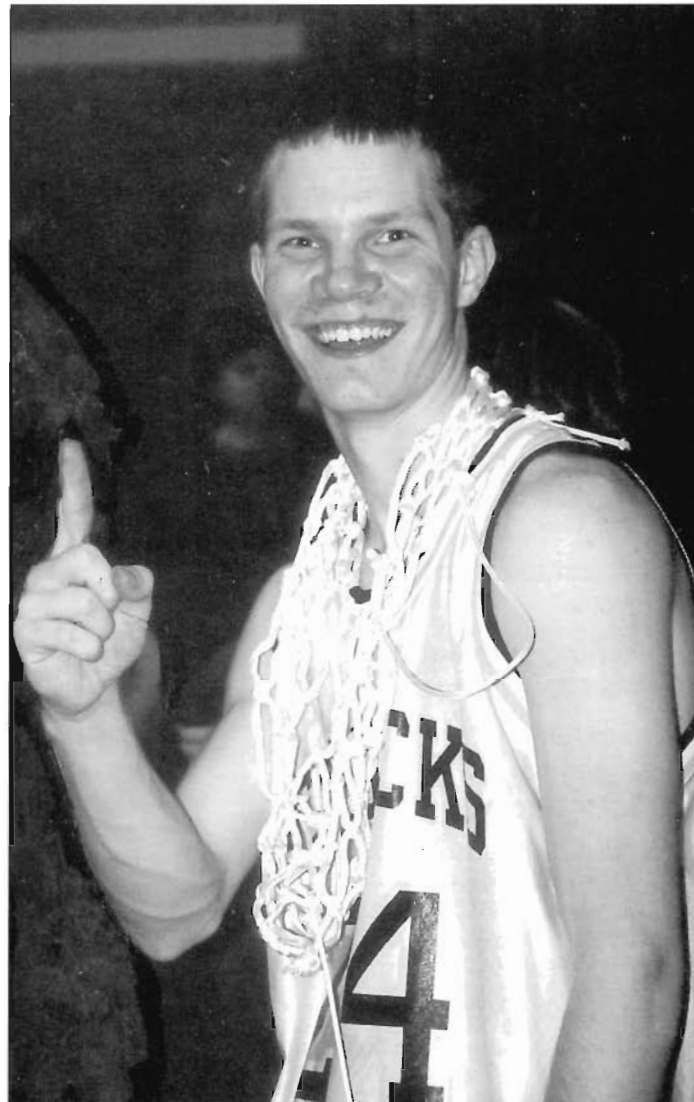


ENCOURAGING YOUTH TO GIVE THEIR BEST FOR JESUS!



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THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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AN ENCOURAGING WORD

What sort of persons?

"Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of persons ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God ...?" (II Peter 3:11-12a).

Lives of holiness and godliness. That is the goal or aim that Peter set before us as he contemplated the end of this world as we know it.

Under the power of the Holy Spirit he did see that end, not all the details, but a broad picture of fiery destruction.

As the new year began on January 1, there was almost more talk of entering a new millennium (a thousand-year period) than of a new century (one hundred years). Now few of us can foresee this world lasting a thousand years more, the way things are going. Maybe not even a hundred years, but the times are in God's hands.

Our personal times (life spans) are also in His hands. In light of the brevity of human life, and in view of what is ultimately to happen, "how should we then live?", as the late Francis Schaeffer put it.

In our first devotional in January, we saw that Paul declared that God has given the spirit of discipline or self-control, among other things (I Timothy 1:7). Too often Christians approach the Christian walk with a casual or nonchalant attitude. There is little evidence of the flame of consecration to the world's greatest cause and goal.

What sort of persons ought we to be in lives of holiness and godliness? Paul wrote to the Philippians (2:15) that they should be "blameless and innocent ... in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation." The word "innocent" is better than the King James Version's "harmless." The world doesn't need harm-

less Christians, but people who are afraid of sin (innocent) and who oppose evil in all its forms.

Discipline speaks of close attachment to devotional life: Bible reading and study, prayer, alone and with the group. It speaks of faithful use of the Sacrament of the Altar, for strengthening and the reassurance of the forgiveness of sins. It is to give evidence that the kingdom of God is of first importance and all other aspects of life flow from that.

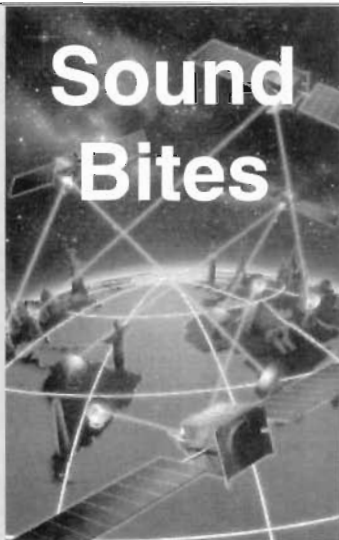
But this world is so big and there are so many forces working against righteousness. Believers are tempted to ask, "What are these among so many?" In the days before the big flood there in 1997, I was driving out of East Grand Forks, Minnesota, and noticed a placard to my right on which were the words, "You be the change you want to see in the world."

One person cannot do much perhaps, but he can do something. And he can be the sort of person who shows by his life the holiness and godliness which God desires and the world needs.



— **Pastor Raynard Huglen**
Newfolden, Minnesota

Sound Bites



When it comes to predictions about their future, children are literalists —

1 particularly when they hear predictions from their parents, the most important people from an earthly perspective, in their lives. ... Loving words that picture a special future help children change and develop in a positive way.

— Gary Smalley

One of the primary reasons that working with junior highers can be unusually strategic is that young

4 adolescents are very open to new ideas and to guidance. ... The church has just as much potential as the world to capture the attention of this age group. Kids are open not only to fads and bad influences; they are also open to positive guidance and direction for their lives. It is doubtful that there will ever again be a better or more strategic time to reach young people for Jesus Christ.

— Wayne Rice

2

Children must develop a faith of their own, but chances are that most of the time whatever faith a child develops is going to be like Mom's or Dad's.

— Guy Doud

What this generation doesn't understand is that lying is wrong because God is truth, that hate is wrong because God is love, that killing is wrong because God is life. Until we help members of this generation connect ethics with the nature of God, they will continue to lose their way.

— Josh McDowell

Is your church ready to accept the challenge of all-out, inclusive youth ministry? Is it ready to open its doors to kids who don't fit an ideal? Are the members of your congregation willing to embrace any teen that walks through its doors on Sunday morning —

whether that kid wears a tie or a tie-dye?

— Billy Phenix

5

6

It is easier to build a boy than to mend a man.

— Author unknown



The disappearance of

The teen years used to be defined as an age range from 13-19, that included an emphasis on education, socializing, and a gradual preparation for the independent life of an adult. Those years would be spent in junior high and high school surrounded by family, school and church activities.

The definition of the teen years has changed. Instead of an emphasis on education that is focused during those teen years, education has become a part of all of life. Students start college courses in their junior year of high school and adults of all ages take continuing education courses through the internet or distance learning.

Socializing formerly occurred through the family, school and church. Now socialization happens almost exclusively within the peer group — from the phone and internet chat, to the sleepovers and the weekend parties. There is little adult involvement or supervision in the socialization that happens between teens. Any topic is fair game and any conversation is acceptable in a culture that has learned tolerance, acceptance and privacy as the standard. Teens are left alone and often fend for themselves even though they may sleep in the same house as their parents.

The gradual preparation for adult life has probably been shattered more than any other area of teen life. There is nothing gradual left. The audible, visual, and experiential boundaries between children and adulthood are non-existent. The formerly “adult-labeled” language or visual images heard or seen on the radio, TV, or phone dial-up services are all equally accessible for any age. Now the cable, rented movies, and internet add to the possibilities. They are almost unavoidable



A day in the life of a teenager

This morning when I woke up it was cloudy, and the forecast was for rain, but the sun was breaking through the clouds in a few places. That seems like the forecast of my life. The future looks dark and there are storms all around, but the Son breaks through the clouds and gives me hope for life.

Before school, eight of us meet for prayer on Tuesdays. Sometimes only a few show up. Other times a friend will come and the group will grow. Today we prayed for Scott's test in math, Shawn's friend that doesn't know Christ, a girl in Sarah's class that is pregnant, and Luis because he always gets picked on and they took his backpack again yesterday.

First hour was science. It's a lousy way to start your day, especially when we are talking about dissecting animals. About half of the kids' sleep through first hour.

the teenager

— **Pastor Kevin Olson**
*Director of
 Youth Ministries
 Minneapolis, Minnesota*



for parents who desire to keep the gradual preparation a part of the process. Even if this process is controlled within your home, it is often not in other families.

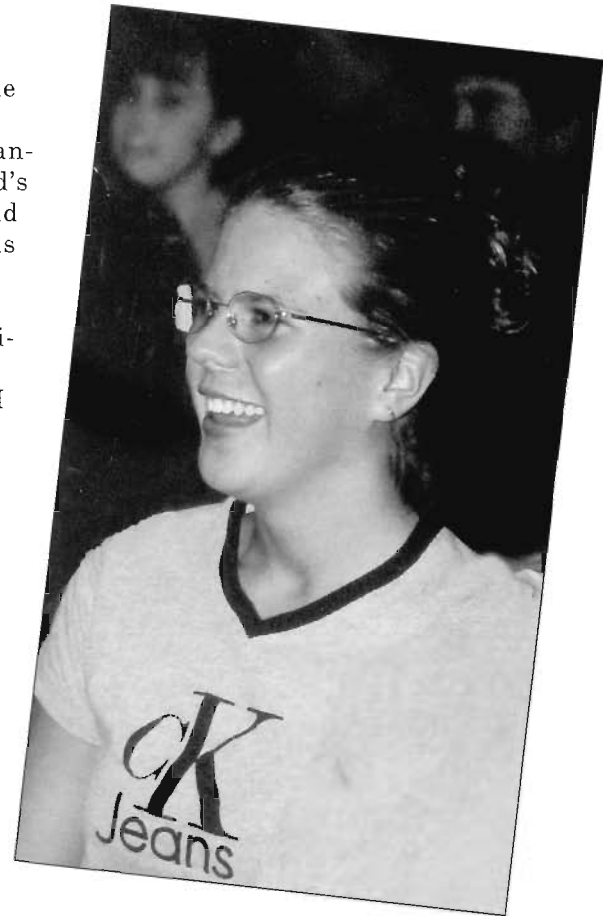
Experiential boundaries have been shattered. The horrors of war have become common in the video game market. The experiences of alcohol and drugs continue to be available to the “under age.” Sex and parenting have lost the boundaries of marriage. The experience of working to support yourself has become a norm within the teenage culture.

Though the definition of the teen years has changed in our culture, the needs of those students have not changed. They still need the knowledge that comes from the Word of God! They still need Jesus walking with them through all of the peer contacts that they have. They still need the bound-

aries that God’s Word clearly defines.

They also need the hope that new life in Christ has to offer, tangible examples of God’s love in their lives, and the forgiveness that is possible in Jesus. They need the audible, visual and experiential Jesus whom John wrote about in I John 1:1-2, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have looked at and our hands have touched — this we proclaim to you concerning the word of life.”

Jesus longs to fill the void in our students’ lives with a living, active and honest relationship. Jesus said, “Let the little children come unto me, and do not hinder them for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Matthew 19:14).



Second hour was English and we are studying poetry. The two guys behind me were planning where to meet during lunch to smoke pot. Third hour is social studies and that is the most boring class and we are always talking about tolerance and respect for those who are different. Tuna casserole was on the lunch menu board so my friends and I decided to have a can of pop and a candy bar. I don’t feel like I fit in as my friends are talking about alternative music and most of it has parental warnings while the guys across the hall are talking about “which girl they are going to do” next. During study hour I go to the library and check my e-mail on the internet. Today the computers were all busy and half of them were guys checking out porn sites that were not blocked by the filter.

I had to work tonight until 8:00. I don’t think I’m going to have time to get ready for the test tomorrow. When I got home, Aaron

called and asked me why I hadn’t responded to my e-mail. It was about a party this weekend and I know my parents won’t let me go. My parents are so strict! I fell asleep studying for my test but woke up again when mom closed my book. We talked for a while and then she left and turned off the light. The hall light was breaking into my dark room through the partly opened door. It reminded me of the sun shining through the clouds at the beginning of the day. Through the door I could see the silhouette of my mom praying for me.

The future looks dark and there are storms all around, but the Son breaks through the clouds and gives me hope for life. “Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm” (Matthew 8:26).



— **Pastor Kevin Olson**

—Pastor Tom and Sharon Olson
Naknek, Alaska

Connect them to the world

**Help
your
child
get a
passion
for
missions**

Supportive parents and prayer

Another powerful influence is parents who pray for and financially support missionaries. Prayer cards on the refrigerator and praying for missionaries during family devotions can make the missionaries seem like part of the family. We pray for missionaries and people in foreign countries each morning at breakfast time. Their pictures are kept in a box by our table and each day we pray for a different family. Our children have gotten to “know” many people on the mission field without even meeting them.

Tom purchased a copy of *Operation World* at the Urbana Missions Conference and prayed for every country in the world one year. The statistics listed in the book

— Kevin and Paula Faye Hoops
Abiding Word Lutheran
Deshler, Nebraska

How do you get children to have a concern for world missions? To answer that we have had to ask another question: “How did we move from being average rural Midwestern kids into the full-time “cross-cultural” missionary life?” In thinking on that we have thought about some things that influenced our lives along with some other ideas that could help you help children develop a concern for the world.

Visiting missionaries

The greatest influence we had was missionaries visiting our home churches. Missionary presentations make a deep impression on young children. Whenever a missionary is around on deputation, take your children to see them. If possible, have the missionary stay in your home while they are in the area. Under the influence of missionaries, Sharon, felt called to missions by age 12. Tom’s confirmation pastor was a former missionary to Africa and his sermon illustrations and artifacts in his office made a strong impression on him.

The game “Monkey see, Monkey do,” isn’t just a game for kids. They watch others and imitate their actions. Christians must be willing to face this reality and be role models, available to our youth and putting them in an environment that encourages spiritual growth. We have to be willing to go the extra mile and do all the little things that in the end make a big difference. We need commitment and a God-given desire to see our youth grow and mature into servants of the King.

What a joy to see the younger children in our homes and churches watching the youth. The older ones are unaware of how they are inspiring the younger ones to want to be servants. Jesus did just that with the disciples when He said, “Let the little children come unto Me.” In our church the younger kids say, “I can’t wait to be in C.O.O.L. B.I.B.L.E. Youth.” This past Easter sunrise service, the younger ones were

made a lasting impression on him. A good project for a family or a Sunday school class is to adopt a foreign country and learn everything you can about the people and pray through all the details. We are having people in the lower 48 pray for every name listed in our local Alaskan bush phone book.

Learn to serve

To be a successful missionary you must learn to show mercy. You must learn to serve the weak and the lowly. The best way to do that is to see your parents taking on the undesirable jobs in the church and community and doing them with joy. Volunteering at a rescue mission in a city is great preparation for mission work.

Short-term missions

Today, with affordable air travel, short-term mission experiences for teen-agers is a possibility. If a young person serves the Lord beyond the paved roads, in the "jungle" of the inner city or any place of despair and unbelief, he or she will never leave there the same. Many short-term workers go on to become lifetime "career" missionaries. If they don't return to the field they often sup-

port the work in prayer and financially the rest of their life. Mission conferences, like Urbana, also help a young person seriously consider the missionary call.

Letting go

The hardest part of mission work is to be separated from loved ones. Our children get to see grandparents once a year, many only get to see them every third year or more. Preparing your children for distant or dangerous work requires surrender. Mission work is often financially lean as well. But if you keep an eternal perspective you will try to keep the missionary call before your children as an option to seriously consider. It will be worth it all in heaven when someone from a far off land says, "Thank you for sending your child to tell me about Jesus."

As the stock market has climbed in America the missionary force has fallen to record low numbers. The great commission demands that we keep the call to go to the ends of the earth before the eyes of our children.

I began with one question and end with another one: "Will American continue to be a significant missionary-sending country in our children's generation?"



Training kids to be servants

asked to carry in some of the props during the service. They were thrilled and can't wait till next time. What a great way for our youth to model servanthood.

Our motto is, "If you need to talk, we are always here to listen." We have found that some of our nine-hour road trips of non-stop talking are wonderful experiences in getting to know them better. We always encourage them that the most important thing is to put God first in their lives and to remember that He is always there for them in every situation. Our prayer is that one day they will do the same for someone else.

When we offer a healthy environment, it's a joy to watch as God-given talents develop and shine. We as Christian leaders must accept the responsibility to provide lock-ins, camps, or short events such as caroling and assisting the elderly. There are so many possibilities. If we neglect these activities, our youth will find readily available negative models to follow. Christian activities are excellent tools to help youth learn to proclaim God's awesome message and how to reach out to others.

We experienced this recently in our small

youth group of 10 members. Their positive peer pressure influenced many so that we had over 40 at our first lock-in with an unanimous vote to do it again next year.

We as adults need to go the extra mile for our youth. It's more than just organizing an event. It's paying attention to detail. Youth want to know they are important enough to have their name put beside a task to be done and that you care enough to expect them to do it. Often they go beyond expectations and want to be proud of their work. We encourage organization. God is concerned about details. He says, "the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Matthew 10:30). Sometimes the detail is the extra phone call, note of appreciation or showing up at one of their events. The extra effort and commitment is all for God's glory. Christian servants just give, then give some more and our children and youth will watch and follow. The ultimate reward is servants of Jesus Christ living together in heaven forever.



What do children and

— Paul Kneeland
Stillwater Lutheran
Kalispell, Montana

My family recently took our turn as janitors for the church. We vacuumed, dusted, picked up garbage, emptied trash cans, cleaned bathrooms, etc. From a janitor's perspective, I decided to gather evidence as to whether

children and youth were a part of this congregation. I found bulletins with creative cartoons scribbled on the back. I found Cheerios under the pews. I found Sunday school projects waiting for the glue to dry. I found tiny fingerprints on the windows.

Yes, there was evidence. But the evidence directed me to another question: Do we as a church fully realize and appreciate the value, uniqueness and contributions our children and youth can and do make to our congregations?

As a parent and a youth pastor, I am becoming increasingly aware of the differences among our young people. Even in my own family I see one child who likes to help others, feels sad when others are hurt, and is a deep thinker. I see my other child as one who likes to talk and tell stories, yet enjoys playing alone.

No two children are alike. Each one is wrapped up in a single, unique package. They differ in what they know, what makes them laugh, what interests them, what they like to think about, how they walk, how they talk, their body language, their personalities. "I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from You when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in Your book before one of

them came to be" (Psalm 139:13-16).

God rejoices in our uniqueness. We also should rejoice in the wonderful, sometimes surprising and unexpected, yet beautiful distinctions created within us. When we are tempted to get impatient with our children and young people, we should remember to appreciate and enjoy these differences. "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you!' And the head cannot say to the feet, 'I don't need you!' On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other" (I Corinthians 12:21-25).

It is important for us as a church to recognize that the relationship that our children and youth have with God will be different from our relationship with God. As we

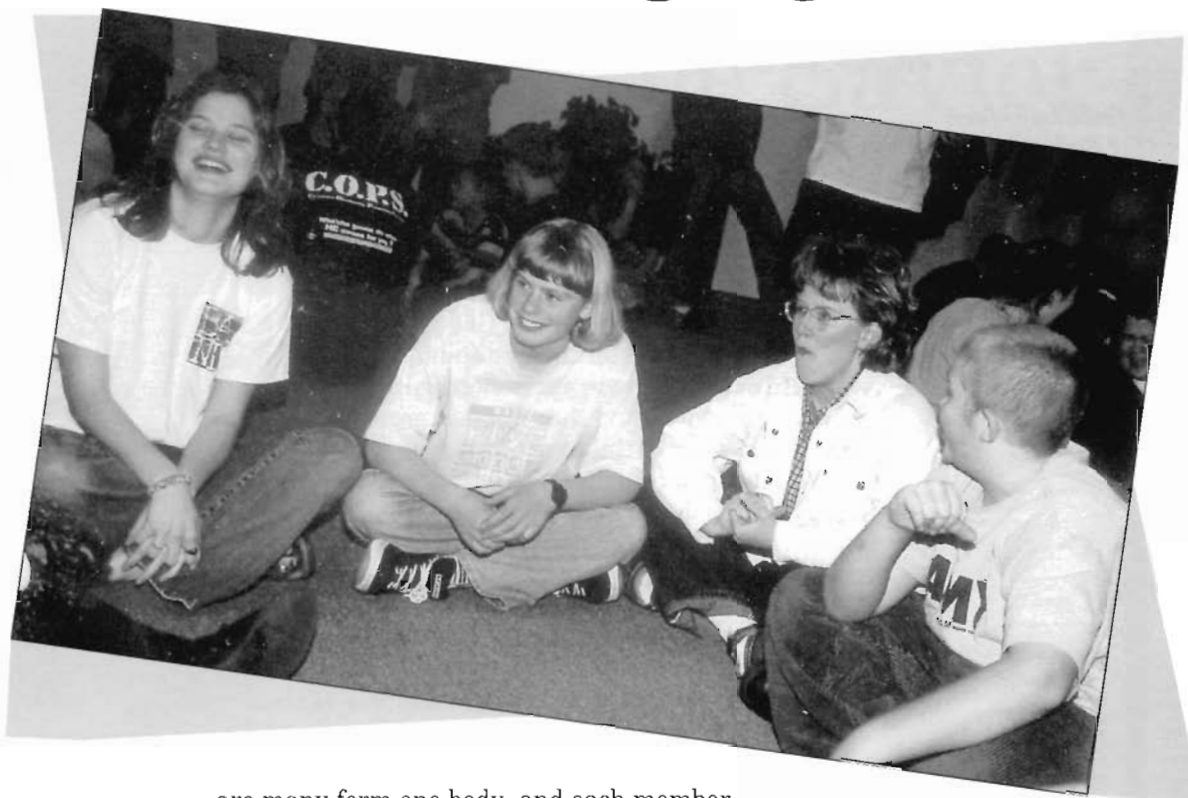


youth add to a congregation?

look through Scripture we see God relating to various biblical characters in very different ways, in accordance with their personalities. The same will be true for our young people and us. God has a plan for our lives and tasks for us that will be perfectly suited to our personalities and our own unique walk with the Lord. This relationship with Him will grow differently for each one of us, including our children. Some may pray, study and memorize the Bible in different ways. Some may uniquely fit in with God's people. As we train our children in all of these areas, we should do so in a way that values their individuality and uniqueness, remembering that God has a specially designed place for them in His heart.

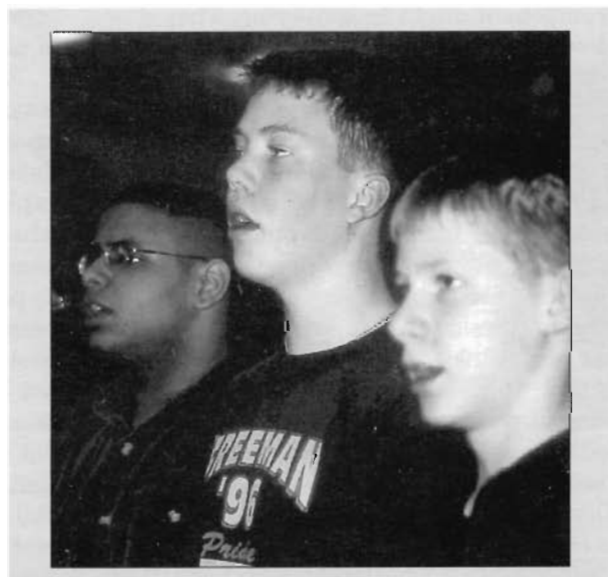
So, what do children and youth add to a congregation? I'll answer that with more questions: What are you as a church willing to let them add? Do you value, appreciate and use the young individuals whom God has created with their unique temperaments, personalities, gifts and abilities? Are you willing to help them learn to temper their strengths and develop their weaknesses? Are you willing to build relationships with your young people to recognize their differences, so as to communicate and relate to them more effectively?

Their ability to contribute to your church family is great. Help them find God's plan for their involvement. "Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who



are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others" (Romans 12:4,5).

God has a unique plan for our children, but in order for them to walk in that plan fully, they need to be in a relationship with God. Let's help our children understand this fact and allow God to develop them into who He has designed them to be, so that their involvement in our congregations will match His plans for their lives.



Teaching our youth about worship

— Dale Lankford
Our Redeemer Lutheran
Kirkland, Washington

Worship is often understood to be participation in the Sunday service at our local church. But as God gives us a better understanding of what He desires of us in our honoring Him, we come to understand that worship goes beyond the walls of the sanctuary.

Worship can be defined as a response to what God has done for us. When we acknowledge and receive God's work of salvation through Christ our lives are changed. And from the time we receive salvation our lives are a response to that gift.

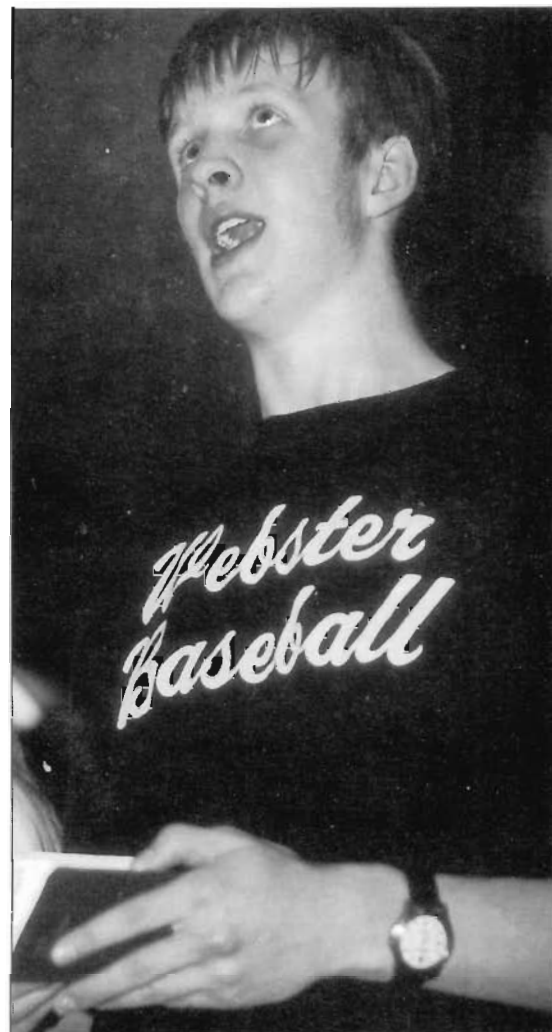
Our youth can also receive the gift of salvation, and as parents, friends, mentors and role models we can help them consider what kind of shape their response might take both in corporate worship and in their personal lives.

A helpful approach to this is simply sitting down with youth and putting this definition before them. They will likely be able to identify their response to genuine worship and it will include thankfulness, honor and praise for what Jesus has done for them.

A good discussion could come out of looking at the church bulletin and identifying how each of the components of the service is a response to God's actions and what that component might be conveying. They will discover humility, thankfulness, obedience, praise and honor. This can move our youth from being a tolerant observer of a service to an active participant. Visiting other church services and a similar evaluation of their components can help youth understand why the service is put together the way it is in their home congregation as well as understanding other ways of expressing the same attitudes toward God.

We also want to help our youth understand that worship goes beyond the walls of the sanctuary. Once their lives are changed by God the rest of their lives is a response to that action.

Discussion that identifies the components of their lives and what kind of attitude and vehicle is used to express that atti-



tude helps our youth consider their actions more closely. It may help them to consider how much time is devoted to fellowship with others compared to often very little time devoted to fellowship with God. It may also encourage them to see that music makes up a significant portion of their life but the attitude expressed in some of the music chosen is not one that is pleasing to God.

Allowing the youth to explore different ways to express thankfulness, praise, obedience, humility and honor to God is a freedom that we can give to them. In their exploration we can help them sort out whether or not the vehicle for that expression is pleasing to God, even if it is not quite so pleasing for them or us. Spending time in personal devotions may not come easy at first, the richness of a hymn or creed may not be fully appreciated for a while, or the uneasiness of visiting a nursing home may not subside right away. God's receiving of that as an expression of worship from His children is a concept that we can help them realize. As adults we might not care for a particular style of music or how a Bible ver-

*Let the words of
my mouth
and the meditation
of my heart
be acceptable
in thy sight,
O Lord, my rock
and my redeemer.*

— Psalm 19:14



sion might translate a well-loved verse, but God may receive them as sincere offerings of a youth's worship life.

As we watch our young people grow in their understanding of their relationship with God, we are rewarded to see their worship lives mature. Just as their social and physical skills show times of awkwardness, there will be ups and downs in their living a life of worship of God. That too, contributes to the maturing process.

As we instruct our youth in worship, we learn ourselves. Our care and guidance in the lives of our youth benefits all of us as together we grow in our worship and exercise our gifts to His honor and glory.



Kids will be kids: Patience Required

— Kay Porter
Community of Grace
Omaha, Nebraska

For several years I cared for children in my home. I learned that even the most stubborn and tantrum-prone toddler, given enough time, realizes his or her need for help and turns to an adult for guidance. Of course, few of us adults have either the time or patience to wait out such fits and frenzies. It doesn't get much easier as they get older.

Big kids, too, are still kids. While their once translucent skin may be spotted with pimples, and their chubby, kissable feet now reek of sweat-soaked socks, they are still the same people inside — still struggling to become bigger than they are and take control over lives of which they are unsure.

Into the midst of this hormone-drive struggle steps the mentor. At a time when many teens are at best skeptical of their parents and at their worst downright defiant, a mentor can offer a non-judgmental sounding board. Void of parental power to inflict punishment or guilt, mentors are "safe."

Even the "safe zone," must be prayerfully and patiently established. Many of the youth who are drawn into a mentoring program are suspicious of adults, coming from homes where parents may be neglectful, abusive, or simply absent. Such children want to be independent and self-sufficient, but they have few physical or emotional skills. The mentor's first goal is simply to gain their trust and keep them around long enough so they can hear the message of God's love, forgiveness and plan for their lives.

Our congregation's program began with an effort to draw middle school kids who were loitering and smoking after school away from the playground and into the haven of the church. The bait was simple: Krispy Kreme doughnuts. Their hunger wasn't just in their souls. They ate, and some listened. We took a tiny step toward trust. But we had a problem: it doesn't take long to eat
(continued on next page)

KIDS WILL BE KIDS: PATIENCE REQUIRED —

doughnuts and we needed more time.

Soon we added pizza in the evenings. Some kids counted on it as their dinner. They seemed to begin to count on it for the companionship as well. While a few angry teens remained defensive or sullen, others began to open up. I braided girls' hair and heard stories that nearly broke my heart. I wanted to comfort them or offer advice, but all I could do was listen. They refused even my compliments, thinking so little of themselves that they were certain any praise must be a lie.

Even emotionally healthy and morally strong teens often think of adults, if not as the enemy, at least as "one of them." They are the people who impose limits and uphold rules, who lecture on consequences and deal out restrictions. They can't possibly know what it's like to be a kid. Adults just want to be in control, many teens suspect, and can't possibly know what it's like to be a kid. Being a teenager, after all, is the process of taking charge of one's own life.

Wayward kids often find it difficult to seek help from the adults whom they should be able to trust, but perhaps were the ones who left them wandering alone to begin with. Instead, they turn to other teens and most likely those with the same troubles. Problems that begin as loneliness and lack of self-esteem may end in gang involvement, drug use and promiscuity. These kids need a lifeline. Mentors often provide that lifeline and how valuable it is when it occurs through the congregation.

Some kids handle pressures, even as they are magnified by peer encouragement, fear of abandonment and simple temptations. Others, however, "fall through the cracks," of what should be a strong moral foundation of a loving family and caring educators and leaders. Herein is the biggest challenge of the godly mentor — to keep them out of the cracks by God's grace.

Some are difficult to reach and they run when we reach out in love. Then do we quit and give up? What do we do?

We wait, and we listen. Those are perhaps two of the hardest things humans do because it requires a focus outside of ourselves and upon the Lord. They are the challenges and the tools of the mentor. As we wait for trust to develop, it is at times with the risk of kids slipping further into destructive behavior. As trust develops, we must listen. It's hard to not enter in and offer counsel even if it is a simple solution.



Patience is required. A great success is listening to others as God works in their lives a realization that they need Him.

When teens are older and sometimes smarter and more worldlywise than we who try to guide them, it is difficult to remember that they are still kids. But they are. They must make much of the journey into adulthood alone, while we who love them stand by and watch. When they stumble, we can offer them a hand. When they cry, we can offer them a shoulder. When they fall, we may even help them get back up. But above all, we can love them with Christ's love and show them God's Word which can guide them through all of life.



He is my almighty Father

In heaven up above He is love
He is so precious and His love is gracious
For He looks down in love from heaven above
He takes away our sin and pain
Almost like cleansing or washing with rain
He looks down upon us with loving eyes
And keeps us in close ties
He is from eternity
And gives us eternal beauty
He raises the dead
of Him we are led
He is my Father
Who created my loving mother
He is my Father in heaven above
He is love.

— Karmen Gregory, 14
Abiding Savior Lutheran
Sioux Falls, South Dakota

Ministry with an impact

— Eddie Britz

The last few months have given me a journey's worth of experiences as I have traveled with the Youth Ministry Training Team through many cultures as varied as the landscapes of our nation. This has shown me that the effectiveness of a church's ministry is not dependent upon its style of worship, or the quality of its earthly structure, or even the number of people that gather within its walls. The impact that the church has on its community has everything to do with a God-given vision for ministry, a vision that involves winning people to Jesus Christ, building them in their faith, and equipping them to repeat the process. This is basic, and this is biblical.

Community of Grace Church in Omaha, Nebraska has a vision for outreach that screams to the community, "Come!" and also, "I'm coming after you!" This is a very Christ-like and effective attitude. Like good fishermen, the congregation, not just the pastor or youth worker, is actively involved in ministries that "cast the line," or reach out via the gifts each individual has been given. The gifts include praying for and encouraging those in positions of leadership in the church.

The church practices an upbeat, energetic form of worship in a contemporary setting. During youth nights, chairs and altar area are rearranged and moved back to allow for round tables and chairs. Lights are dimmed somewhat to give that "coffee shop" atmosphere. Before school, the teens continue to show up because baked goods are made available. At the church, a devotional time starts out the day and the youth feel welcome, loved, and accepted as they are.

In a rural culture with a more traditional setting, and a volunteer youth worker, God-given vision is still active. Stained glass windows adorn the sanctuary, reflecting on worn green carpet and hymnals that

*"Where there
is no vision,
the people
perish."*

— Proverbs 29:18

are the staple for worship. The church in Newark, Illinois has been building a youth group with a small, but strong core group of believers. Is this a youth friendly environment? It doesn't seem to matter. The teenagers come. They feel welcome, loved, and accepted as they are.

The youth have a sense of ownership in the activities of the program here because they are given responsibilities that harmonize with their talents. Their desires to bring their friends into "their" youth group is thus enhanced. And above all, the pastor, among others, sees the power that comes from praying by the blood of Christ, in "the victory that has overcome the world" (1 John 5:4). Prayer is not only contagious in the church, but "powerful and effective" (James 5:16).

I have seen congregations on opposite ends of the "God-given vision" spectrum. On one end, people were working together, pastor and youth worker were encouraged, the people felt the need to participate in some form of church ministry, the church was open to change for the sake of the lost, the position or condition of the church furniture was not as important as the sinner. The Holy Spirit was a blowing wind in a room of open windows.

Congregations without vision, regardless of their worship style, facilities, or numbers, had little or no impact on the surrounding community, and an almost embarrassing inability to reach out to the cul-

ture in which the Lord had planted them. Often, the air was stagnant, heavy, tired, and stubborn, interspersed with backbiting and quarreling. The greater part of the burden of "church stuff" was taken on by one or two already over-committed Christians.

As we bind ourselves to God's vision through prayer, we access a power that is infinitely greater than the hurdles of the smallest church in the most rural setting, or the largest most comfortable church that has the tendency to forget what it means to need God's help. We are given a vision that pushes us to the Father and not to the ministry, a vision that allows us to share in the blessing and not burn-out our pastors and youth workers by "hiring" them to do the ministry.

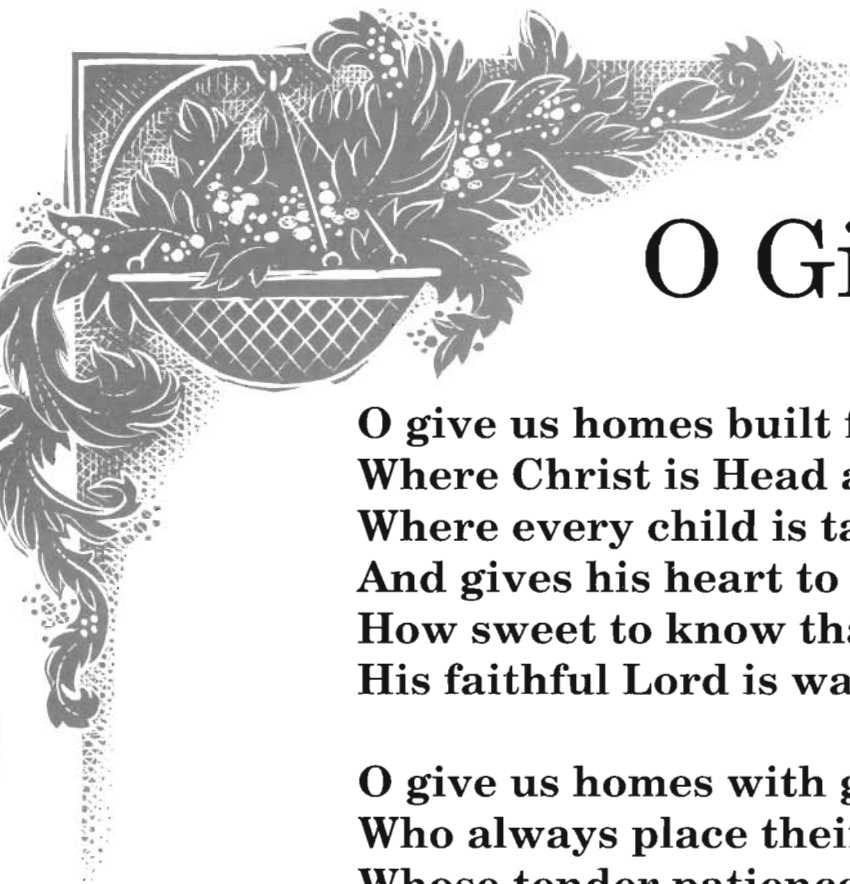
Satan is in the business of shifting our visions, of wearing out believers and churches, leaving the outside walls standing so not to alarm onlookers, but rotting out the inside. We have some churches that are standing . . . and that's about it.

Helen Keller said, "The saddest thing in the world is people who can see but have no vision." After what I have seen, I believe it. A healthy ministry is the result of a vision that stems from the quietness of the surrendered heart of a believer who is actively, presently on his or her knees in prayer, gaining confidence in his or her ability to be used by the Most High God.

Let's not forget what works. Let's not waste our time and energy. Let's remember to pray for our congregations and our pastors. "What I mean, brothers, is that the time is short" (1 Corinthians 7:29a).



Eddie was a member of the Youth Ministries Training Team and is currently available to do youth ministry training. He can be contacted through the AFLC youth office. Call 763-545-5631.



O Give Us Homes

**O give us homes built firm upon the Savior,
Where Christ is Head and Counselor and Guide:
Where every child is taught His love and favor
And gives his heart to Christ, the crucified:
How sweet to know that though his footsteps waver
His faithful Lord is walking by his side!**

**O give us homes with godly fathers, mothers,
Who always place their hope and trust in Him;
Whose tender patience turmoil never bothers,
Whose calm and courage trouble cannot dim;
A home where each finds joy in serving others,
And love still shines, though days be dark and grim.**

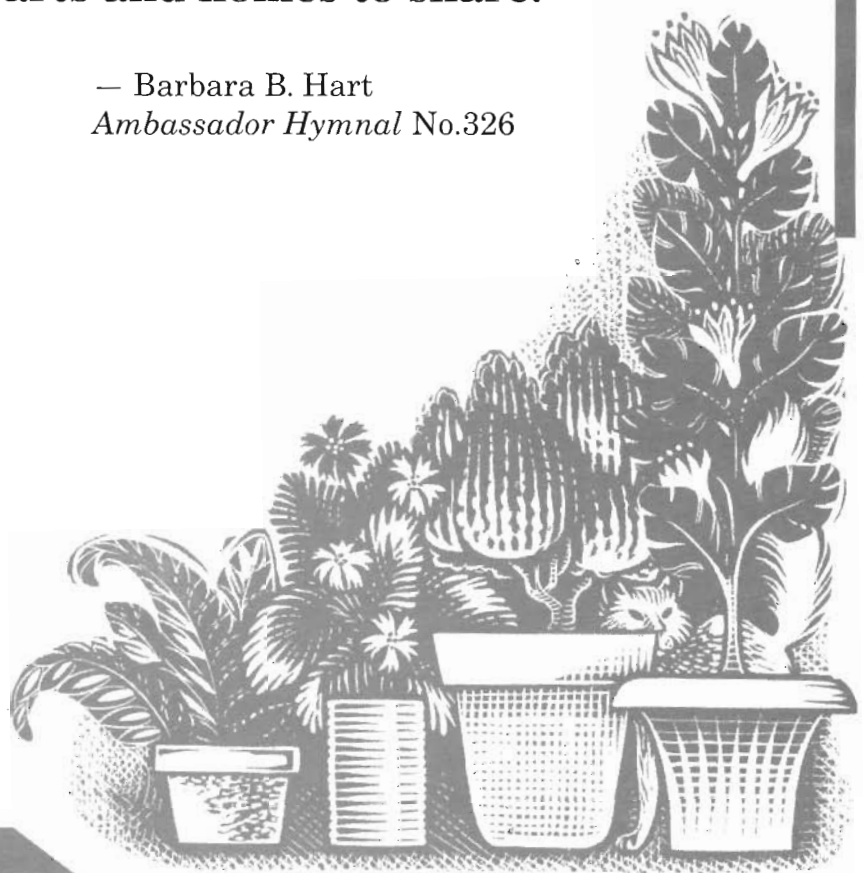


Built Firm Upon The Savior

**O give us homes where Christ is Lord and Master,
The Bible read, the precious hymns still sung;
Where prayer comes first in peace or in disaster,
And praise is natural speech to every tongue;
Where mountains move before a faith that's vaster,
and Christ sufficient is for old and young.**

**O Lord, our God, our homes are Thine forever!
We trust to Thee their problems, toil, and care;
Their bonds of love no enemy can sever
If Thou art always Lord and Master there:
Be Thou the center of our least endeavor:
Be Thou our Guest, our hearts and homes to share.**

— Barbara B. Hart
Ambassador Hymnal No.326



Teen-agers. Does the very word bring shivers to your spine? The thought of having those precious toddlers grow up into

sullen, sassy, and arrogant teens brings fear to many. How can one wisely parent a teen? Oh yes, Proverbs advises, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." So just how do you raise a teen in the way he should go?

As a parent of teens, I do not feel qualified to tell others how to raise a teen-ager. For some insight, I went to the source, my teens, and asked for their advice. Here is what's important to them.

☐ **Be there.**

Eat supper as a family! Get involved in our lives, and don't ever forget to tell us you love us. We may not respond as we did when we were small, but we still need to hear you say it and demonstrate it. We may now be able to care for ourselves but it makes us realize how much you value us when you make the effort to be there for us. On those rare days when Mom must work until 5 p.m., we don't like it. We don't want to come home to an empty house.



☐ **Encourage us in school.**

Communicate with our teachers. Come to our events. Encourage us to be good readers, knowing that good readers will succeed. Let us participate in some extra-curricular activities that we want to try. Just don't push us to be "the best," as we may be simply enjoying it as a hobby and not to receive a scholarship. Most of all, don't try to make us be like you. We may enjoy totally different things.

A mother shares

Counsel from teens

— Nancy Langness
*Hope Free Evangelical Lutheran
Ishpeming, Michigan*

☐ **Allow us to make some decisions.**

Give us the freedom to fail even if you know that a certain decision is unwise as long as you discuss with us why you feel the way you do and explain the consequences of our decisions. It's better for us to learn from a poor decision while still at home. You can't shield us totally from pain and "the world" as much as you would like to. Just be there for us and guide us in the way of the Lord.



☐ **Keep up with discipline.**

Yes, it is different than when we were small children, but we still need firm limits and boundaries. Let up on us gradually, because once you give us complete freedom, it is impossible to try to re-establish and enforce your authority.

☐ **Expect responsibility.**

Allow us to earn your trust. Out in the world there is no one to buy us every toy or grant us our whims. We want to work for and earn what we have. It gives us a tremendous feeling of self-esteem. One popular poll states that teens are given an average of \$50 a week for spending. Don't compete with that.

☐ **We need some space.**

Provide us a place where we can be alone. Allow us some privacy. There is lots of thinking, considering, praying and deciding to be done during the last few years of high school and we cannot always do that with the family around.

☐ **Expect us to attend worship as a family.**

Many parents let us decide for ourselves after confirmation whether or not to attend church. It is too easy to stay in bed when we are allowed to make our own decision.



☐ **Show us that Christianity can be fun.**

Join with us at camps, retreats, meetings, etc. Our family looks forward to attending The ARC Family Camp each summer. We have grown spiritually and enjoy the friends we have made. Encourage us at home with family devotions and our own daily Bible reading.

☐ **Show us your faith.**

Your actions and your life will speak louder to us than any sermon you can give us. Don't be so holy that you are unapproachable.

Book Review

— *Keep A Quiet Heart*

When you long for a quiet refuge away from the noisy, frenetic circumstances of daily commitments, where do you turn? If you're Elisabeth Elliot, acclaimed speaker and author of many best-selling books including "Keep A Quiet Heart," you look to one place alone — the embracing arms of our omnipotent and infinitely loving heavenly Father.

"Keep A Quiet Heart" is a unique collection of short articles taken from her newsletters over several years. I enjoyed that because of the demands on my days often don't allow time to read lengthy articles and books. These one to two page short stories have been a blessing and encouragement to me in my daily walk with Jesus.

Elisabeth Elliot has faced many trials and sufferings in her life and through them, God has given her a tremendous love and devotion to

Him. I especially appreciated the article entitled, "Moonless Trust." In it she compares our lives to being like a ship voyaging on a moonless sea. Uncertainty surrounds us and there seem to be no signs to follow. Sometimes we can feel engulfed by loneliness and there is no one we can speak to of our need. It is at that time we can cry out to our El Shaddai, "the God who is Enough." It is when the sea is moonless that the Lord becomes our light. We are not asked to understand but simply to obey.

Of course the most precious book in the all the world is our Bibles because it is the written Word of God. Other books should never take the place of that. But if you enjoy other reading, I recommend "Keep A Quiet Heart," published by Servant Publications, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1995.

— *Linda Nelson
Kandiyohi, Minnesota*

— *Women Mentoring Women Ways to start, maintain, and expand a Biblical women's ministry*

Does your women's group need an overhaul? Or perhaps a tune-up? Do you find you're driving an Edsel or a Studebaker when an update to a Camry or Accord or even an SUV would be more functional? If so, have I got a workbook for you.

"Women Mentoring Women, Ways to Start, Maintain, and Expand a Biblical Women's Ministry," by Vickie Kraft, published by Moody Press, is a workbook that will help you identify your needs and develop a design for your women's ministry. It's comprehensive, Scripture-based and filled with helpful information and ideas. Included are page after page of program ideas, sample schedules and agendas, hints for selecting and organizing leadership, guidelines for

(continued on next page)



☐ Pray for us.

That's the most important thing you can do. These teen years are difficult ones under the best of circumstances, and without the Lord and His guidance, the challenges may be more than any can bear.

Thanks Jared and Jordan. Not only are they my sons but they are also my friends. I know God has created them for a special purpose, just "for such a time as this." They will reach people for the Lord in their circle of influence that no one else



Fergus Falls, Minnesota —
Calvary Free Lutheran ladies make quilts and lap robes on their once-a-

can. I place them in the Lord's hands. I may come away from their teen years with more gray hairs, but I pray I'll also have a heart full of thankfulness that God is faithful.



month "Share Day." For four years the women have met with the purpose of gathering items needed on the mission fields as well as their own community. On Sunday, April 9, over 60 quilts and lap robes were displayed on the pews for the worship service before being sent out. Gloria Aasness (seated) is in charge of the Women's Missionary Federation Share Day.

MENTORING

planning luncheons and other special events.

Updating (I shy away from using the dreaded word "changing") is never without work, but I am convinced that our women's groups are worth the effort. I especially appreciated the chapter "A Special Garden: Heart-to-Heart" in which the author encourages supportive friendships between older and younger women, called "Seniors" and "Juniors" depending upon age. Detailed informative ideas are given for planning and maintaining this "garden of friendships" in your church.

Many young women today do not have the pleasure of a nurturing and discipling extended family in which to receive wisdom, encouragement and fellowship. Many older women feel isolated and lonely and can provide a sympathetic listening ear and godly counsel. I pray that all will find these blessed relationships, woman to woman, as you incorporate the ideas found in this book into your upcoming activities. It's a work that's worth the effort.

— Cheryl Skordahl
Dalton, Minnesota

Shakopee, Minnesota —

Faith Lutheran is sponsoring a Mug and Muffin Saturday. It's a monthly opportunity to gather for fellowship and study of God's Word "for all women, ages 18-118," according to the church's newsletter.

Parish Education update

Volume II in *The AFLC Heritage Series* is being prepared. This is a daily devotional book with a different Scripture text for each day of the year, including two brief meditations for morning and evening. A gift to the parish education department is completely funding the printing of *Rosenius' Devotions: Strength for the Helpless, Lessons for All* by C.O. Rosenius. The first volume in the series was a devotional commentary on the book of Romans.

The first in a new series of Bible studies is also being prepared for publication. The *Ambassador Bible Study Series* will include studies in various books of the Bible for youth and adults, with separate student and leader guides available. The first study will be in I, II, and III John and is expected to be available for classes by September of 2000. There is a current financial need to fund the printing of this new Bible study.



Buxton, North Dakota — Ny Stavanger Women's Missionary Federation finished their winter spring missionary quilt project. They are pictured with some of the handiwork before it was distributed.



Newark, Illinois — Newark Lutheran hosted the Illinois District Women's Missionary Federation rally on April 8. Missionaries Todd and Barb Schierkolk spoke and music was



provided by some of the younger ladies (pictured above). Some of the young people served in the nursery, assisted with registration and other places of service.

Thankful to serve at the Miriam Infant Home

— Rhoda Monseth
Campo Mourão, Brazil

I am experiencing a short-term mission opportunity here at the Miriam Infant Home in Campo Mourão, Brazil. Each day as I work with the sixteen children, I am reminded of the fact that Jesus died especially for each one and has plans for each of their lives.

The oldest children live upstairs and the younger are downstairs. There is a family originally from Paraguay living with and caring for the older children. Irani, a single Brazilian lady, cares for the younger ones. The children are taught about Jesus and His love for them in numerous settings. The Bible school and seminary students here on campus spend time with the children too. They love to sing all the songs they know about Jesus in both Portuguese and English.

Each of the children come to the home with their own tragic story. Five-year-old Alexandre's is no exception.

Looking at Alexandre's huge smile that seems to take up a majority of his chubby face and his big brown eyes that seem to speak on their own, one would not sense his terrible beginning in life. He arrived at the home two years ago, small, a vocabulary of four words, a mouth full of black teeth, fearful and insecure.

Born to alcoholic parents, Alexandre knew physical abuse. His mother had mental problems and was unable to care for him. She basically gave him to a neighbor to raise. This neighbor had two adolescent sons who watched him a majority of the time and they began to sexually abuse him. After being examined at a hospital where those suspicions were confirmed, Alexandre was brought to the Miriam Infant Home.

When he arrived, he was fearful of all men and would start screaming and crying at any given time because certain things would trigger

memories. Today, however, his best friends are the Bible school and seminary guys who come down to play with him and the other children occasionally. Medical exams label him as "special" because he still cannot talk like a normal five-year-old and has a wandering eye. But I believe Alexandre is extremely smart and mature and I know that he understands as much as any other five-year-old. He attends regularly a public school and does fine.

He has an obsession with cleaning things and enjoys putting a white sock on his hand and wetting it and scrubbing the walls in the home. He is sensitive and kind to others and has a sweet way about him. Bug hugs and kisses are his specialty and he gives them out freely to those of us who work at the home.

My favorite times with him are when he climbs onto my lap and we proceed to "chat" with lots of gestures and giggles. He'll start to laugh and then I'll say, "O que" (what?), and he'll roll his eyes and giggle some more and imitate me. He never tires of this game.

Soon Alexandre will be heading to Germany where a couple there has expressed interest in adopting him. First they will come here to spend a month with him, so that they can get to know him and he can get used to them. I'm so thrilled that he will soon be in a real home and will have two loving people all to himself, to give him all the attention he so needs and craves. Alexandre is one of many children in this world who have been abused and unwanted, but dearly loved and not overlooked by Jesus. I know that He too, is rejoicing that this little one will soon have a family to call his own.

Thank you for keeping the home in your prayers and support. I've been told that the funds for the home are down and they are in real



The author with some of the children at the Miriam Infant Home.

need of more support. Your gifts of money, no matter how "small," go far. Each child in the home is allotted \$2 per day to cover regular expenses, such as food, clothing, medicine, etc. I pray that you will not only consider giving financially to this mission but that you will also commit to praying for the children and the workers regularly. Pray that each child would grow up to be servants of God, earnestly seeking Jesus for the rest of their lives. Pray that the workers will be strengthened and given wisdom each day and show the children the love of Jesus: the greatest gift.



Alexandre

We remember with thankfulness

A tribute to Herbert and Sylvia Franz through the eyes of a friend who loved them.

Who can measure the impact of someone's life? Truly, only God can. However, this is a humble attempt to honor two precious saints whom God used to bless this author's family. The impact of something is usually observed by the objects of that impact. Soon after the Lord called our beloved Pastor Herb and Syl home to heaven, I remarked to a friend, "Oh, how we loved them! They took such a personal interest in our family. We always felt so special to them."

Her reply was, "It was the same for us." I am sure that a legion of loved ones and friends would share the same comment. I remember so well when we first met Pastor Franz. His preaching was strong and intensely personal. He could never be tied down to a microphone nor did he need one. He paced across the front of the church expounding God's Word, punctuating the message with true stories of personal evangelism opportunities.

His style of sharing the Lord was strong and direct. It wasn't at all unusual for him to walk halfway down the aisle as he preached, looking people in the eye and using their names as he directed a question to them. "Isn't that right, Clifford?" or "Isn't Jesus precious, Jim?" In personal conversations one could expect a hearty handshake and an exuberant greeting, often accompanied by a challenge, "How is it with you and Jesus?"

The first night that we heard him preach was the beginning of evangelistic meetings sponsored by the LEM (a group of Bible-believing Lutheran lay people) in suburban Cleveland, Ohio, our childhood home. It was the winter of 1963. It was the task of a young father named Eugene Enderlein to drive

Pastor Franz to the group fellowship time. Can you imagine Gene's astonishment when Pastor Franz eagerly climbed into the front seat, stomped the floor of the station wagon exclaiming, "Wasn't that a wonderful service, Brother! Hallelujah, Hallelujah."

That was the beginning of a relationship between the two men that became in God's time, something akin to Paul and Timothy. That young man helped another beloved layman prepare Pastor Franz's taped messages for radio broadcasts each week. The other layman was Dan Antal, father of Pastor Mark Antal. Gene invested a lot of hours listening to those sermons, trying to make them fit into a 30-minute time frame, and produce a quality copy fit for broadcast on WCRF, the Cleveland-area Moody Network station.

The technical equipment gave a lot of trouble during one particular message by Pastor Franz entitled, "Religious but Lost." Repeatedly, Gene listened to Pastor Franz describing the state of the person who was raised in the church, attended church, even served in the church — yet did not yet have saving faith in Jesus Christ. Over and over the message bored its way into Gene's soul, engraving itself upon his mind. That clear-cut message along with prayers of precious Christians brought forth new birth in his heart.

Our own personal story is like that of many others who came under the loving, powerful influence of Herbert and Sylvia Franz. In our particular case, God was tugging at our hearts for Christian service.

"The technical equipment gave a lot of trouble during one particular message by Pastor Franz entitled, 'Religious But Lost.'"

— Beverly Enderlein
Medicine Lake Lutheran
Plymouth, Minnesota

Finally accepting a call to full-time mission service with the Wycliffe Bible Translators/ Jungle Aviation and Radio Service (JAARS) and undergoing linguistic training and deputation, we found ourselves welcomed into the fellowship of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Cloquet, Minnesota, and drawn lovingly into the family of the Franzes. It was there that we were commissioned to mission service.

The real essence of the beauty of someone's life is usually seen in the home. Love, prayers, laughter and affection filled that home. Herb was strongly affectionate and honoring to his beloved wife. Sylvia was the epitome of grace, patience, lovingkindness and hospitality. So genuinely humble was she, so prayerful and kind, that we fell in love with her. We were awed to be as welcomed as family! After the Lord redirected our path to the Free Lutheran Seminary for training and service, Herb and Syl called us regularly, urged us to visit them, and became like family to us. Weekend after weekend during Gene's seminary years of pastoral service at Drummond/Mason, Wisconsin, the Enderlein van, filled with Mom, Dad, Steve, John and Rebecca Joy, edged its way through Superior, on to Cloquet and into the driveway at Wilson Avenue. That parsonage became a second home, a refuge to us. Delicious Sunday night suppers, hugs and earnest conversation, love for our kids all awaited us week after week. Finally after four years of preparation came the culmination of ordination at St. Paul's during annual conference, 1971.

We remember with thankfulness how Herb and Syl loved their sons. They were keenly involved in their Christian growth, love for sports and school activities, finding the "right partner" for life, and yet gave Dean, Rick and Peter the free-

Brenda Stilley, 35, of Bethel Park, Pennsylvania, will become the AFLBS women's resident head in August. Stilley served the past year on the AFLC Youth Ministries Training team, and as youth director at Ruthfred Lutheran in Bethel Park from 1993-99. She received her degree in mineral economics from Penn State University. She received Jesus Christ as her Savior when she was seven and was active with Campus Crusade for Christ as a college student.

Jason Norlein, a member of the Youth Ministries Team, accepted the call to serve as youth worker at Amery Free Lutheran in Amery, Wisconsin.

Pastor Rodger and Helene Olson, Fergus Falls, Minnesota, are "on loan" from Calvary Free Lutheran to serve Good Shepherd Lutheran in Camarillo, California, for the summer months.

Pastor James L. Johnson, Plymouth, Minnesota, was appointed to serve on the editorial board of *The Lutheran Ambassador*. He joins Oryen Benrud, Pastors John Mundfrom and Jerry Moan who serve on that advisory board of the magazine.

dom and encouragement to develop in their own personal relationship with Jesus Christ. When grandchildren began to arrive, you couldn't find anyone happier than Herb and Syl. They were enthusiastically in love with their grandchildren and saw them as God's sweetest blessings in their older years!

There is no way to close these comments with satisfaction. The deep thanks we feel can go on and on. We bless the Lord for the lives and testimonies of Herbert and Sylvia Franz. God did a mighty work in bringing them to personal salvation, and all of their life they joyfully shared Him with others. They took us under their wing and we have never been the same. Our own children bless them and honor them. We look forward to seeing them in heaven. Now they rest from their labors, and their works do follow them. We rise up and call them blessed.



Click here: Vision 2004

Visit the new format on the web site at www.aflc.org and click the Vision 2004 button. See the proposed drawings for the additions to the AFLC campus, read interviews and much more. We welcome phone calls too. Project Director Tonnes Pollestad can be reached at 763-412-2004.

Pastor Peter Franz, Cloquet, Minnesota has resigned as pastor of St. Paul's Lutheran where he has served since 1991, in order to accept the call from Medicine Lake Lutheran in Plymouth, Minnesota. He expects to begin his new ministry later this summer.

In your hearts, set apart Christ as Lord,
Always be ready to give an answer ... I Peter 3:15.

The Free Lutheran Youth Leadership Conference

July 17-22, 2000

The ARC

Osceola, Wisconsin

This conference is designed to help student leaders grow in the areas of personal evangelism, leadership, and personal faith.

For more information:

2000 Leadership Training Conference

3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.

Minneapolis, MN 55441

763-545-5631

youthmin@aflc.org



"I had purchased this stock several years earlier and it had grown greatly in value. After retirement, I needed more income. My friends at the AFLC Foundation showed me how to exchange the stock for a seven percent income. I am delighted to receive monthly fixed payments, contribute to the Lord's work and have large tax savings."

If you would like further information, please contact Mark D. Johnson, CFP, AFLC FOUNDATION at 1-800-950-2109.

Frontier, Saskatchewan — Bethel Lutheran is making building changes to accommodate their new larger congregation's needs. Recently Elim congregation of Frontier voted unanimously to join with Bethel. Pastor Manfred Kurschner serves Bethel Lutheran.

Pastor Mark Homp, who completed a colloquy study program at Free Lutheran Seminary, accepted a call to serve Good Shepherd Lutheran, Ponca City, Oklahoma. He will begin his ministry in July.

Congregations Awarded Lutheran Brotherhood Church Extension Grant

As part of its mission to serve Lutheran congregations, the Lutheran Brotherhood Foundation recently awarded a Church Extension grant of \$40,000 to the AFLC. The grant was divided among 19 congregation and projects and will be used to provide resources for special evangelism programs in established churches and to develop mission congregations.

Cloquet Teacher Honored by AAL for Financial Education

Emery Risdall, Cloquet, Minnesota was recently recognized in a nationwide awards program of Aid Association for Lutherans for his innovative approach to teaching students about finances. He was a finalist in the AAL Lutheran Educators Award for Financial Fitness program. Risdall is the principal of the junior high at St. Paul's Academy where he also teaches seventh and eighth grades. The school will receive \$500 to expand its financial literacy curriculum.

The financial literacy program at St. Paul's is integrated into the regular curriculum. Banking, taxes, installment buying, investments, budgeting and tithing to the church are among the units taught. More information about Risdall's creative program and those of other LEAFF award winners will be published on the AAL Web site:

www.aal.org/LifeResources.Youth_Resources/LEAFF

Edinburg, North Dakota — Grace Free Luther League hosted nearly 80 young people for an afternoon of Bible study, games, food and fellowship at the Cavalier Air Station last April 9. The annual outing has been increasing in numbers each year as the youth desire to gather in Christian fellowship with other area youth from AFLC churches in Hampden, Grafton, Larimore, Park River and Edmore.

The Grace youth meet weekly for Bible study and monthly for a business meeting. A fund raiser for the group is mowing the church yard. Each family in the congregation takes their turn at mowing, but if they cannot mow, they hire a member of the Luther League and all money is put into the treasury.

Jason Gudim, a 2000 graduate of AFLBS has accepted the call to be the youth director at First Lutheran in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. He will begin in the fall and will continue his education while serving as youth director.

West Coast District — From June 20-30, men from the district are planning to help build a hangar and do other work on the churches and buildings of the mission in Naknek and South Naknek, Alaska. For more information, contact Pastor Mike Crowell at 360-435-9191.

Congregational roster changes

Littleton, Colorado — Community of Hope Lutheran was accepted on the AFLC congregational roster at the May Coordinating Committee meeting. The former LCMS church is served by Rev. Douglas Lutz. The congregation meets in rented facilities in the Denver suburb. It is the third AFLC congregation in Colorado, along with the churches in Loveland and Parker.

Pepin, Wisconsin — The Free Lutheran Church of Ella was added to the congregational roster of the AFLC at a recent meeting. The home mission congregation has been associated with the AFLC for some time and is served by Pastor Paul Pillman.

Another home mission congregation associated with the AFLC, **Calvary Free Lutheran of Mesa, Arizona**, was officially added to the congregational roster during the coordinating committee's April meeting.

Warroad, Minnesota — Warroad Free Lutheran is no longer meeting and was officially removed from the AFLC's congregational roster.

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences (2 months) – January 1 - April 30, 2000

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN APRIL	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$252,865.00	\$16,713.01	87,332.65	35
Seminary	118,291.00	7,383.24	32,556.73	28
Bible School	164,270.00	10,386.88	51,733.91	31
Home Missions.	262,125.00	13,664.02	83,088.49	32
World Missions.	239,968.00	15,655.01	51,518.54	21
Capital Investment	15,226.00	768.34	3,409.95	22
Parish Education	69,480.00	11,266.87	51,001.89	73
Church Extension	25,285.00	642.65	11,320.78	45
TOTALS	\$1,147,510.00	76,480.02	371,962.94	32
TOTALS 1999	1,013,386.00	95,964.22	337,262.26	33

Goal 33%

Evangelism Department received \$3,394.27 in April.

Being childlike but not childish

One part of the newspaper my dad always read was the comics. I thought that was neat. He was definitely mature and grown-up, but that didn't mean he looked at laughing as something only for kids. He set a good example of being childlike while not being childish.

When the disciples were discussing who was the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, Jesus called a little child to stand among them and said, "Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3, 4, NIV).

A little child has no list of great achievements to brag about. What they've done is eat, sleep, cry and make messes. It is the same with us. In comparison to the almighty, holy God, we have no more reason to brag than the littlest infant. "You boast and brag. All such boasting is evil" (James 4:16, NIV).

No matter what we have done; no matter how long we have served; no matter how much we have given; we are to humble ourselves like little children before God, admitting we have not earned His favor. We have no reason to expect Him to be good to us. What we have done is make a lot of messes.

Little children are generally more willing to admit their dependence than we adults. Often with loud cries, they let their needs be known. That is a model for us. The Bible says, "... present your requests to God" (Philippians 4:6, NIV). Our Father in heaven graciously invites us to cry out, to share with Him what is going on in our lives.

Sometimes little children provide us with a great example of what it means to trust. Some years back a little girl was standing at the top level of a long flight of stairs. She saw me coming up the stairs and when I was still a few steps away, she jumped. She knew me as a friend. She was confident I would catch her so she gave a leap into my arms. She would have experienced some major hurt if I had let her down, but she trusted that wouldn't happen.

In Joshua 3, the Israelites are called to cross the Jordan river. The priests in the front were told to put their feet in the water first and then God would cause the water to stop flowing. They had to take a leap of faith. If God failed to keep His promise they were in

big trouble. They stepped off the bank and God kept His Word. They showed a childlike trust.

Our heavenly Father will catch us when we jump into His arms. He is strong enough. We can trust Him to keep His Word.

Are you avoiding jumping into God's arms thinking: "I'm going to wait till He gets closer; I don't want to put myself in that scary position of being totally dependent on Him; I'll just lean next to Him and not really depend on Him"? Step off of that place of trusting in yourself and trust fully in Him.

Often little kids have more fun than adults. They play, they laugh, they enjoy themselves. Some adults, on the other hand, seem to think never-smiling seriousness is a sign of maturity.

Being childlike in our relationship with God

means spending time when we simply enjoy being with Him. Most of us need to spend more time doing what to the human mind may not seem practical. Revel in His goodness. Rejoice in the great gifts He has showered upon us. Worship Him and rest in His presence, even if it may not appear to be accomplishing anything.

In II Samuel 6 we read of a time of worship and celebration over God's blessings. King David was in the lead. He "danced before the Lord with all his might, while he and the entire house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouts and the

sound of trumpets" (v. 14, 15, NIV). His wife Michal saw him and "despised him in her heart" (v. 16, NIV). She thought acting like he did wasn't dignified. It wasn't the way a mature king should conduct himself. David replied, "I will celebrate before the Lord" (v. 21, NIV).

Let us be a people who celebrate before the Lord and encourage others to do so as well.

Anne Graham Lotz talks about how many people would like to see her father, Billy Graham, but it just can't happen for all of them. She, however, because she is his child, can go right into his house whenever she wants.

Being childlike means, when our faith is in Jesus the Son, we can go to our Father in heaven whenever we want. We are welcomed in as His precious, beloved child. Are you His child today? You can be through faith in Christ. And if you are, be more childlike and spend more time with your loving Father.

— Pastor Craig Johnson

"Our heavenly Father will catch us when we jump into His arms. ... We can trust Him to keep His Word."

SOMETHING TO SHARE

A lesson at the feeder: Focus

There were several birds at the feeder. They looked similar, yet a little different. I decided to take a closer look.

"What are you doing?" my husband asked as I scanned the outside yard for the birds. I'm sure I resembled a bobble-head doll as my head went up, down and in figure eights looking for the birds.

"I want a closer look at those birds," I replied. "I just can't seem to find them."

"You just don't know how to use binoculars. I'll show you. First, have the binoculars in your hand, or hanging around your neck so you can easily grasp them. Now fix your eye on the bird you wish to see more closely. Without taking your eyes off the bird, bring the binoculars to your eyes."

And there they were! I smiled. I had just passed "Focus 101, Basic Binocular Technique."

What fun it is to be able to look closely at the various birds so quickly and easily after that instruction. From a distance the female purple finch and grosbeak look similar. Whoa, take a close look. They're distinctive ladies and you sure can tell them apart. Did you know there is a bird with a wedge cut and not to be confused with his cousin who has the boat cut? And so one begins to recognize the differing characteristics between bird varieties through

eye color, beak shape or color, feather patterns, flight patterns, calls, and many others.

I have learned much from focusing in on the birds and recognizing their uniqueness. "For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them" (Romans 12:4-6).

Focus on yourself, your family, your friends, your church body. God desires that we recognize our uniqueness. What gift or ability has God given you? You do have one. You have a personality, temperament and ability that is as distinctive and unique to you as your fingerprint. Even though members of the same family can be alike, still each one is an individual. Don't underestimate your individuality. Neither should we try to be what we are not. Sit down together with your family. Recognize and discuss the traits you see in each other. How can you use these abilities? How can you nurture the abilities you see in your children or complement the abilities of your spouse? How can you be useful for God's service?

"There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of

activities, but it is the same God who works all in all" (I Corinthians 12:4-6).

God designed us with our abilities. And with His Spirit within us, we can be vibrant and useful. Just as we look at the birds, admire their beauty and recognize their individuality, we need to do that for ourselves as well. We must allow God to use us. He will help us develop our gift and provide the opportunity to use it. His church works as one, yet when you take a closer look you see the individuals. There may be many musicians but each brings his own feeling to the worship. There are several teachers, yet each offers a message to different ages or interests. Some pray, some encourage, some support.

Have you identified your special traits? Enjoy developing them, using them. You will be shaped and molded into the unique servant God can use.



— Mary Christenson
Calvary Lutheran
Fergus Falls, Minnesota