

The Lutheran AMBASSADOR

June 11, 1996

Children & Youth

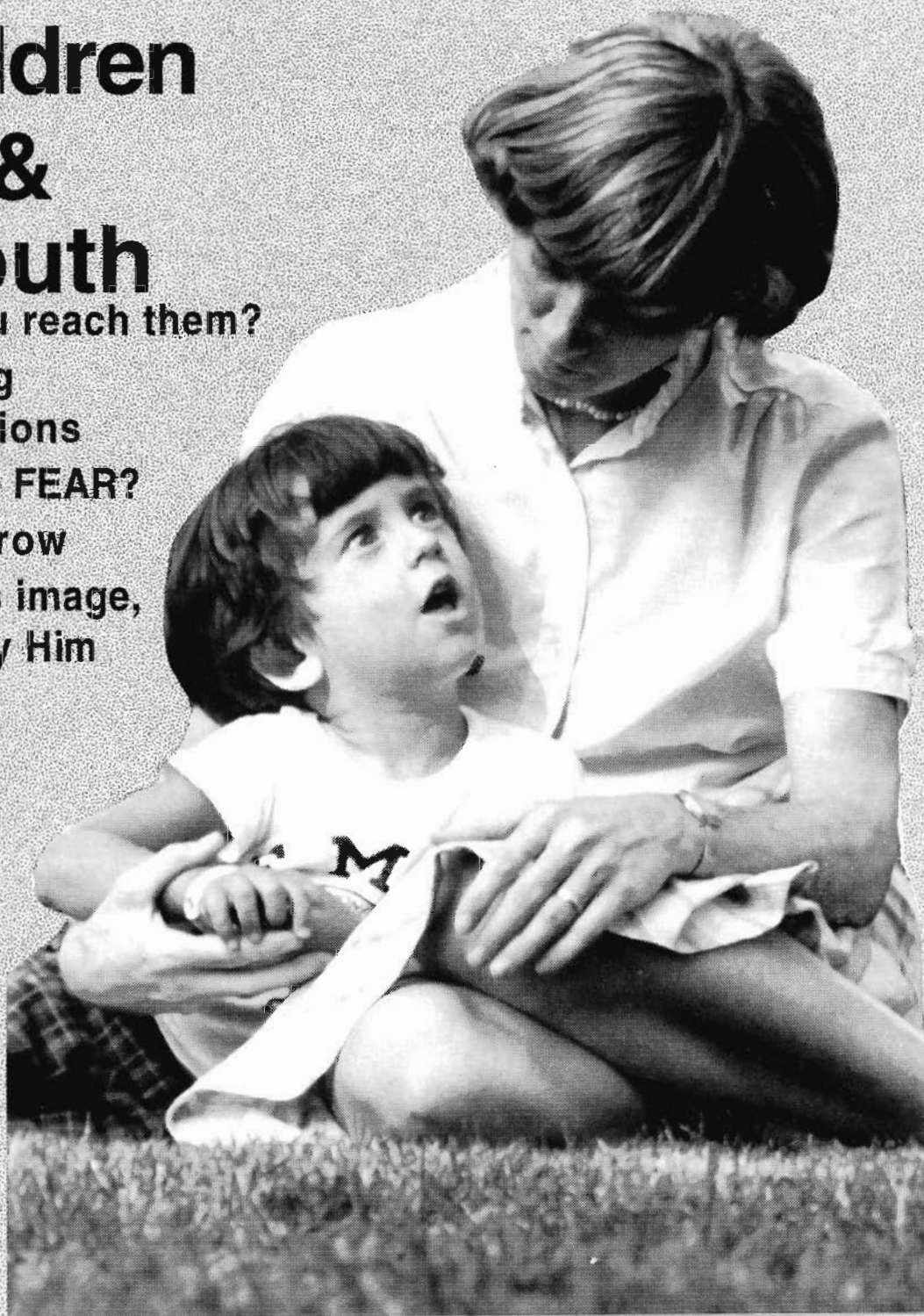
How do you reach them?

When facing
temptations

Is there NO FEAR?

Let them grow

Made in His image,
loved by Him



THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

June 11, 1996
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AN ENCOURAGING WORD

Jesus, the great I AM!

Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I AM." — John 8:58

These past weeks we examined the seven "I AM" statements of Jesus in the Gospel of John. Now we focus on the one remaining "I AM" declaration which gives significance to all the others. In our verse, Jesus identifies Himself as the great "I AM" of the Old Testament. Hearing this the Jews knew exactly what Jesus was saying. Jesus claimed to be God Himself and thus, the charge of blasphemy which led to His crucifixion.

Exodus 3 states the first claim of Jesus to be the "Great I AM." Moses stood before the burning bush (which was quite likely a pre-incarnate appearance of the Son of God) and had been instructed to go to God's people and lead them out of slavery in Egypt. Moses then asked, "What if they ask your name? What shall I tell them?" The voice of God from that bush then said "I AM WHO I AM."

What exactly did Jesus mean with that statement? We might ask, "What kind of a name is that? What is the significance of His statement?"

In the Scriptures a person's name was regarded as the manifestation of his nature or of his deepest purpose. The phrase "I AM WHO I AM" is closely related to God's person-

al name Jehovah or Yaweh in the Old Testament. In this self-designation God desired to remind the afflicted children of Israel that their God was the unchangeable and faithful One. He was the timeless One, the very foundation of all existence.

The expression emphasized His absolute independence and constancy — He was the absolute "I" moving with unlimited freedom. In declaring "I AM WHO I AM," God intended to remove any loyalties to the deities of the Egyptians and furnish Moses and His people with a powerful support to their faith in the promises of salvation given to the patriarchs.

We ought to view Jesus — the Great I AM — in the same way today. When He says "I AM the light of the world" or "the bread of life" or "the way, the truth and the life," He is declaring His absolute and unchanging power and ability to meet our every need! We find in His words "I AM" something certain and sure to put our faith in. As we do so our hearts and lives find a peace and satisfaction that is to be found nowhere else in all of creation!

Has the Great I AM touched your life? Have you heard His claims to be all that you will ever need and put your faith in Him? He longs for you to do so today and you will never be disappointed.

*Oh, hallelujah to the King of Kings,
Hallelujah to the Lamb,
Hallelujah to the Lord of Lords,
Who is the great I AM.*

— Twila Paris

— Pastor Les Johnson
Trinity and Christ Lutheran Parish
Minnewauken, ND

SOUND BITES

1

"When we are out of sympathy with the young, then I think our work in this world is over."
—George MacDonald

ABC

2

"The bottom line in youth ministry is not how many kids you have coming to your youth group. The bottom line is, 'Where will your kids be five to ten years from now?'"
—Jim Burns

DEF

3

"Many parents are more concerned about their children's happiness than about their holiness. Youngsters often know what kind of actions are identified with the Christian life, but don't know how to live in its reality. This occurs because parents tell their children what to do, but fail to tell them why.... Moral training in the home must define what is right and good, not just what is wrong and evil."

—Gary Ezzo in *Tabletalk*, 3/96

GHI

4

"You may see your teen writing notes in youth group or making spit wads in church. He may fight with his brothers and sisters at home. You may wonder how your teen could change the world when you can't even get him to change his sheets.

God sees all that stuff, too, yet He still believes in his potential — and He is still counting on him. Our young people need to know we have discovered the seeds of greatness within them. When they finally find someone who recognizes their potential, they will abandon the direction this world has given them. When they see an older generation that is convinced of their potential, there is nothing they won't do to fulfill that potential."

—Inspire the Fire
by Ron Luce

JKL

5

"Though we may value time, we aren't spending much of it with our families. The amount of total contact parents have with their children has dropped 40 percent during the last 25 years."

—Too Old, Too Soon by Doug Fields

Reaching the

Pam asked the five youth who had come for Bible study, "Who is the person in your grade most unlikely to ever ask Christ into their heart?" They replied in unison, "Phil."

Phil **was** the most unlikely person to come to know Christ. After all he was the leader of a gang from their class. He was serving his first sentence in the juvenile work camp at the end of eighth grade for beating a kid, breaking his ribs, and stealing a purse from an elderly lady. It was not a small challenge Pam offered the youth when she asked them if they were willing to pray for Phil. She invited each one to pray, but only if they really believed God was able to change him.

They prayed for Phil for three weeks before she asked me to go and meet him.

"Why me?" I asked. "How come I was asked to step into this crazy prayer request?"

I didn't have any idea who this kid was and didn't have any interest in getting to know him. The more I found out the less I liked the idea. You see, I formerly was the kind of kid that Phil enjoyed beating up.

If the Holy Spirit hadn't been working overtime on my conscience, I'm sure I would have found a way out of this. The thought, "If you believe God is real, live like it," kept going through my mind until I took that first step.

Scared, shaking, and feeling stupid I walked up to his door and rang the bell. No one answered, what a relief! But the Holy Spirit was not going to let me rest that easily. On the third visit I found Phil sitting on the front step of his house looking depressed. One word can describe our meeting — **AWK-WARD!** I had finally met him and offered him a ride to the mall the next day.

I look back on our first visits and sense that God was working in the background allowing this relationship to develop. A birthday card, a walk along the river, a game of pool in our basement, and a phone call or two began a relationship that brought the two of us together. Why did he confide in me? What could bring unlikely people like us together? It was an answer to prayer! The Bible study group had continued to pray, unaware of the progress in our relationship.

I treasure the look on their faces when they came to Bible study and Phil was there to join them. They sat in stunned silence much of that first meeting unsure how to respond. I continue to pray for Phil. He never did turn his life over to the Lord at that time, but this was his introduction to a God that he had never heard of before.

How do you reach the unreached?

One at a time. It begins as you bring them to the Lord and it continues as you build a relationship with them. Building that relationship may not be easy, but it is essential.

First, you must go to them. They will not come to you. Going to them will take time, but for the teen, love is spelled T-I-M-E. Going to them will take risk. There is a chance you will suffer rejection and there is a chance you may be the one used by God to change their life. Going means leaving your comfort zone and entering their world.

Second, you must study their culture. A missionary must understand the people he is trying to reach if he has any hope of communicating to them. What is important to them? How do they think? What motivates them to action or to change? What is their view of Jesus?

Third, you must use their language. The average American teenager does not

unreached

understand the words that Christians are familiar with. For most, sin is a relative term. They don't believe in absolutes of right and wrong. They see pain in people's lives all around them, but they do not realize it is caused by sin. Since sin is a relative term to them they don't realize they need a Savior.

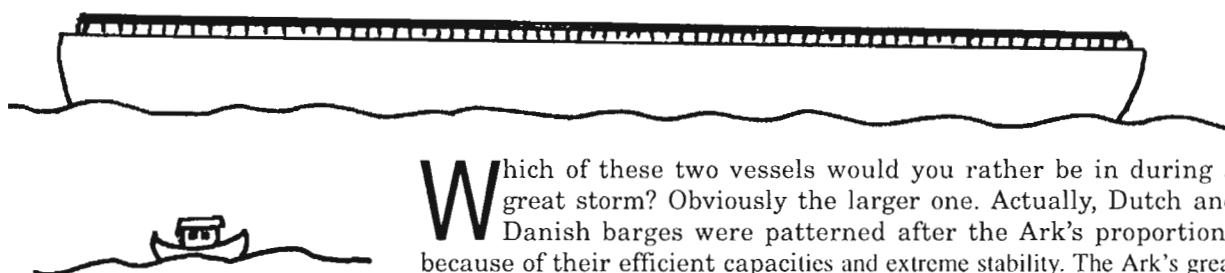
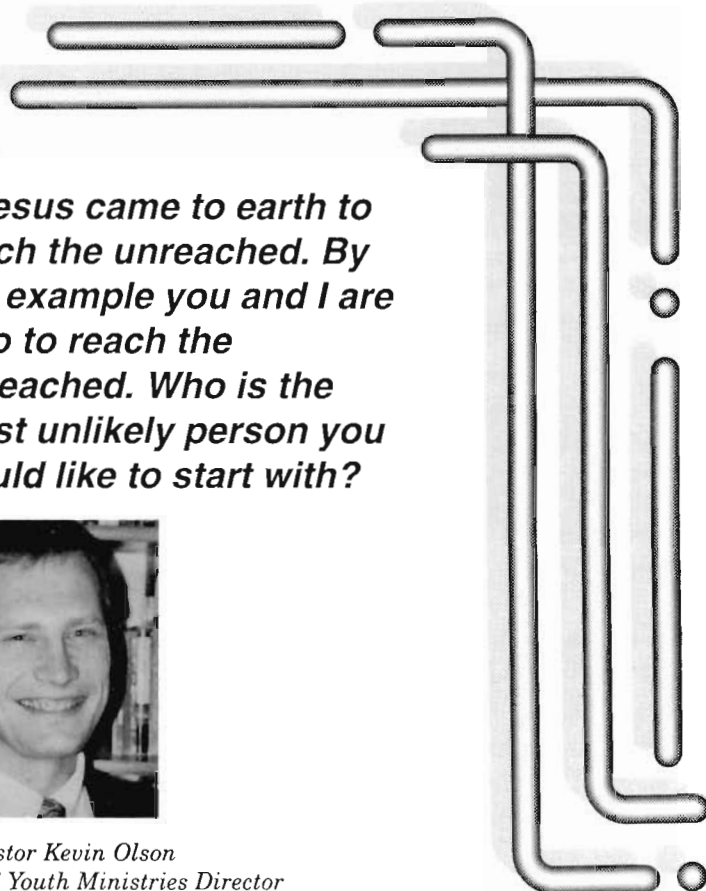
Fourth, focus on Jesus. They only receive the power to change their behavior after they have the power of God within them. It is Jesus who fills the empty void in their heart. It is Jesus who teaches them what real love is. It is Jesus who gives them meaning and purpose for life, and it is Jesus who gives them hope for tomorrow.



Jesus came to earth to reach the unreached. By His example you and I are also to reach the unreached. Who is the most unlikely person you would like to start with?



— *Pastor Kevin Olson*
AFLC Youth Ministries Director



**Is it
truth or
fairy tale?**

Which of these two vessels would you rather be in during a great storm? Obviously the larger one. Actually, Dutch and Danish barges were patterned after the Ark's proportions because of their efficient capacities and extreme stability. The Ark's great length was not exceeded for over 4000 years until the Cunard Company, builders of the Queen Mary, built the Eturia in 1884.

In a spirit of concern for our children's concept of the Word of God we need to be careful about the mental pictures we give to them. In our teaching of Noah and the Flood, pictures appear in Sunday school material and posters are put on the wall depicting a little houseboat having the capacity for about a dozen animals. Doesn't this picture create a fairy-tale image in the child's mind? The Ark was a large vessel, being over 450 feet long, and capable of holding the thousands of animals that God brought to it.

We accept the Bible as being without error. We should teach its truths in a manner that will instill credibility in the mind of the child. If not, what is there to keep them from beginning to have doubts about other portions of Scripture and finally of Christ Himself?

— *Robert Kohl*
Calvary Lutheran
Arlington, South Dakota

Biblical help



Satan, the father of lies doesn't label temptations with warnings!

Instead, he deceives us into believing that the pleasure of sin is worth the consequences that follow. We have all experienced the inner conflict of wanting to do right, but wanting at the same time to do what is wrong. Satan may tempt us, but he definitely can't make us sin. The choice is ours to make.

We are free to decide to do what is right. No matter how intense the temptation may seem, God always provides "a way out." Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

We must also be careful to remove ourselves from situations which we find to be tempting. Get out and stay out!

Don't blame God for the temptations we face. I once heard this topic explained in the following way. Did your mom ever bake your favorite cookies and tell you not to eat any? Oh, but as they were cooling on the table they began to smell so incredible. Before long, you even start to get a little upset at mom. In your opinion, maybe she baked those cookies just to tempt you.

Many people feel the same way about God. They want something they know is wrong and they wonder why God is tempting them. But God doesn't tempt anyone! Our own sinful nature, our "evil desire," makes us want what is wrong. James says: "When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death" (James 1:13-15).

When we're tempted, it is because something inside us likes to do the thing we know we shouldn't do. The problem lies within us, not in the thing we're tempted to do. As the saying goes, "When a good thing becomes a god thing, then it's a bad thing." God has made us new in Jesus. We may still be tempted by things we know to be wrong, but we will enjoy pleasing God much more than any temporary pleasure that comes from sin.

The

— Monica Olsen, 14
Bethel Lutheran
Faith, South Dakota

I can picture the joy of heaven, Lord,
I can hear your triumphs ring,
I long to hear the shouts of glory,
and the angels as they sing.

I long to lift my voice to You,
and sing in the angels' choir,
to glorify my Savior's name,
and lift it even higher.

in facing temptation

What should Christians do when faced with temptations?

Remember what the Bible teaches and obey its truths. The temptation of Jesus as recorded in Matthew 4:1-11, provides the example for us to follow. When Satan tempted Him, Jesus looked to God's Word for direction. Jesus knew that Scripture would show Him what was right in each and every situation. He put this truth into practice in both word and deed.

If we trust God's Word as our guide to discern right from wrong, and if we decide to put Scripture into action when we are faced with temptations, we will overcome our temptations just as Jesus did. The Bible tells us to resist the devil and he **will** flee. "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

We must arm ourselves against Satan's attacks. God gives us incredible power and strength through prayer and through His Word. In my own personal walk with the Lord, I have found Scripture memo-

rization to be one of the best ways to resist temptation and deal with sin. Here are some great verses I have found helpful: Hebrews 2:18; Psalm 119:9-11; I Corinthians 10:13; Galatians 6:1-2; Ephesians 6:10-12; I John 1:8-9; Romans 6:11-13; James 4:7-8; James 1:13-15.

I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

— Psalm 119:11

Temptations will always be present as long as we remain in this fallen world. Praise God our home is in heaven, and Jesus has already paid the price for our sins! Satan holds no power over us when we are empowered by Jesus Christ. Satan is the father of lies, but our Father is the King of kings and the Lord of lords!



— Monica M. Anderson
West Lisbon Lutheran
Newark, Illinois

The author is active in her local congregation as the youth worker and is the Guidance Counselor at Aurora Christian School in Aurora.

Promised Land

To once again see all the faces,
that I've met along the way,
and even some I've never met,
Please Lord, if I may.

Give me the chance to see Your
kingdom, and unto You give praise,
to shout 'Hallelujah' to the sky,
Your precious name I'll raise.

I know that with all my sin,
You'd never let me in,
So this is why I pray that you'll
forgive me deep within.

Take away my sinful thoughts,
the evil temptations too,
Help me to please You day by day,
and Your precious will I'll do.

I know that if I follow You,
One day I will see,
Your loving face, full of grace,
for all eternity.

Lead my weary soul, oh Lord,
take me by the hand,
to the place you have prepared for me,
the perfect Promised Land.



Is there NO FEAR?

— Pastor James L. Johnson
Calvary Lutheran
Fosston, Minnesota



John Cymbaluk was doing 75, his yellow Ski-Doo MXZX snowmobile buzzing yet closer to the lead in the 1994 International 500.

It was a frigid January morning near Two Harbors, Minnesota, and John's wife Vicky (my daughter's Sunday school teacher), was waiting in Duluth where Monday's leg was to end.

But John never arrived. Closing to within five snowmobiles of first place, his sled sailed over the crest of an icy hill and my friend saw in midair what any snowmobile racer deploras.

A tree.

He landed just in time to collide with the trunk at its base, his chest pounding the tree, his body bouncing back onto the race trail.

His back broken in two places, John Cymbaluk (pronounced "SIM-block") faced fear. Real fear. "I know the next guy couldn't possibly see me until he got over the hill," said John, the third baseman on our church softball team. The next racer sped past, then stopped and spun around. He pulled John off the track and told him, "I gotta get going. See ya."

With every movement, the father of five and coach of our youth group's softball team, could hear grinding bones. Though safe from the blades of the next racer's sled, John was hurting, afraid, and wondering — *What's gonna happen next?*

That's when he met his rescuer.

No. 156.

Robert Burke of Renselaer, New York, had traveled 1,500 miles to the prestigious snowmobile event, and though he was near the lead, Burke pulled out of the race and stayed with Cymbaluk for two cold hours while the rescue team attempted to find them in the woods.

Miraculously, John walked out of the hospital two days later. His story was reported on the front page of the *Grand Forks Herald* two years ago, and today, thanks to the Lord and No. 156, a healthy John Cymbaluk runs a small engines repair business, attends our church in Fosston, swings a pretty mean softball bat and, occasionally, thinks about the fear he faced on January 24, 1994.

"My first fear was dying before that sled got there," said John. "Then I was worried about one landing on top of me. But when Bob Burke came and helped me, I said, 'Thanks, but you're going to want to get back in that race,' and he just said, 'No, it doesn't matter. I'm not going to win the race anyway. I'll stay here with you.'"

When I think about fear, and think about lying in the snow like John — with a broken back and the distant sound of buzzing getting louder — I think about the ultimate Samaritan, Jesus. Sometimes in life, there isn't much to do but fear. You wonder, *What's coming next?*"

Then comes Jesus, saying, "I'll stay here with you."

Before that can happen, though, you have to admit you are afraid. Jesus can't help people who are blind but never admit to it.

Or do you say, in your pride, "No Fear."

That's what some of the high school students I know say. My Generation X friends aren't afraid. They have "No Fear." And in a lot of ways, it's not just them. It's all of us. We don't admit it. That's the Nike Tennis Shoes Philosophy Of Our Day — *NO FEAR*.

I think it's bunk.

Think about death. Think about getting into a car with two drunk acquaintances in Wells, Minnesota, like Anna Lee Bixby did after prom on April 28. Think about how she

drove into Fountain Lake and how all three came to the sudden end of their lives. Think about losing your closest friends and family. Think about cancer. Think about Michelle Carew, 18 last fall, diagnosed with leukemia, and finishing her life before it hardly began this spring.

Think about tomorrow. Think about finishing high school and not having Mom to tell you what to do next. Think about paying your own health insurance. Think about parents contemplating divorce — again.

Think about HIV. Think blood transfusions. Think Bosnia or Gulf War or 34 dying from a random gunman in Australia. Admit it. You're afraid. You're not Bob Wylie, but you're scared.

Like me.

Like John Cymbaluk, sometimes we lie in the racing track of life, hoping this isn't the end after all. Sometimes the old MXZX puts us in places we wish never existed.

That's when Jesus comes.

Like Bob Burke, He has the time. He stops. He came a long way and loves you and wants to be there. *Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you,* Jesus said in John 14:27. *Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.*

Jesus didn't have to stop. It wasn't His problem that we sinned. He could have raced by. He pulled over and helped and said, "I'll finish the race for you." In fact, He died and proved His love, like John 15:13 says: "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friend." He stopped for you. Would you roll over from your sleep — from your death, from your fear — and receive the grace He offers to overcome fear? Defying fear and death, he was tortured on a cross to rescue us from sin. Why?

One reason. One word. Love.

And what does that mean for us, the John Cymbaluks of the world, afraid of what's coming over the hill next?

Two words.

No Fear.

The Rescuer is here. Relax. The Hero from Galilee has it all under control.





Let our children grow

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, any one who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." and He took the children in His arms, put His hands on them and blessed them. — Mark 10:13-16

As new parents hold a tiny infant in their arms there is no way of knowing what the future holds for that child. Although we may dream and plan, our child will eventually make choices according to what he/she believes to be right. Will they be wise choices? What is the parent's responsibility?

God clearly tells us in Deuteronomy 6

that we are to obey His commands "so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the Lord your God as long as you live" (vs. 2).

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them upon your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the door frames of your houses and on your gates. — Deuteronomy 6:5-9

Our busy lifestyle plus the influence of a culture that has drifted from accepting God's Word as Truth is rapidly taking a toll on the family. Studies show that the average time a father spends with his children is less than five minutes per week.

A frightening discovery by pollster George Barna reveals that even among dedicated Christians, only about one-eighth have a biblical world view. Values and morals are easily internalized from the secular media by people of all ages.

A comparison of time spent watching television with time spent in the study and sharing of God's Word would be embarrassing for most Christians. Public schools disallow any consideration of scriptural teaching but present a very secular view of morality; sometimes including sexual perversions as a normal option. If choices in life are based on what goes into the mind — and they are — then the challenge to parents is early and consistent training and teaching along with modeling a biblical lifestyle.

It's never too early to be teaching a child. Studies indicate babies in the womb respond to voices and to various kinds of music. I believe every child is born with the capacity and desire to know God.

Our two-year-old grandson began several months ago to point to his heart when asked, "Where does Jesus live?" He doesn't ask for an explanation, but simply responds to teaching. Are we to assume he just doesn't understand? Jesus said, "Anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." Simple childlike faith in the heart of Christian parents who desire to know,

teach and model the truth of God's Word will be rewarded by children who follow in their footsteps (see Proverbs 22:6).

Love children unconditionally. They need it. Love cannot be communicated by yelling and screaming or belittling. Giving material things does not satisfy their emotional needs. Although probably not verbalized, they seem to understand that love cannot be purchased. Children sense they are valued when time is given in listening and when their questions are answered appropriately according to their ages. They know when their fears are acknowledged and comfort is given, also when rules and regulations are accompanied by reasons or an explanation.

Just as "the Lord disciplines those He loves" (Hebrews 12:6), it is also the responsibility of loving parents to discipline their children. If punishment of a child is merely due to the parent's irritability, anger or selfishness, it is not likely to produce the intended purpose of correction, teaching and training. "No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it" (Hebrews 12:11).

Ready or not, children will grow and mature physically and mentally, and will seek some form of spirituality, because God has placed a hunger in our spirit for

life in Himself with all its fullness. False gods come in many forms. The god of this world is ready and eager to entice anyone who is open to his deceptive schemes and counterfeit worship. Biblical teaching and training at home offers necessary knowledge and discernment to be alert to those temptations.

Letting our children go should not be a sudden emotional, traumatic event. When the day comes for them to leave home, they have been prepared by a gradual process of allowing them to learn and grow while parents are readily available and still listening, correcting, and comforting.

Knowing that our Abba Father loves them even more than we do, we can trust Him to continue to hold them in His loving care. All thanks and praise goes to Him when a grown child returns home and says, "Mom and Dad, I'm so thankful I had the privilege of growing up in this family!"



— Leila Gilman
Sioux Falls, South Dakota

The author is a counselor at New Life Biblical Counseling Center in Sioux Falls. She is a member of the International Association of Biblical Counselors. A wife of a retired pastor, she is the mother of four children and enjoys nine grandchildren. The Gilmans attend Redeemer Lutheran in Canton, where their son, Tom, is the pastor.

Should you go?

— David Larson, 15
Bethany Lutheran
Abercrombie, North Dakota

It's a great experience! GO on a missions trip if you have an opportunity. If you are a Christian teen or adult, you are my sighted target in writing this article.

First there are the obvious physical reasons to go. Going to Mexico, Brazil, Russia, India, or some other foreign country is a refreshing change of pace and makes you really appreciative of what we as Americans have. Sightseeing, photo opportunities, tourist attractions — all are great places to pick up new information.

I visited Obregon and Agraristas, Mexico in December and Jan-

uary when it was 70 to 90 degrees most days and cooled to 50 to 60 one rainy night. I returned to North Dakota with a nice tan. Tasting some new foods was rather fun, but don't forget the Pepto-Bismol. Shopping was an eye-opening experience. One market had a whole aisle of fresh meat. The pigs' heads were pretty gross, staring at me with their tongues hanging out.

When studying a foreign language, what better way to practice? Great conversations are waiting for you with those who speak English and with those making the trip with you. I still

write to a wonderful former schoolteacher who gave us a room for the night in Nebraska.

All these experiences are excellent, but are trivial in comparison to eternal spiritual objectives of a missionary excursion. A Teen Missions International brochure states: "The purpose ... is for the ministry of the gospel of Jesus Christ and His Church, not sightseeing or shopping. Any available sightseeing or shopping will be permitted only if it coincides with the team's main purpose, but could be canceled ... if it hinders the ministry of the team."

The spiritual objective is the →

God called us

If someone had told either Patty or me one year ago that we would become the leaders of our congregation's youth group, we wouldn't have believed it. If the Lord had asked me what work I wanted to do for His people, I likely would have requested the job of gardener. My wife Patty, would have chosen to serve as a teacher of young children. I am a forester and Patty is an elementary school teacher. I myself, felt certain that I lacked any significant skill for youth work.

But the Lord called us to offer our time and talents to the youth of our church.

Previously Bethany Lutheran employed Alison Mellgren as a full-time youth worker. She had developed an outstanding program and formed a close bond with the youth. Patty and I looked at what Alison had accomplished and wondered if we could continue such a program. There were many unknowns for us at the beginning. We frequently wondered if God had made the right choice! Then we prayed for

the Holy Spirit's guidance and were reminded of Matthew 7:7, "Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you."

With the prayers of the congregation supporting us, Patty and I set out as youth leaders in September of 1995. We entered the first meeting with great enthusiasm, personal commitment, and a bit of trepidation. The past months have been interesting to say the least. One never knows where the Lord's work will lead you. But we do rest in the assurance that He will provide.

It is with that spirit that we share what we have learned:

Ω God has called you because you have something the youth need! Be sincere, be yourself, and don't get in the way of God's plan.

Ω Seek guidance from the pastor, church board, and parents.

Ω Be flexible and above all, maintain a sense of humor.

MISSIONS TRIP

most important aspect of a missions trip. Four main people or groups are touched with an experience like this:

God is honored through what we do and say. Spreading His Word's transforming power in a foreign country, ministering within your group, and spending more time in prayer is pleasing in God's sight.

You will be affected in a big way. Perhaps you will be one of many specifically touched by the Lord in unfamiliar surroundings. Why are many people saved at a camp or a convention? Without normal walls and hedges, the Lord can get through. In our comfortable homes we likely don't do fervent praying before each day's work, but suddenly you are faced with real needs and you pray. You pray to safely cross the border, to witness and be exactly what God would desire each new day.

Numerous daily challenges encourage constant prayer. If you already are a prayer warrior for God, keep on your knees whether you are visiting the mission field or not! Missionaries need your prayers.

People you visit while traveling or there with the nationals can be blessed by time with you. Your witness and life has eternal impact. Your travel companions should enjoy your company as it's hard to spend many hours on a bus with people you are unable to peacefully get along with.

Family and friends back home are touched by a missions trip when they pray for you, financially support you, and interact with a (hopefully) different you. I pray you'll return more like Christ, apparent to all.

Seriously consider God's will for you. Pray. Give. Go!



Some AFLC students who plan to go out with Royal Servants International this summer are: Rhoda Monseth, Rogers, Minnesota; Melissa Nash, Brooklyn Park, Minnesota — with the Asia Express team in China and the Philippines; Julaine Borg, Cokato, Minnesota; Debbie Holmquist, Maple Grove, Minnesota — with the European team; and AFLBS student, David Dummermuth, Chesterland, Ohio — a counselor with the European team.

Summer missionaries serving in Russia are: Tana Blestrud, Tioga, North Dakota, and Jon Bylka, Minneapolis, Minnesota — with East European Missions Network.

Approximately 25 young people plan to work in Mexico later this summer with AFLC's Partners in Mission Outreach.

— Steve and Patty Skinner
Bethany Lutheran
Astoria, Oregon

Ω Lead by example. You can pull a string a lot farther than you can push it.

Ω Help the group set goals. Learn to listen and respect their opinions.

Ω Every youth is an individual and needs differ.

Ω Allow youth to make decisions as a group and hold them accountable.

Ω Expect the best from everyone.

Ω Despite your best efforts, weekly attendance will vary considerably.

Ω Expect disagreement; not everyone will be happy with all decisions.

Ω Do not be afraid to look foolish in the eyes of the kids and admit it if you do not have all the answers.

Ω It's fun and frustrating and sometimes all at once.

Ω There is no substitution for being prepared.

Ω Above all else: prayer — prayer is fundamental! If God wants it to happen, it will.



Home Missions committee to hold concert of prayer

Everyone is encouraged to attend a special prayer service on Tuesday, June 18, the day before the beginning of the AFLC Annual Conference, at 8 p.m. at the chapel in Cedar Lodge on the Warm Beach, Washington campground. The AFLC Home Missions Committee is leading this Concert of Prayer. Plan now to arrive early enough to include this time in your annual conference schedule.

A Day in the Life of a Missionary

6:00 a.m. — Beginning the day in prayer is essential for me. I have no idea what the natives will be like today and it just isn't possible to face them in my own strength.

9:00 a.m. — What can I possibly say to this people group? How can I communicate Jesus to this culture in a way that they will understand? They seem so uncivilized at times, I don't know if they understand anything that I am saying.

3:00 p.m. — I met with one of the quiet ones today. We talked, but there is more to bridging this culture gap than I realized. The things that they deal with seem so foreign to the way I was brought up. I told him that God can help him, but he gave me a blank stare as if he didn't understand a word I said.

6:30 p.m. — The natives

assemble for our meeting. Some gather in their own groups and talk together in their own dialect. The younger ones push and shove one another. It seems that they must be competing to see who is going to be their future leader. Others are wildly running around as if they are getting ready for a local sports event.

7:30 p.m. — The meeting is failing. They don't comprehend what I am trying to say, or else I don't understand their culture well enough. I could get a larger response if I was talking to the trees.

8:30 p.m. — One native stayed after the meeting to talk. He has been the wildest one in the bunch. I didn't pay much attention to him until I saw the tear in his eye. He said he wanted to know if Jesus really loved him and if Jesus would change his

heart! His name is Mike, age 16, a sophomore in Senior High.

Reaching the young people of this generation is mission work. The youth culture is constantly changing and is difficult to reach. However, they will not come to us. We must step into their world if we are going to reach them. We must meet them where they are with a language they can understand. Paul struggled with this challenge. Notice his approach in I Corinthians: 9:22, 23. "I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some." It may seem like a task that is too big, too few people will help, and there is too little time. But remember, God chooses to use our weakness so that His strength can be seen.



— by Pastor Kevin Olson
AFLC Youth Ministries Director

A local radio host the other day said, "With all the things that need changing in our country, it still starts with one individual." America's history revisionists would ignore or blur the fact that our forefathers were guided by biblical principles. Many of us are lured into believing we can't do anything to slow our nation's slide to becoming an anti-Christian culture.

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." And so reads the familiar sentence from the Declaration of Independence. In the sentence preceding this familiar one, reference is made to "the laws of nature and of nature's God."

Our founding fathers demonstrated their beliefs in their writings and in their lives. They put faith into their work while plan-

You make a difference

ning this strong nation. They began each day's meetings with prayer. Many then and since have sacrificed their lives to preserve these unalienable rights.

What are we willing to do? When we begin our day with prayer, do we include the nation and those who govern? Do we listen and read to know what is happening around us? Do we use

Scripture to judge whether these things happening are within God's purpose? Do we write a thank you note or commend one who has taken a stand for truth? Complaints flow easily when we disagree, but it is rare to praise someone for an action or vote with which we agree.

It is impossible to ignore this being an election year. Are you

I believe no one can read the history of our country without realizing that the Good Book and the Spirit of the Savior have from the beginning been our guiding geniuses. ... I believe the entire Bill of Rights came into being because of the knowledge our forefathers had of the Bible and their belief in it. Freedom of belief, of expression, of assembly, of petition, the dignity

of the individual, sanctity of the home, equal justice under law and the reservation of powers to the people. I like to believe we're living today in the spirit of the Christian religion. I like also to believe that as long as we do so, no great harm can come to our country."

— *Supreme Court Chief Justice Earl Warren*
quoted from TIME, 2/15/54

No two alike

When Jesus was on this earth He often ministered to individuals as He sought to lead them to Himself. But in this ministry we see no set pattern or steps that Jesus followed. Some of the Gospels tell of the same incidents, but of all events recorded in the Bible there are no two alike.

The reason for the differences is that each individual whom Jesus encountered had different spiritual needs, and Jesus who knows everything about everybody directed Himself to those needs. However, at the same time, there is only one way of salvation. It is a simple way which can be summed up in a verse like John 3:16. But it is not a shallow way. Many articles and books have been written explaining this great plan of God's salvation — and still all that could be said has not.

We as Christians, whether pastors or laity, have varied experiences of how we were drawn to Christ and turned our lives over to Him, accepting Him to be both our Savior and Lord.

In our attempt to witness and

tell of Jesus to others, proclaiming God's Word, we tend to reflect back to our own experience which has worked for us and to that with which we are most familiar.

Because we have experienced it, our method of relating the way of salvation to others becomes most important to us.

Some of us come from Christian homes and as babies were brought to God in baptism. Baptism and all the blessings that are promised through it mean very much. Our parents, who lived their Christian lives before us, taught us the way we should go.

registered to vote? This year estimates indicate that only 35-50% of eligible citizens are registered to vote and nearly one-half will not bother to vote. Regrettably that means many of us in our churches will not vote. One writer states that, "Our leaders are being effectively elected by ten percent of our people!" Do you really believe that your vote won't make a difference?

Christians can make a difference in our nation's future! But we must be willing to do something. The truths that our founding fathers believed in can be preserved. Christians need to follow Jesus' admonition to His disciples to "Be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves" (Matthew 10:16b). Paul advised the Romans in chapter 16:19b, "I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil." Shrewdness and wisdom based on Scripture are necessary for effective and responsible action.



— Deanna Hobelmann
Abiding Word Lutheran
Deshler, Nebraska

We haven't had a drastic conversion experience and can't remember a time when Jesus wasn't dear and real to us. We would wish that many others too could have such an experience.

On the other hand not everyone who has become a Christian has had the background of a Christian home. Some have found Christ through conversion experiences. They may have been baptized, but realize that baptism alone didn't keep them in the faith.

Knowing that there are still many in this world who do not know Jesus as Savior and Lord, we wish that all of them could have conversion experiences.

Sometimes we can become so wrapped up in what we have experienced, that we seem to forget that not everyone who is a Chris-

tian has come into God's kingdom exactly as we have. We tend to ignore completely any other means of building God's kingdom.

Our omission can be irritating to someone who might hear us preach or teach but has had a much different experience in coming to Jesus from ours.

No one knows all there is to know about God's wonderful plan of salvation. Paul said, "Now we see through a glass darkly." None of us sees all aspects of God's plan clearly. At best, we can minister as witnesses of that plan with only a cloudy concept. No one is an expert. We all have much to learn and can learn from others who have a different point of view.

God expects no individual to be able to give every person the spiritual nourishment he needs. God

FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Free indeed!

The mission of the AFLC is to build free and living congregations. But what is this freedom that we proclaim?

Jesus said: "If you continue in My work, then you are truly My disciples; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." — John 8:31-32

A free congregation is committed to a certain form of polity or church government, that recognizes no authority above itself except the Word and Spirit of God. Yet this freedom cannot stand alone or become an end unto itself. Therefore we say free and living.

The freedom that we proclaim is founded on the Word of God, which is the truth that makes us free (John 17:17). To continue in His Word is to grow as His disciples. Our task is to nurture His people in spiritual freedom, through a message of sin and grace.

If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.

— John 8:36

Jesus offers the gift of freedom to all who come to Him. The AFLC is committed to the freedom of the local congregation, convinced that our polity is an attempt to be as open to the Spirit as possible, and constrained by the love of Christ to lead all who will receive Him into His freedom.

May the Lord keep us faithful to this mission!



— Pastor Robert L. Lee

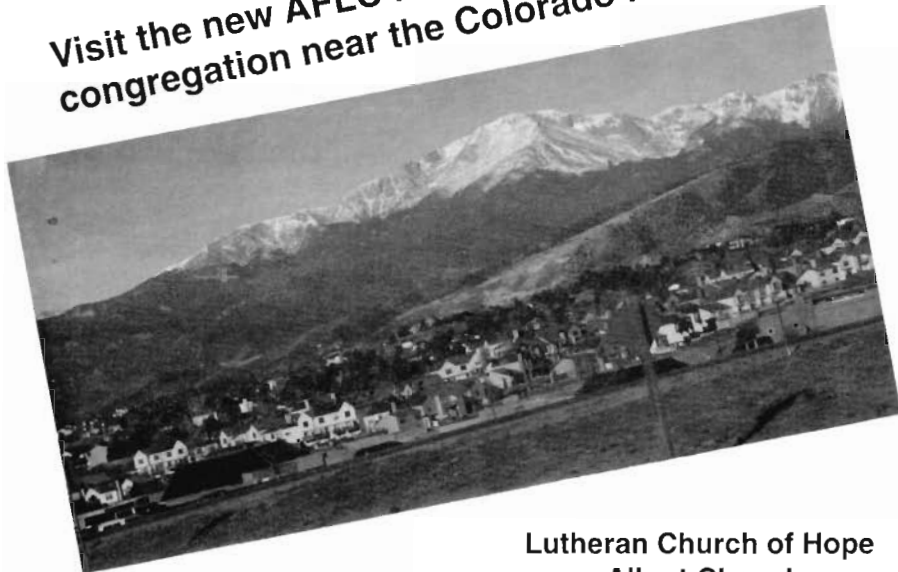
has called many people with different gifts and different experiences to accomplish His work. The Holy Spirit will lead us to the people whose spiritual needs are such that we can minister to them with what we have to offer. However, in every case our aim is the same — to prepare the sinner to meet his God and become prepared to spend eternity in heaven.



— Rev. Gerald F. Mundfrom
Osceola, Wisconsin

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Visit the new AFLC Home Mission congregation near the Colorado Rockies



**Lutheran Church of Hope
Allnut Chapel
2100 N. Lincoln
Loveland, Colorado**



Pastor Larry Haagenson, the first full-time pastor arrived September, 1995.



Mrs. Elaine Mundfrom led the Sunday school singspiration time.



Jennifer Warfield, Hannah and Bethany Haagenson.

DeKalb, Illinois — Rev. Jonathan Unverzagt, of Grace Lutheran was installed as the pastor on April 28, 1996. Rev. Jeff Swanson from Helmar, Illinois preached and conducted the installation service.

Rev. Michael Peterson, Pleasanton, Texas, has accepted a call to serve St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Whitestown, Indiana,

Ottawa, Illinois — Faith Lutheran took a special May Basket offering for the Miriam Infant Home in Brazil. The offering came from the Sunday school and the coffee hour donations held beginning in late July. He has been the pastor of Good Shepherd congregation in Pleasanton since his ordination in 1994.

each Sunday between church and Sunday school. The WOF (Women of Faith) serves the coffee, juice and donuts and the donations normally go to purchase the next week's donuts. But for several weeks a special basket with pictures of the home and its children were placed on the table. The total offering on May 5 was nearly \$300.

PEOPLE AND PLACES



The Lutheran Ambassador editor, Rev. Craig Johnson shared the ministry of the AFLC church magazine with the Lutheran Church of Hope congregation of Loveland, Colorado on April 28. The congregation rents the chapel of a local funeral home.



Trenton Parker and his great-grandmother, Marie Stevens.



Terry Hunter led the children's sermon.

Melbourne, Florida — Members of Abiding Word Lutheran, an AFLC Home Mission congregation pastored by Rev. David Barnhart and Rev. John Abel, are praying for two Parish Builders to help establish their work. The idea of Parish Builders is for a young married couple, preferably graduates of our Bible School, to relocate to the area, find regular employment, and be resource persons for evangelism and church growth in the community. Parish Builders is a new idea for AFLC Home Missions, and represents an attempt to find more efficient ways to plant churches using the resources available. It is hoped that the program will also provide an avenue by which young Christians in our fellowship who do not feel called to the ordained ministry may give a part of their lives in special Christian service. Anyone interested in being a Parish Builder may inquire by calling the Home Missions office at (612) 545-5631.

Zumbrota, Minnesota — Our Saviour's Lutheran Church celebrated its 25th Anniversary on April 21, 1996.

Detroit Lakes, Minnesota — Faith Lutheran, organized in 1991, requested to go off Home Mission subsidy as of 1996. According to the 1995 statistical report, Faith Lutheran was one of 26 AFLC congregations receiving subsidy.

Rev. Merle Knutson, Hawley, Minnesota, has accepted the call to serve Hope Free Lutheran in Ishpeming, Michigan. Pastor Knutson has served the congregation on an interim basis since March 1, 1996.

Pipestone, Minnesota — On May 26, 1996, Christ the King Free Lutheran held the service of ordination for a son of the congregation,

Tim Johnson. Pastor Johnson begins serving Resurrection Free Lutheran in Beltrami, Minnesota later in June.

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Missionaries in Liberia safely evacuated

Gunfire and rioting on the streets of Monrovia, Liberia forced missionaries to switch from making translation plans to survival plans. On April 6, 1996, Mae Johnson was in the office in Monrovia planning future translation projects while her husband Larry was away in neighboring Guinea.

The situation quickly became serious. Mae and other Lutheran Bible Translator (LBT) missionaries and workers gathered at the office where they miraculously made telephone communication with the LBT Service Center in Aurora, Illinois.

Evacuation plans were underway. On April 12, a U.S. military helicopter took the LBT missionaries from Monrovia to Freetown,

Sierra Leone. From there a C-130 transport plane took them to Dakar, Senegal.

Meanwhile Larry Johnson was able to relay messages through the LBT Aurora center. After some difficulty he made his way overland to Freetown on April 14. Mae flew back to Freetown to meet up with Larry and from there they traveled to Chicago, arriving on April 19. After a few days of debriefing in Aurora, the Johnsons traveled on to their home and the welcoming arms of loved ones.

The Johnsons have their spiritual roots at Grace Lutheran in Valley City, North Dakota. Three of their four children have attended AFLBS.

Missionaries Connely and Carolyn Dyrud, Campo Mourão, Brazil, report: "At the start of this year, we have encouraged our people to read through the Bible this year. During our Thursday night Bible study, we have a few minutes for testimonies. Just about everybody has received some very special insights in God's Word. Through their daily reading, the Holy Spirit has been working among them."

Celaya, Mexico — Joshua David was born to Pastor and Mrs. Milton Flores on April 12, 1996. He is their second son. On April 18, the congregation served by Pastor Flores, Gethsemane Lutheran, purchased land on which they hope to build a church when funds are available. The congregation meets in temporary facilities at this time.

Summer Institute of Theology scheduled

**July 22 - August 2, 1996
Minneapolis, Minnesota**

The annual two-week Summer Institute of Theology at the Free Lutheran Seminary is scheduled for July 22-August 2, 1996. Four courses offered are: Church Leadership and Administration — taught by Pastor Richard Anderson; Studies in

Call 612-544-9501

Joshua — with Pastor Jerry Holmaas; History and Aims of the AFLC — with Pastor Robert Lee; and Doctrine of Last Things — with Dr. Francis Monseth. Pastor Jerry Moan will teach Introduction to New Testament Greek, with the class beginning July 22 and ending August 30.

Vernon, British Columbia —

Living Word Lutheran hosted the Canadian AFLC Annual Conference during April 12-14, 1996. Pastor Gene Sundby was re-elected as president for his 5th three-year term. Pastor Kelly Henning of Salmon Arm, B.C. was elected to fill the clergy position on the Coordinating Committee and Pastor Gerald Gettis of Vernon is the committee's new chairman. The new facility of Living Word Lutheran was dedicated during the conference. The delegates honored and said farewell to Pastor Les and Dawn Johnson, formerly of Lake Alma, Saskatchewan, now serving in Minnewauken and Devils Lake, North Dakota. Pastor Johnson served for many years as the Coordinating Committee chairman and Dawn was the first Canadian WMF president.

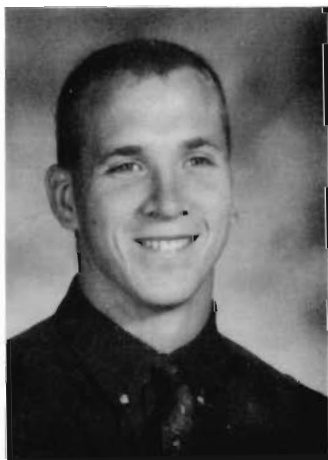
The conference speakers focused on the theme, "Behold the Lamb of God." President Sundby commented: "We enjoyed an excellent spirit. The last service concluded with an altar call during which all pastors came forward to dedicate themselves and the ministry of their congregations. About 100 people joined them at the altar for a wonderful time of praying and sharing."

Several from our AFLC-Canada family expect to enjoy the AFLC-U.S. Annual Conference in Warm Beach, Washington, during June 19-23.

Pastor Todd Peterson, Thief River Falls, Minnesota, accepted the call to Maple Bay Free Lutheran church, Mentor, Minnesota, beginning in late June. Mr. Peterson, a licensed lay pastor, has been serving Bethlehem Lutheran in rural Greenbush, and as youth director for Our Saviour's Lutheran in Thief River Falls.

AFLBS gets new dean of men

Seminarian Tom and Linda Schierkolk and family have been living in the men's dorm on the AFLBS campus while Tom has attended seminary and served as the Bible School dean of men. He is leaving to begin his internship in Valley City, North Dakota. Moving into the dean of men's residence is Jason Sanford, 23, a 1996 AFLBS graduate.



I was born and reared in Story City, Iowa, and baptized and confirmed at Trinity Lutheran in Ellsworth. I am a 1991 graduate of South Hamilton Community Schools, Jewel, Iowa.

I gave my heart to the Lord when a friend took me to an evangelistic crusade in Story City, where Pastor Michael Brandt was sharing the gift that has been freely offered to me through Jesus Christ. He shared many verses with me. One was Romans 6:23, stating that, "I have been given a free gift ... it is eternal life." Also I understood I John 1:9, "I am forgiven," and "Christ has come in and He will stay" from Revelation 3:20. Since becoming a Christian, I have realized that if we put everything in God's control, He will provide for us in His time and according to His will. I praise the Lord for being offered the position of dean of men and also

PEOPLE AND PLACES

assistant cook by the Board of Trustees. It is truly an answer to prayer (Philippians 4:6-7).

I am very thankful for the Bible School and the biblical truths I have been taught. Most importantly, I am thankful for the solid foundation in Christ that I have established since attending AFLBS. In regards to my future plans, I felt the Lord's call to take a year off from school before attending Northwestern College to obtain a bachelor's degree. After college, I plan to attend AFLTS to become a pastor in the AFLC.

For me to live is Christ and to die is gain. — Philippians 1:21

— Jason Sanford

Position open for AFLBS dean of women/resident head. For more information call Pastor Lyndon Korhonen at (612) 286-2861.

Timothy Johnson receives American Bible Society award

A Free Lutheran Theological Seminary student is the recipient of the American Bible Society Scholarly Achievement Award for excellence in biblical studies. Dr. Francis Monseth, Dean of FLS, presented Timothy Johnson with the outstanding achievement award during graduation exercises on May 18, 1996. Johnson ranks among the top students selected each year from colleges and seminaries across the United



States to receive this honor. These outstanding young scholars/seminarians are recognized by their respective institutions for their high achievements in the study of the Bible.

The ABS presents the Scholarly Award in appreciation for the work colleges and seminaries are doing in preparing students for ministry.

Wheatland, Iowa — AFLBS student and daughter of the congregation, Renee Behne, has accepted the position of one of the youth workers for the summer at Christian Free Lutheran Church.

Campus prayer notes

Pray for the safe return of the AFLBS Choir. Their last day in Norway is June 9, in Oslo. Dr. Francis and Ellen Monseth are traveling with the choir and their director, Mr. Jerry Nelson.

Pray for the Team Training Week from June 12-15, on the AFLBS campus. Pray for the continued process of the nomination of AFLBS dean to be submitted for a vote at the Annual Conference June 19-23, in Warm Beach, Washington.

Fosston, Minnesota — AFLBS 1996 graduates, Kelani O'Neil and Wes Patterson have accepted the call to be summer youth workers beginning June 1, at Calvary Free Lutheran Church.

Well done

— Myron Berg
Our Saviour's Lutheran Church
Dickinson, North Dakota

Faithful use of our God-given gifts

In athletics, the person who cleans up the locker room after the team is finished dressing may be using his talent of cleaning to the fullest extent possible, but will never receive the recognition that the athletes do, at least here on earth. While we don't positively know the ultimate value of anyone's work until judgment day, it appears that many of the people who go through life with little recognition here on earth will be stars in heaven because they were faithful with the talents God gave them.

The rewards of money, power, and recognition are handed out on a basis that even the world has to admit does not always reflect a person's true worth. The Christian church does much better overall than the world at recognizing true value, but the church struggles with this problem, too.

A friend of mine once told me about a leader of a church organization who asked him how he thought certain members of a \$5,000 club should be recognized. The members of this club had each donated \$5,000 or more to some worthy church project. My friend told him (satirically) that they should get some people to play silver trumpets for this group, but a plain room should be set up somewhere else for the poor widows who could only contribute a mite. To God, the dollar amount of the gift doesn't matter as much as the desire to use the resources and gifts that He has given us for His kingdom.

God has given each of us abilities. Some of these are passed to us naturally through genetic characteristics inherited from our parents, some are learned from

other people, and others are given to us supernaturally. God wants us to use the gifts He gives us.

A musician or artist using his ability to the fullest will reflect what the Psalmist (19:1-4) says is the glory of God in creation. The same applies to those with abilities in every occupation and aspect of life.

The Holy Spirit also gives us gifts that come to us supernaturally. These gifts are given to unite the church, draw others to Christ, and strengthen our own relationship with God.

First Peter 4:10 tells us, "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms" (NIV). Each of us has been given a gift. We here on earth have the opportunity to use these gifts in a special way for God's kingdom.

In our world, the kingdom of darkness is in all-out war against

God. Pain and needs, both physical and spiritual, are everywhere, and the resources to meet them are being hoarded by those trying desperately to find security outside of God. Sinful nature infects even those who would serve God, and must be dealt with, painfully at times. Those who are faithful with the gifts God has given them under these circumstances will be accorded special recognition in heaven. In II Corinthians 4:17, Paul reminds us, "For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all" (NIV).

The temptation to want to seek worldly success here on earth is a temptation which is deadly. The Psalmist (73:2-4,17a) says: ***"But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold. For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong. They are free from the burdens***

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences – January 1 - April 30, 1996

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN APRIL	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$241,472.00	\$17,633.92	\$68,061.01	28
Seminary	122,626.00	5,948.22	24,204.88	20
Bible School	184,696.00	9,162.03	33,629.49	18
Home Missions.	253,270.00	15,043.26	62,941.92	25
World Missions.	341,257.00	30,514.55	133,862.70	39
Capital Investment	24,639.00	1,025.31	4,945.68	20
Parish Education	49,289.00	2,712.01	17,016.67	35
Church Extension	15,018.00	930.81	3,812.01	25
TOTALS	\$1,232,267.00	\$82,970.11	\$348,474.36	28
TOTALS 1995	1,484,851.00	72,625.86	386,365.72	26
Goal 33%				

common to man. They are not plagued by human ills. ... Till I entered the sanctuary of God. Then I understood their final destiny" (NIV).

Do you look at others who are perhaps your age and see those who have established themselves in a career or a business or in some other way that gives them notoriety? Do you wish God had given you that security instead of all the struggles you have? Using the gifts that God gave you to feather your own nest instead of building the kingdom of God is a real danger to the soul. Many times even some of the good pleasures of this life must be passed up because they would interfere with the work necessary to advance the kingdom of God.

Even with all the enjoyment available here, is there anything that can compare with what it will be like when, upon arriving in heaven, Jesus greets you by saying, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant"?



Beltrami, Minnesota — Resurrection Free Lutheran held an Open House on Sunday, June 2nd, honoring the many years of faithful service of their pastor, Rev. Rolf Heng. Pastor Heng is retiring from the ministry.

Colfax, North Dakota — Members of the Home Missions Committee gathered at the Ken Nash farm near Colfax for a planning session May 13-14. Several of the committee members flew in by private plane with Director Paul Nash piloting. Results of their "brainstorming and barnstorming" session will be shared at the Annual Conference in Washington.

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Graduation services held at AFLC Schools on May 18

The Free Lutheran Seminary awarded diplomas to three graduates on Saturday, May 18. They were: Pastor Kevin Olson, the AFLC Youth Director who completed his studies the first semester; Timothy Johnson, who has accepted the call to serve Resurrection Lutheran in Beltrami, Minnesota; and Bruce Peterson, who has not accepted a call as of press time. Pastor Mark Olson, Arlington, South Dakota, received a certificate recognizing completion of the AFLC Colloquy Program at the seminary.

The Association Free Lutheran Bible School also concluded their school year on May 18. Thirty-six students completed their studies on campus. Dr. Francis Monseth, FLS Dean and Acting Dean of AFLBS, gave the address at the graduation service.

Fargo, North Dakota — St. Paul's Lutheran hosted the Eastern North Dakota District WMF Spring Rally on April 27, 1996. The theme was, "Walk While Ye Have the Light" from John 12:35. Missionaries Paul and Becky Abel were the special speakers. Registration for the day totaled 101.

Winger, Minnesota — Union Lake Lutheran will celebrate its 100th Anniversary on July 27-28, 1996.

Pastor Les Galland has a new address as of June 15: 1711 - 26th St., Everett, WA 98201, phone (206) 252-6775.

Pastor Dennis Gray, Greenbush, Minnesota, has a new fax number: (218) 782-2486.

Pastor Tim Hinrichs, an AFLC pastor serving with the East European Missions Network in the Czech Republic, recently preached his first sermon in Czech. He has been studying the language for nearly a year and estimates it will require three years of study to become fluent.



Janesville, Wisconsin — Pictured is Trinity Lutheran Church, a Home Mission congregation served by Pastor Curt Emerson. Earlier this spring, six new family units were received into membership. On June 2, four young men were confirmed. The ladies of Trinity meet twice a month to quilt blankets and recently gave over 30 quilts to local community service organizations.

NEWS OF INTEREST

Beaumont, TX — One of the most segregated places in America is a church on Sunday morning, but that's changing in Beaumont, Texas. There, two United Methodist congregations — the black McCabe church and the white Roberts Avenue church — have merged to form McCabe Roberts Avenue United Methodist Church. The merger solves problems for both congregations: McCabe lacked space for youth programs, while Roberts Avenue was losing members as whites moved to suburbs. The merged congregation meets in the 93-year-old Roberts Avenue church, while the 92-year-old McCabe building is used as the church's outreach center, which includes an outreach for battered women. McCabe's pastor, Elijah Stansell, leads the combined congregation. There are two services on Sunday mornings: the first a low-key meeting that draws mostly whites, the second a more energetic meeting that draws mostly blacks. Members are beginning to sample both services, and further integration is expected.

Greeley, CO — Nick Rademacher has a guardian angel — like it or not. The 17-year-old high school student's penchant for skipping school frustrated his parents, but they didn't know how to control him. The answer came from their pastor, the Rev. Dave Mundy of Greeley Missionary Baptist Church, who agreed to follow the young man to school and stay with him throughout the school day. Watching people to keep them from doing wrong comes naturally to Mundy, who worked as a police officer before entering the ministry. Rademacher's parents pay for Mundy's lunch, and the pastor works on writing sermons while Nick is in class.

Jackson, MS — Though intellectuals may dismiss faith, Christians should not be bullied into silence, Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia told students at a prayer breakfast sponsored by the Mississippi College School of Law, a Baptist institution.

"We are fools for Christ's sake," said Scalia, who noted that the word "cretin," or fool, is derived from the French word for Christian.

Scalia continued, "To be honest about it, that is the view of Christians taken by modern society. ... Surely those who adhere to all or most of these traditional Christian beliefs are to be regarded as simpleminded."

Scalia said that while intellectuals may accept the idea of religion in general terms they are often unable to accept such concepts as miracles. "The wise do not investigate such silliness," he said with sarcasm.

Rejecting miracles is irrational, said Scalia. "One can be sophisticated and believe in God. Reason and intellect are not to be laid aside where matters of religion are concerned."

Scalia urged Christians to follow the example of Sir Thomas More, and stick to their beliefs even when facing adversity. "We must pray for the courage to endure the scorn of the sophisticated world," he told the audience of 650.

Charlotte, NC — Calvary Church in Charlotte, North Carolina has a new understanding of the "Parable of the Talents." During a church service in January, each member of the congregation was given a \$10 bill, and told to find ways to multiply the money in the coming weeks before returning it to the church. The initial investment of \$17,580 led to a return of

Stockholm, Sweden — Church plans to use television to spread the gospel during Easter week were rejected by a Swedish television channel because it is illegal to advertise political or religious opinions in Sweden. The Swedish Free Church had hoped to use a pre-Easter advertising campaign to boost attendance, but Swedish law forbids Christian messages on television, just as it forbids political messages. Curt Ankarberg, organizer of the abortive campaign, said he was told that ads would have been permitted if the group had agreed to remove the name "Jesus," but added, "If we had done that there would have been nothing left."

Medina, Saudi Arabia — Saudi Arabia has increased its efforts to spread Islam throughout the world, while working to reduce the number of Christian "guest workers" within its own borders. Prince Abdallah Ibn Abdelaziz, president of the Islamic University of Missions in Medina, increased the number of students from 4,000 to 7,000. He also plans to investigate ways to replace Christian workers from other countries with qualified Muslims from Europe and America.

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\$69,043 — an increase of \$51,463. One woman used her family's \$40 for materials to sew aprons, which then sold for \$250. A teenage boy multiplied his money eight-fold by buying candybars and reselling them at school. And a Sunday school class of 38 pooled its funds to produce and sell tapes featuring church musicians, bringing in nearly \$2,000.

A value beyond measure

FROM THE EDITOR

A symptom is a sign of an underlying problem. The search for a solution involves dealing with the problem and not simply bringing momentary relief from the symptom.

Some terrible symptoms exist in our country that all point to a similar root problem. Millions of unborn and even some partially born babies are legally being murdered in this nation. It appears we are about to give physicians the right to kill their patients if that is the patient's wish. On many city streets young people do not expect to live past their teens. Kids are armed and dangerous and killing other kids over shoes and jackets and dirty looks.

These tragedies may seem to be unrelated, but they all arise like bad branches shooting off from the same corrupt tree. The cancer on our society's soul that is causing these terrible symptoms is a cheapening of human life. Many appear to hold the opinion that one life doesn't mean much anymore.

Each human life is overflowing with value because it is a creation of God, made in the image of the holy One. David's statement in Psalm 139 does not apply to him alone but to every person God has ever made. "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well" (Psalm 139:13,14, NIV).

"Fearfully and wonderfully made" is an appropriate label to affix to every individual God has put on this earth. This includes the autistic girl and the Down Syndrome boy; the paralyzed young adult and the senior citizen with Alzheimer's.

Joycelyn Elders, former surgeon general of the United States, told a Senate committee, "abortion has had an important, and positive, public health effect." She explained what she meant by saying, "the number of Down's syndrome infants in Washington state in 1976 was 64 percent lower than it would have been without legal abortion."

Syndicated columnist Paul Greenberg commented on this statement by writing: "The doctors simply aborted a large number of babies/fetuses found to have Down's, thus keeping down the cost of health care and raising the general Quality of Life. And the only thing this marked gain in public health cost was life itself."

Life itself is of great value, even if that life requires the paying of special costs and making sacrifices.

Keeping Katie's life going was expensive. Because of her physical and mental disabilities she had never been able to feed or bathe or dress herself. Much

time and money was spent caring for her at the place in Minnesota called Homeward Bound where she lived and I worked. Yet she was a creation of God, made in His image and loved by Him. Her life had great value. In her own unique and special way she brought joy into my life and many others. How many "Katies" has our society been denied the pleasure of enjoying?

On the other end of the age spectrum, my family, like many others, has had to endure the pain of watching loved ones suffer. My mother would tell of hearing her mother, in the midst of a battle with cancer, saying over and over, "Jesus come, Jesus come." She wanted the suffering to end, but she knew the only one who has the right to end the suffering is the Lord.

Life is too precious for human beings to take upon themselves the authority of saying when it should end. Value remains as long as God lets life remain.

A popular Christian book of recent years is titled "The Search for Significance." Large numbers of people, especially youth, are on that kind of search. Many come up empty as they get confronted by a society that is increasingly spreading the lie that life has very little significance or value. It is a problem that demonstrates itself with many symptoms. Praise be to God it is a problem, however, that can be cured by Christ.

We have value because the Lord declares, "I have made you ... I will not forget you" (Isaiah 44:21, NIV). Each individual is precious and loved by God "with an everlasting love" (Jeremiah 31:3, NIV). We are of such significance that Jesus has chosen us out of the world (John 15:19). We matter because we were "bought at a price" (I Corinthians 6:20, NIV).

God was filled with such a longing to have us with Him that He gave His Son to die on the cross in our place. Each of us, sin-sick and disabled as we are, is seen as desirable by the almighty God.

The world is going to the unborn and the handicapped, the elderly and the sick, and telling them they have no value. They may soon come to me and to you with a similar message. We don't need to listen. We tell them they are wrong. We have heard the good news. We matter, and so does every other human being, because Jesus says so.

— Pastor Craig Johnson

Sharing Jesus with people who have special needs

*Blessed is he who has
regard for the weak; the
LORD delivers him in
times of trouble.*

— Psalm 41:1 (NIV)

Communicating the gospel of Jesus Christ to the developmentally disabled is both a challenge and a blessing. The challenge is that one wonders whether or not the individual understands the Bible message. The blessing is knowing that God works in their hearts through the Word and the Holy Spirit. Not far from where you live, you likely have a group home or a family who are meeting the needs of developmentally challenged people. You and your congregation can minister and share the gospel with these souls.

Fears of developmentally disabled people hinder an effective ministry to them. One may encounter noises, awkward move-

ments, and bursts of emotion. Overcome fear by understanding the developmentally challenged person's situation and see them as Christ sees them — precious individuals (I John 2:2; 3:1,16; 4:11). Get to know them. Do not be afraid: you do have ability to communicate God's Word. Trust God that He will enable you to love and serve these persons. God can and will work through you. The power of God's Word will work in the lives of the developmentally disabled. "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35 NASB).

Next, pray for patience in ministering to the developmentally challenged. At times one wonders whether or not the message has taken effect. Be encouraged in the promise of God's Word: "My word that goes forth out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11, NIV).

Keep the message "simple" and at their level without condescending. This requires prayer and sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. Bible picture storybook lessons and/or flannelgraph pieces effectively communicate the gospel. Singing

SOMETHING TO SHARE

choruses and traditional church hymns are well received. Our congregation's experience at the Oakridge Home in Wadena has shown that music greatly impacts their lives.

Christ is the reason and motivation for ministering to the developmentally disabled. It is a blessing to minister not only to them, but to the assisting staff or family members in the home.

Don't overlook a possible congregational outreach ministry to these people. What a joy it is communicating Christ to the developmentally challenged! They have taught us how to love and trust others in a not so loving world.

*Whatever you did for one of
the least of these brothers of
mine, you did for me.*

Matthew 25:40 (NIV)



— Pastor Todd Klemme
Zion Free Lutheran
Wadena, Minnesota