheran distinctives which we believe are vital to effective ministry.

Among the issues that are troubling many Lutherans because of Reformed influence are the meaning and significance of baptism, the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, the security of the believer, extra-biblical revelation and the role of law and gospel in evangelism and sanctification. While this situation should definitely inform us in planning our parish education agendas, there is need at the same time to retain a balanced treatment of the "whole counsel of God." In other words, we may overreact to the neglect of other important truths of God's Word.

Roman sacramentalism

One the other end of the theological spectrum, one discovers an equally insidious danger in a growing trend toward Roman sacramentalism. This is evident in the blind assumption that the

mere application of the means of grace guarantees a thoroughly Christian congregation. It would be well for some modern Lutherans to recall Luther's remarks in this regard, "Just because everyone in Saxony is baptized does not mean that everyone in Saxony is a Christian. Of course it happens that many leap overboard into the sea and perish." (Babylonian Captivity, LW, vol. 36, p. 61). C.F.W. Walther is also remembered for his frank admission of reality even as he affirmed the efficacy of the means of grace:

*If the mere act of being baptized and partaking of Holy Communion brings grace to a person, the Gospel manifestly has been turned into a Law, because salvation then rests on a person's works. ... One would indeed think it to be utterly impossible for a Christian minister to teach that the Sacraments produce salutary effects **ex opere operato**; still, that is what happens again and again. This awful error is taught by the very men who wish to pass for strict Lutherans, every time they discuss the Sacraments. When they have finished unfolding their doctrine of Baptism, every hearer has received the unmistakable impression that in order to get to heaven, it is merely necessary to submit to the act of being baptized ... because God has attached his grace to this external action. ... This teaching is diametrically opposed to the Gospel." (The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel, p. 351)*

It is in the proper distinction and faithful preaching of law and gospel that the blessed means of grace are rightly understood and appreciated. We must, with the Apostle Paul, determine to know nothing except Jesus Christ and Him crucified (I Corinthians 2:2). We must, with the Apostle Peter,

call for repentance and baptism in outlining the divine plan of sal-

Moralism

A more subtle shift in approaching Scripture, though not new, is that of moralism. The problem is centered in the tendency to limit the definition of sin to specific violations of the Moral Law rather than to recognize the overarching problem is rebellion and unbelief against God. Sin and evil are understood chiefly in terms of the last nine commandments and the first is minimized or ignored.

This reduces sin to a series of wrong actions only, which it is thought lie within the ability of a person to correct or at least control. In the right concern to exhibit a godly lifestyle before a watching world, the attention, however, is shifted from the fundamental problem that underlies all sin: the displacement of God from His rightful place in one's life. "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me."

Moralism rears its ugly head whenever the law is not taught in its demand that there be perfect and constant conformity to it in thought, word and deed. If the law is presented as humanly attainable, somehow, either sooner or later, its chief purpose of revealing sin is displaced. Then there is not real need for the gospel as the gracious good news of forgiveness in Christ. Rather, what results are legalistic and frustrating attempts to obey the law. Jesus and His cross are nowhere in sight.



(The conclusion of this paper addresses "feeling-centered theology" and will be included in the next issue of The Lutheran Ambassador.

Summer Bible Camp dates

- ♣ **Northwest Minnesota**
Galilee Bible Camp
Lake Bronson, MN
Youth — June 18-22
Teen — June 22-26
- ♣ **North Central Minnesota**
Bethany Bible Camp
Bemidji, MN
Junior — June 18-22
Senior — June 22-26
- ♣ **Illinois District**
Lake Geneva Bible Camp
Geneva, WI
July 28-August 1
- ♣ **South Central District**
Family Camp at
W.T. Johnson Bible Camp
Anadarko, OK
July 14-18
- ♣ **Pacific Northwest District**
Family Camp at
Camp Brotherhood
Arlington, WA
July 14-18
- ♣ **South Dakota District**
Pickerel Lake Bible Camp
July 21-27
- ♣ **Association Retreat Center**
Osceola, WI
Youth Camp
July 27-August 2
- ♣ **Eastern North Dakota Dist.**
Bethany Bible Camp
Bemidji, MN
June 29-July 3
- ♣ **Western ND/Eastern MT Dist.**
Camp Cherith
Williston, ND
July 13-17
- ♣ **Family Camp**
Galilee Bible Camp
Lake Bronson, MN
July 6-11
- ♣ **Wilderness Family Camp**
Lake Park, MN
July 15-20
- ♣ **Family Camp**
Association Retreat Center
Osceola, WI
July 5-11

AMBASSADOR Publications

Devotionals for Children			
32-1SD	God's Rules for Me		\$.95
33-1SD	Lord Jesus, Teach Us How to Pray		\$.95
33-2SD	Talking With God		\$.95
34-1SD	God You Are Enough		\$.95
34-2SD	Did You Know Jesus is Called the Lovely One?		\$.95
34-3SD	I Think the Holy Spirit Must Be Like A Dove		\$.95

Song Books & Cassettes			
6851	Songs of God's Love		\$6.25
6853	Songs of God and Me		\$6.95
6854	Scripture Praise		\$4.95
6855	Joyful Sounds		\$7.95
6856	Salvation Songs Favorites		\$4.25
6857	Salvation Songs #1		\$4.25
6858	Salvation Songs #2		\$4.25
6859	Salvation Songs #3		\$4.25
6860	Salvation Songs #4		\$4.25
6861	Growing Songs for Children #1		\$4.25
6861CS	Growing Songs for Children #1 - Cassette		\$7.50
6862	Growing Songs for Children #2		\$4.25
6862CS	Growing Songs for Children #2 - Cassette		\$7.50
6863	Little Ones Sing Praise		\$8.95
6864	Scripture and Chorus Songs - FLY		\$4.95

Mission Stories			
3080MS	A Miracle For Samuelito - Mexico		\$13.95
3081MS	The Walking Umbrella - Brazil		\$7.95
3082MS	John and Betty Stam - China		\$8.95
3083MS	Hudson Taylor - China		\$10.95
3084MS	I Dare - Amy Carmichael - India		\$10.95
3085MS	William Carey - India		\$14.95

Other Stories			
3090ST	Pilgrim's Progress - John Bunyan		\$10.95
3091ST	Wordless Book Visualized		\$10.95
3300ST	Oliver and the Twins - Lord's Prayer		\$9.95
3010	Best Loved Bible Stories		\$9.95

Wall Charts & Maps			
3030	Student Bible Atlas - 32 maps		\$4.95
3110MP	Books of the Bible - Wall Chart		\$7.95
3510MP	Old Testament Timeline - Wall Chart		\$7.95
3610MP	New Testament Timeline - Wall Chart		\$7.95
3710MP	Where Jesus Walked - Wall Map		\$7.95
3810MP	Paul's Journeys - Wall Map		\$7.95
3910MP	The Holy Land - Wall Map		\$7.95
3020	Luther's Small Catechism in Illustration		\$34.95
3040	Christianity, Cults & Religions - Chart		\$7.95
3045	Christianity, Cults & Religions - Pamphlet		\$3.95

resource list

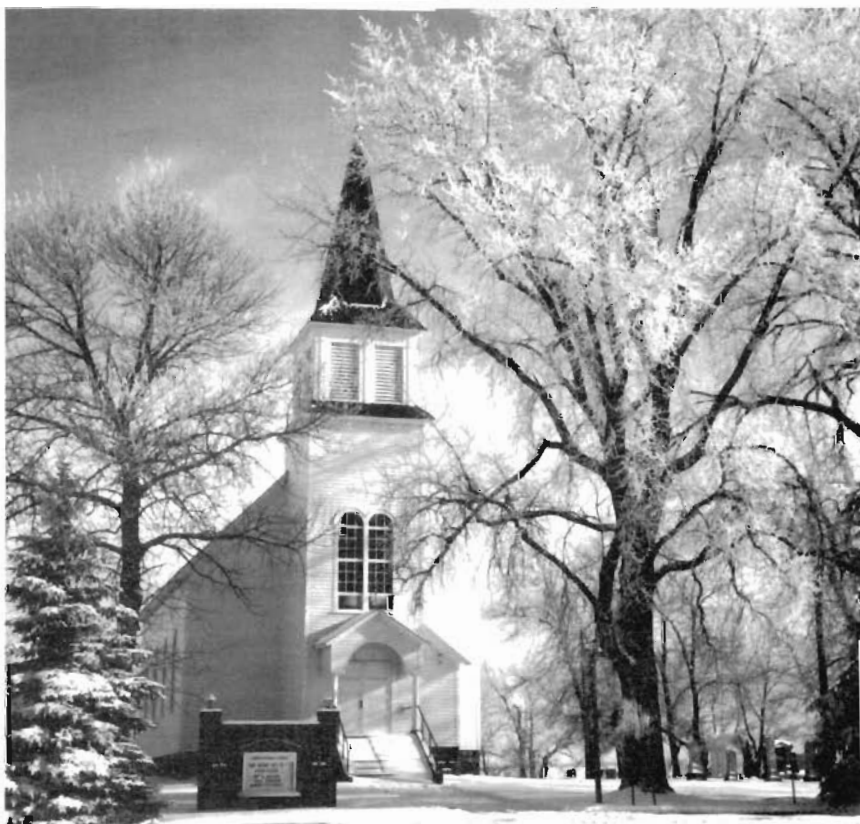
	Flannelgraph Stories		
3K01FL	Miracles of Jesus - 8 Stories		\$10.95
3K02FL	Birth of Jesus - 8 Stories		\$10.95
3K03FL	Crucifixion & Resurrection - 7 Stories		\$10.95
3101FL	Creation To Abram - 8 Stories		\$10.95
3102FL	Stories of Moses - 10 Stories		\$10.95
3201FL	Jesus & The Ten Commandments - 10 Strs		\$10.95
3301FL	Lord's Prayer - 8 Stories		\$10.95
3001FL	Abraham, Isaac, Jacob - 11 Stories		\$10.95
3002FL	Stories About Joseph - 8 Stories		\$10.95
3003FL	Stories About David - 9 Stories		\$10.95
3004FL	Women of the Bible - 8 Stories		\$10.95
3005FL	Later Life of Jesus - 7 Stories		\$10.95
3006FL	The Christian Soldier - 8 Stories		\$10.95
3007FL	Ministry of Jesus - 7 Stories		\$10.95
3008FL	Beatitudes - 8 Stories		\$10.95
3009FL	Parables of Jesus - 7 Stories		\$10.95
3010FL	Books of the Bible - 8 Stories		\$10.95

	Visual Songs		
3K00VS	I Love To Tell The Story		\$5.95
3101VS	Jesus Loves Even Me		\$5.95
3102VS	Take My Life and Let it Be		\$5.95

* List price does not include shipping and handling.

Grong Lutheran Church

Ambassador Publications has several books being carried by the Sonshine Shop in the West Acres Mall in Fargo, North Dakota. The prices will be slightly higher there than directly through the Parish Education office. The hope is that having materials more visible will open new opportunities for evangelism and spiritual growth for other individuals and churches. The publications are solidly biblical with an emphasis on a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and a need for daily repentance and faith. God can use them to call people to salvation and godly living in Christ. If you are using the internet, check out our publications and resources on the AFLC web page. Please add shipping costs to any order you place. Our e-mail address is: hqmail@afcl.org



Rollag, Minnesota church celebrates 125 years

Grong Free Lutheran is one of the oldest congregations in the central Minnesota area. They will celebrate their 125th Anniversary on Sunday, June 29. Following the 10:30 a.m. morning worship service and the noon meal, will be the 2 p.m. anniversary program.

Organized in 1872, by Rev. Bernard Hagebo, the congregation met in homes and a school building. Five years later property was purchased and the building was erected in 1881. Numerous improvements have been made throughout the years.

They were a Lutheran Free Church congregation until 1963, when they joined the ALC. In 1994, they voted to join the AFLC and are currently served on an interim basis by Pastor Dale Finstrom, the pastor of Maranatha Lutheran in Glyndon, Minnesota.

WOMEN'S PAGE

The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps.
— Proverbs 16:9

Last April the hearts of America went out to the North Dakota flood victims as thousands of people lost their homes and most of their possessions to the waters of the Red River. Our state's devastation hit the front pages of many newspapers and magazines and was the lead story in countless newscasts, and the topic of conversation on street corners and in cafes for days.

Though our home in Stanley is some 300 miles west of the actual flood area, our lives were personally touched by the many who evacuated their homes — some of whom had to leave with only 30 minutes notice.

While the flood water of the Red River destroyed homes and property on the eastern border of our state, there was another flood taking place in western North Dakota. It didn't hit the front pages of the news, but its banks were wide and its currents ran deep. This other flood consumed countless homes and brought

Man can plan but God will prevail

changes to the lives of many. And only time will tell if its crest has been reached.

You see, this other flood didn't consist of water and mud. It didn't ravage the land with destruction. Rather its flow was gentle and soothing. It was a flood of love and prayer, comfort and encouragement. This was a time when God wanted us to put our faith into action! "To love not only in word and in tongue but to love in deed and in truth" (I John 3:18).

The flood of love came to evacuees in many forms — a warm, dry home to stay in, special meals shared, offers of food, clothing, child care, money and prayers. Most families brought only a few changes of clothes, some only the clothes they were wearing. What a joy to see their look of amazement as boxes of clothes were given to them from people they didn't know and whom they may never see again. The flood of love brought encouragement.

Students were concerned

We don't know what tomorrow holds;

But we know Who holds tomorrow.

*Knowing this we'll live above
The world and all its sorrow.*

— unknown

because they would not be able to finish their last six weeks of school. Public, private and home-schooling families opened their doors and welcomed these children to join them.

We discovered an opportunity for many to gain a new perspective as to what is truly essential and what brings true comfort.

Our WMF Bible study for this month is on "Comfort." How can I bring comfort to someone who has experienced great loss or devastation such as those of the recent flood? One answer came on a day when our family was discussing the flood victims. We listed ten items we would take if we had to leave our home. Each member had their own special items on the list. Their family and their Bible topped the list, followed by special pictures, a stuffed animal, the family pet, etc. Surprisingly, their list of absolute necessities was short.

But the greatest lesson taught was the lesson of love —



Plymouth, Minnesota — The Medicine Lake WMF met at the apartment of Becky Dyrud for their March meeting. It was a great opportunity to see the creative work Becky does with silk and dried floral arrangements. A surprise came when Barb Hendricks, AAL District Representative arrived to present a \$1000 check to the WMF to be given for the furnishing of the missionary home at the ARC.

not human love but the love of God. Our discussion had been focused on the devastation and uncertainty of the future. Then our thoughts turned when we realized that regardless of the earthly loss, there is a God who knows and cares and will provide and prevail.

We can't see beyond our circumstances and our human understanding cannot make sense out of what is happening. We feel helpless and certainly can't see how anything *good* could result from this situation. Scripture assures us, however, that, "He knows the way I take" and "He will be with us always" (Job 23:10a and Matthew 28:20). What truly matters? What brings real comfort? It's looking beyond the temporal to the eternal God. He will never disappoint!

— Candice Johnson
Our Saviour's Lutheran
Stanley, North Dakota

Portland, Oregon — A home Bible study has begun in the Portland, Oregon suburb of Beaverton with prayerful consideration being given to the planting of an AFLC congregation in the area. For further information contact in the Portland area Mike and Linda Leddige, (503) 579-1751 or Pastor Craig Johnson, 86286 Pine Grove Road, Eugene, OR 97402; phone (541) 687-8643; e-mail cjohnson@efn.org.

Home Missions Prayer Service will be held at 8 p.m. on Tuesday, June 10, at Our Saviour's Lutheran in Thief River Falls, Minnesota.

PEOPLE AND PLACES



Celaya, Mexico — Pictured is a worship service on the future site of Gethsemane Lutheran Church. At this service they celebrated their 18th anniversary as a congregation and laid the cornerstone for their new church building. Missionaries Dan Giles and Todd Schierkolk and Fernando from Springs of Living Water congregation in Aguascalientes were in attendance. Pastor Milton Flores serves the congregation.



Monroe, Washington — Pictured is the newly rented storefront facility in downtown Monroe which Monroe Free Lutheran shares with a local youth ministry. The congregation continues to seek the Lord's guidance in raising the funds for their own facility.

Cottonwood, Arizona — Pastor Al Monson, Lakeville, Minnesota preached at Verde Valley Lutheran Mission in this northern Arizona community on May 18.

Senior Seminarian Tom Schierkolk, has accepted the call to Hope Lutheran Church, Northome, and Bethesda Lutheran of Mizpah, Minnesota.

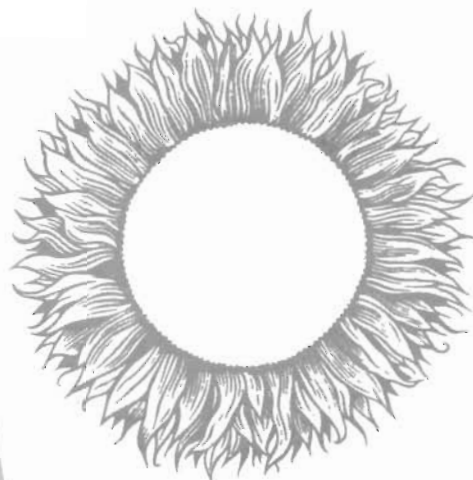
Seminarian Marshall Nessa, Minneapolis, Minnesota, and his family have returned from their six months of internship work in Brazil. They will be traveling with the summer Ambassador Gospel Team from AFLBS. In the fall, Marshall will begin his last year of study at the seminary while serving as the dean of men for the Bible school.

PEOPLE AND PLACES

AFLBS summer teams -

The summer teams spent the first week of June training at the Bible School campus. They were commissioned at a service on June 5. Pray for these teams as the travel around the nation, that they will be used in His service to bring glory to Jesus.

1997 summer teams



Majesty — Wade Mobley, Lake Preston, SD; Melissa Strand (alumni), Abercombie, ND; Tami Caouette, Brooklyn Park, MN; Erin Kuster, Wheatland, IA and Dave Chamberlain, Fargo, ND.

Petrozavodsk, Russia —

The second annual English Language Bible Camp is being held in June. East European Missions Network is working with this camp and Pastor Don and Mavis Richman will again lead the team of 16 members. Among those leaving on May 30, are: Seminarian Jon Bylka; David Larson, Abercombie, ND; Donna Boggot, Bloomington, MN; 1997 AFLBS graduates, Stacy Keller, Wallace, SD, and Renee Behne, Wheatland, IA. Petrozavodsk is a city of about 300,000 near the Finnish border.



Ambassadors — Ann Keranen, Menahga, MN; Ben Deubner, Brockton, MT; Brooke Schrage, Wheatland, IA; Ben Monseth, Rogers, MN and Tara Cherney, Tucson, AZ.

PEOPLE AND PLACES

FLY Team - Brazil — Heidi Quam, McIntosh, MN; Sonja Olson, Shakopee, MN; Susie Skramstad, St. Cloud, MN; Luziane Betzel, Campo Grande, Brazil, and Sue Vanyo, Pipestone, MN. They will be in Brazil from June 7 - July 25.

Summer Servant Team is a new AFLC Youth Ministries high school team. Four young people will join in the Church of the Lutheran Brethren training week in Fergus Falls, Minnesota, before going to work for two weeks in the Northome, Minnesota parish.

Cornerstone — Kayla Hardina, Detroit Lakes, MN; Nathan Hembree, Houston, TX; Shannon Quam, McIntosh, MN; Holly Dahl, Borup, MN (and not pictured, Nathan Stover [alumni], Larimore, ND).

Barnabas — Midwest — Kelly Nelson, Glyndon, MN; Shawn Danielson, Lake Preston, SD; John Miller, Grand Forks, ND; Jodi Kiecker, McIntosh, MN and one to be named.

Barnabas — Southern — Jeremy Vance (alumni), Eagan, MN; Andrea Burnes, Cloquet, MN; Jeremy Nelson, La Crosse, WI; Jennifer Wiener (alumni), Pine City, MN and not pictured, Marnie Anderson (alumni), Ames, IA.



The Grand Forks Flood Team is a new team sponsored by the AFLC and Home Missions office to assist in the ministries of Trinity Lutheran and Christ the King Lutheran this summer. Support for this team is through the AFLC Disaster Relief Team at 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd. Minneapolis, MN 55441.

Members are Heather Thorson, Farmington, NM; Jessica Benson, Elkmound, WI; Melanie Blawat, Viking, MN and Arta Cesle, Valmiera, Latvia.





Rev. James W. Asp, 1914-1997

A tribute to God's grace in the life of Pastor James Asp

And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took Him.
— Genesis 5:24

Pastor James W. Asp was also a man who walked with God, and just like Enoch "he was not, for God took him." It was Friday, April 25, 1997, just before midnight, when the Lord took him

home. His was a sudden, swift departure. There had been no indication of any serious health concerns. In fact, Pastor Asp that day had been quite active, even stopping to call on a parishioner.

The funeral, held at Bethlehem in Morris, Illinois, was a celebration of victory, not a mourning of defeat. Cynthia Nickel spoke on behalf of all the grandchildren. She commented that "Grandpa had several qualities that we all admired." Some of those were: "He prayed for us by name ... went to our sporting events and concerts ... was generous ... had a sense of humor ... and, when together, we always had devotions and closed with the Lord's Prayer."

Joel Aarsvold, one of the sons-in-law, spoke on behalf of the family. He mentioned three qualities demonstrated in Dad Asp's life: faithfulness, consistency, and concern for others. He was faithful to the Lord, his wife, his family, and the congregations he served. He was consistent throughout life, and never changed his biblical principles and priorities. And, Dad Asp had concern for the spiritual condition

of people. He wanted believers to grow in their Christian walk, heeding the admonition: "Therefore, beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord" (I Corinthians 15:58). He wanted those who haven't accepted Christ to do so *now!* The fundamental message Dad emphasized is summed up in the words: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

I had the privilege of preaching Dad's funeral sermon, even though he had observed some months before that, "I'd like to preach it myself!" Anyone who heard him preach knew Pastor Asp to be clear and convincing, a powerful and pointed preacher of God's Word. His love of preaching was certainly evident because he loved the subject of preaching, Jesus Christ! Just as the English preacher, Charles Haddon Spurgeon did over a century ago, Dad Asp took his text and "made a beeline for the cross." He did not preach destructive doubts, but rather radiant realities. He preached Christ!

Right up to the end of his earthly journey, Pastor Asp was reading, studying, praying and preaching. And, even in his quick departure, he preached a splendid sermon: To believers, what joy to know that "to be absent from the body" is "to be at home with the Lord" (II Corinthians 5:8). To unbelievers, come to Jesus today for it may be that "this very night your soul is required of you" (Luke 12:20). To God be the glory!

— Pastor Steven C. Lombardo
Bethlehem Lutheran
Morris, Illinois



St. James, Minnesota — Pictured are eighteen of the 20 new members who joined Hosanna Free Lutheran recently. Pastor Tom Tuura is pictured on the right. Hosanna began ten years ago meeting in the community park with nine people. Now the congregation owns their own facilities with average attendance around ninety people.

PEOPLE AND PLACES

The AFLBS dorms are open!

Stopping in Minneapolis this summer? It's your campus, so stay with us!

Here's the deal: stop in after 4 p.m. any day, all week, June to August for only \$20 a room.

(An even better deal: stop in after 4 p.m. and clean and vacuum it yourself for only \$10 a room.).

Call Scott Mundfrom or Jesse Reith if your family would like to stay in the men's dorm. Call Tami Fugleberg or Kari Manderud if you would like to stay in the women's dorm — (612) 544-5291 or (612) 749-8701.

Or write us at: AFLBS Summer Lodging, 3120 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441

(We're 20 minutes from downtown Minneapolis, 30 minutes from the Mall of America, 45 minutes from Valley Fair. Common kitchen available, rest rooms on each floor, bring a fan! Please check in after 4 p.m. Checkout time is 11 a.m. Host/Hostess offices close at 10 p.m.)

Pastor J. Wesley Johanson, Pukwana, South Dakota, has resigned as pastor of Pukwana Lutheran and St. Olaf Lutheran of Chamberlain where he has served since 1989, in order to accept the call to the Dovre and Union Lake Parish of Winger, Minnesota.

AFLC Schools — On Friday evening, May 16th, the AFLC Schools held their annual Spring Concert. This included selections from the Seminary Chorus, AFLBS Choir and Choral Club. The following day, 42 seniors graduated from the Association Free Lutheran Bible School, a two-year, post-secondary institution. Thirty years ago, the Bible School completed its first year of existence with 13 students enrolled in that inaugural year.

FLS receives Lutheran Brotherhood funds

The Free Lutheran Seminary in Minneapolis recently received \$4,275 from Lutheran Brotherhood's Member Matching Gift program. The latest payment matches 45 gifts from Lutheran Brotherhood members given during the first quarter of 1997.

Pastor Brian Davidson, Northome, Minnesota, will be starting his new interim ministry at Good Shepherd Lutheran in Ponca City, Oklahoma, on June 22. His address will be Rt. 3 Box 536, Ponca City, OK 74604. He can be reached at the phone number of the chairman of the congregation — (405) 765-7886.

Astoria, Oregon — "Raising Our Vision For Ministry" was the theme for the March 25-27, Preaching Mission at Bethany Free Lutheran. Pastor Rick Long of Arlington, Washington was the guest speaker.

Greenbush, Minnesota — United Free Lutheran hosted the kick off for the Hot Times program of the Northwest Minnesota District youth on May 31, 1997. Former professional baseball player, Mike Kingery appeared in a baseball clinic during the day and joined in the supper at United. Mike Kingery attends the Baptist Church in Atwater, Minnesota, having retired this year from the Pittsburgh Pirates.

Five Lutheran teens at RespecTeen Youth Forum

Each fall Lutheran Brotherhood mails a citizenship curriculum called *Speak for Yourself* to junior high social studies teachers across the nation. Students write a letter to their U.S. Representative as the final activity of the curriculum. These letters are entered into a contest and one winner from each state is selected to attend the RespecTeen National Youth Forum in Washington D.C. during April 26 - May 1. Out of over 13,000 contestants, five of the 51 winning entries were submitted by Lutheran teens. This is the ninth annual forum sponsored by Lutheran Brotherhood as part of its philanthropic effort to support youth.

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences - January 1 - April 30, 1997

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN APRIL	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$279,330.00	\$18,346.49	67,812.62	24
Seminary	113,300.00	8,110.52	28,831.59	25
Bible School	142,509.00	9,608.08	33,861.21	24
Home Missions.	257,432.00	17,118.94	68,982.95	27
World Missions.	341,000.00	28,866.58	113,328.90	33
Capital Investment	19,000.00	285.15	2,867.73	15
Parish Education	56,517.00	3,886.14	19,794.74	35
Church Extension	14,813.00	4,362.14	7,897.47	53
TOTALS	\$1,223,901.00	90,584.04	343,377.21	28
TOTALS 1996	1,232,267.00	82,970.11	348,474.36	28
Goal 33%				

Our Lutheran Free Church tradition

100 years old on June 12

At the AFLC annual conference in Thief River Falls we will be celebrating one hundred years of free church tradition.

Our founding fathers, Georg Sverdrup and Sven Oftedal, had faith that the 1890 merger of the United Norwegian Lutheran Church would be an open and free church. In practice, however, the United Church was anything but free.

The major sticking points were control of Augsburg Seminary and free church polity – not theology. So when the United Church moved to take control of Augsburg in 1893, both professors balked. Both felt that to have pastors that would rightly uphold free and living congregations, they had to be trained properly. According to Andreas Helland in *Our Fellowship*, both “Sverdrup and Oftedal maintained that no mere book knowledge sufficed to produce pastors after God’s own heart. The knowledge must be made alive by the Holy Spirit in the soul of converted personalities. Knowledge was not considered unnecessary; but it must be permeated and animated by the Holy Spirit.”

When Sverdrup and Oftedal refused to turn the seminary over to the United Church, several like-minded individuals as well as 13 congregations signed supporting statements and formed a group called “The Friends of Augsburg.” These thirteen congregations were: Trinity, St. Petri, St. Lucas in Minneapolis; Hadeland and Lismore in Nobles County; Willmar congregation in Willmar; Eagle Lake, Kandiyohi County, all in Minnesota; Escanaba in Escanaba, Michigan; Zion in Peshtigo, Our Saviour’s in

Marinette, Comstock and Cumberland in Barron County, all in Wisconsin; and Bethania in Richland County, North Dakota. (The last two congregations are still active as AFLC congregations. Cumberland’s name has been changed to Section Ten. Bethania’s name has been changed to Bethany and is in rural Abercrombie, North Dakota.)

At the 1895 annual convention, the thirteen congregations were given a year to renounce their stand or be expelled. They refused, and by 1896, though one of the congregations had left the United Church, the remaining 12 were officially dismissed.

The convention also elected a separate Board of Trustees for Augsburg in order to test the courts to see who actually owned Augsburg. Late in June the “Friends” met in Fargo, North Dakota and selected a committee to work out rules for a Lutheran Free Church to be submitted for adoption the following year.

From June 9-13, 1897, the Friends met at Trinity in Minneapolis. (Trinity was just south of the Augsburg campus and was demolished in the 1960s to make way for I-94.) There on June 12, a Saturday afternoon, the Free Church Committee submitted the *Rules for a Lutheran Free Church* in two parts: the *Fundamental Principles* and *Rules for Work*. They were discussed and adopted and took the place of a constitution. These original 13 congregations together with representatives from over 100 congregations on that afternoon became the Lutheran Free Church.



— Loiell Dyrud
Our Saviour’s Lutheran
Thief River Falls, Minnesota



Prof. Georg Sverdrup
1847-1907



Prov. Sven Oftedal
1844-1911



Section Ten Lutheran, Cumberland



Bethany Lutheran, Abercrombie

No fear

It says "no fear" on their shirts, but that isn't the case in their hearts. Young people of today are a generation full of fear. It is not just the common phobias that children have always wrestled with. The fears of today's youth are much more dangerous and real than a fear of the dark or of monsters under the bed or whether or not Batman and Robin will survive the Joker's latest scheme.

I was going to a baseball game with my nephew, who was 14 at the time, and a friend of his. They live in Seattle, Washington; in the city but certainly not in the roughest part of town. The friend's family was thinking about moving to a small town a little ways from Seattle. One good thing about the possible move, in the friend's view, was that in the new school he would be going to they don't have too many shootings.

High school freshmen having to deal with a legitimate fear of being shot at school — it shouldn't be the case anywhere. It shouldn't be the case with good kids living in nice, middle class neighborhoods in the United States. And yet it is. One survey states that one in six youth between the ages of 10 and 17 has seen or knows someone who has been shot.

A Christian man with a solid, stable marriage discovered one of his child's fears when he was asked if he and Mommy were going to get a divorce. The child saw it happening to the parents of so many of his classmates he was afraid it would happen in his home next.

Being abandoned or abused, getting AIDS or another sexually transmitted disease, financial worries, the pressure to succeed — these are just some of the other very real fears that are far too prevalent in the lives of young people today. They are having to face dangers and threats that kids should not have to face. They are as a *Newsweek* magazine cover story declared: "Kids Growing Up Scared: New Fears and Pressures are Robbing a Generation of Its Childhood."

Last summer I had the privilege of observing God at work in some powerful ways at our district Bible camp, particularly among the youth. It was encouraging to hear their testimonies as they confessed sins and expressed a desire to walk with Christ. At the same time, however, it was sad to hear of some of the battles these kids are having to face. They were asking for prayer as they deal with broken

homes, alcohol and drug addictions, financial concerns, sexual temptations, pressures from family and friends to be and to do. And these are kids who come from homes where they at least have the opportunity to go to a Bible camp. What are the other kids dealing with?

Many of these battles are ones that kids are not equipped to deal with. They are to be enjoying a time of training, a time when they are protected by those who are more mature. Instead many are being let down by the adults who are to be protecting them and sent out alone to suffer the attacks of the enemy.

Jesus warned that "if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea" (Matthew 18:5,6, NIV). He considers the safety of children a serious matter.

Keeping children safe is more than having the right kind of car seat and good locks on the door. Some can be obsessive about physical safety to the point where they create fear in children instead of faith in God's ability to protect. They can also be consumed with the physical dangers and neglect the spiritual.

Children most of all need protectors who will point them to Jesus and care about their souls. They ought to hear that "The Lord is my light and my salvation — whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life — of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalm 27:1, NIV). They need to be told "the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done" so that "they would put their trust in God" (Psalm 78:4,7, NIV). God wants each child to have what is described in Proverbs 14:26: "He who fears the Lord has a secure fortress, and for his children it will be a refuge."

Young people are precious, fragile jewels. The enemy is on the prowl, knowing that a child is often receptive to the gospel of Jesus Christ but vulnerable to attack. It is an age of great potential and great danger. It is also an age when true protection for the body, mind and soul is available, but only in Jesus.

May our goal be to see "no fear" of the world as the message in their hearts and not just on their shirts.

— Pastor Craig Johnson

Keeping children safe is more than having the right kind of car seat and good locks on the door.

Servant evangelism

Does washing cars have anything to do with reaching people for Christ? Is there any connection between cleaning bathrooms and sharing Jesus? The answer to both questions can be “yes.”

Now I'll be honest with you. I've been trained to think that the ministry of Christians and Christian churches stops at preaching the Word — proclaiming truth — and that churches aren't supposed to get bogged down with humanitarian efforts. There is some truth to that. The primary role of the Church on earth is to make known the way of salvation by telling people of their need for a Savior and pointing them to Jesus. If we as Christians fail to do that we really aren't fulfilling the Great Commission.

But often people need a tangible demonstration of our love and commitment to them with our **hands** before they are open to hear what comes from our **mouth**. Many people are convinced that the church is all *talk*. Every contact they have had with the church convinces them that the church is only interested in what it can get from them — not what the church has to bring to them.

So for many, those barriers to

the church and its message will only be torn down by the church demonstrating the genuineness of its commitment to people with loving acts of kindness. Often once a person has experienced our love and commitment in tangible ways, they are willing to hear of the Savior who has put this love in our hearts in the first place.

This can aptly be called *servant evangelism*. If it seems like a radical thought, consider Jesus' words in Matthew 5:16: *Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven*. Consider the example of Dorcas in Acts 9 who captured the hearts of those around her through her “good works and charitable deeds.” I tend to believe she was a bold witness for Jesus — and people listened because her life demonstrated her love and credibility.

So how do we practice servant evangelism?

1. Be sure there is genuine love in your heart for Jesus as well as for people, otherwise it will all be empty action.

SOMETHING TO SHARE

2. Pray that God will open your eyes to the way or ways He wants you to demonstrate your love for Him through tangible service.

3. Go into action.

4. Be ready to witness for Christ as the opportunities come.

You can find illustrations of ways that other churches have done deeds of kindness to capture the hearts of their communities in the book *Conspiracy of Kindness* by Steve Sjogren. Determine to be a servant to your community for the sake of capturing hearts for Christ.



— Pastor Richard Long
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