

The Lutheran AMBASSADOR

June 30, 1998



St. Paul's Lutheran, Cloquet, Minnesota



Morgan Avenue Lutheran, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Celebrating 100 years in 1998

inside:
THAT
Amazing
grace



Zoar Free Lutheran, Hatton, North Dakota

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

June 30, 1998
Volume 36, Number 9



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AN ENCOURAGING WORD

Undeserved and overwhelming grace

A "At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior" (Titus 3:3-6).

Grace is undeserved favor.

Twenty-eight years ago on a warm, summer day, I drove my father's car to work. The day was beautiful, the car was almost new. A teenager could ask for nothing more. Changing lanes less than a block from work, the front fender of my father's car creased another car from its nose to its tail. The policeman said it was my fault. (They get paid to know those things.)

The day was no longer beautiful. I called home to let my mom know what happened. I went to work, but my mind was not there. What would my father say when he found out what I had done to one of his prized possessions? He didn't make me wait until I came home to find out.

When he got off work, he came to the place where I was employed. Obviously he observed his car in the parking lot; then he came in to see me. When he noticed that I was fine, he asked, "Did you get them good?" Although I had ruined something he prized, he was not angry. I'm sure he was disappointed, but he did not show it. My father was gracious, even though I did not deserve it.

Our heavenly Father is even

more gracious. I had to pay the insurance deductible to reverse the damage to my father's car. We have been rebellious to God and deserve death as our punishment. We are so spiritually poor that we cannot even pay the down payment on our debt to God. He recognized our predicament and worked out a plan to pay our debt. God, in the person of the Son, came to earth, lived a perfect life and allowed Himself to be punished with death so that we could go free. Paul described it clearly when he said, "You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:6-8).

At the cross Jesus took our sins, and gave us His righteousness. The Scriptures make this clear saying, "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (II Corinthians 5:21).

God's grace and love for us are so overwhelming, we naturally respond as Isaac Watts did when he penned the words, "Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all."



— **Pastor Del Palmer**
Faith Lutheran
Shakopee, Minnesota

sound bites

I have portrayed God as a lovesick father eager to forgive, and grace as a force potent enough to break the

1 chains that bind us, and merciful enough to overcome deep differences between us. Depicting grace in such sweeping terms makes people nervous, and I concede that I have skated to the very edge of danger. I have done so because I believe the New Testament does too.

— Philip Yancey

For the Gospel ... does not require our works for making us godly and serving us; yea, it abominates our works. On the contrary, it demands

4 that we believe in Christ, namely, that He has conquered sin, death, and hell for us and makes us godly, quickens us, and saves us, not by our works, but by His works and His suffering and dying, so that we may appropriate His death and victory as if we had achieved it ourselves.

— Martin Luther

6

When preaching the Gospel, you must not present it with a black cloud hovering over it, but proclaim free grace and unconditional consolation.

— C. F. W. Walther

2

Many years ago I was driven to the conclusion that the two major causes of most emotional problems among evangelical Christians are these: the failure to understand, receive, and live out God's unconditional grace and forgiveness; and the failure to give out that unconditional love, forgiveness, and grace to other people. ... We read, we hear, we believe a good theology of grace. But that's not the way we live.

— David Seamands

You need not be a Christian to build houses, feed the hungry, or heal the sick. There is only one thing the world cannot do. It cannot offer grace.

— Gordon MacDonald

Believers who are most desperate about themselves are the ones who express most forcefully their confidence in grace.

— Paul Tournier

5



— *Pastor Kenneth D. Moland*
Our Redeemer Lutheran
Kirkland, Washington

What do we mean by Grace?

A true understanding of the grace of God was so important to Martin Luther that he included *Sola Gratia* — that is, “grace alone” among the three main tenets of the Reformation. (The other two were “Faith Alone” and “The Word Alone.”) Because the Christian is saved by grace, (cf. Ephesians 2:8,9), Luther carefully defined the nature of grace in his teaching and writing. Failure to do so would have jeopardized the doctrine of salvation.

Grace is central in the teaching of the Christian church because it is central to the message of the Scriptures and fundamental to understanding the nature and character of God. God’s people have recognized the centrality of grace from the Aaronic benediction, “...The Lord make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious to thee....” to the Apostolic benediction, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.” The purpose of this article, then will be to define the remarkable concept of the grace of God.

The Giver and the gifts

God’s grace can be defined in two main ways:

1) Grace refers to God’s disposition toward us, that is, He is disposed to be kind and loving and merciful (Romans 3:24,25 and Ephesians 1:5,6). This is all because of who God is, not because anything meriting His goodness is found in people. Grace, in this sense, is not resident in the heart of man, but in the heart of God. In the fullest sense of the word, God is gracious. He chooses to be kind to fallen humans.

2) The second way grace is used biblically is to describe the gifts of grace. The Greek word for grace is *charis* and the word for “gifts of grace” is *charisma*. It is the gifts of grace which are given from God to equip and

empower the believer to serve and honor God. These gifts of grace are given to believers to enable willing and faithful service (I Peter 4:10), patience in suffering (I Peter 2:9), and careful administration of the office of ministry (Romans 15:15,16.) It is true that the gifts of grace dwell within the heart of the believer, exerting themselves unto good works. However, the gifts of grace in no way contribute to the salvation of the sinner. They belong in the realm of sanctification and service.

The grace of God and justification

The distinction between grace and the gifts of grace is vitally important when we speak of justifying grace. It also helps to define grace as we are led to a firm assurance of personal salvation by grace alone. The believer’s right standing before God, his justification, depends not on the gifts of grace but on the grace which resides in the heart of God. It puts the cause of justification totally outside of the subjective experience of the believer. No feeling, experience, or good work (even if caused by the Spirit’s indwelling) contributes to one’s right standing with God. The gifts of grace do not, cannot, contribute to justification.

God’s grace displayed in Christ

The grace of God is known in the person of Jesus Christ, of whom John wrote, “... grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17b), and, “... of His fullness we have all received, grace upon grace” (John 1:16). The central role of Christ in the doctrine of grace is further stated in Ephesians 1:5-9 where Paul exalts Christ as the expression of God’s

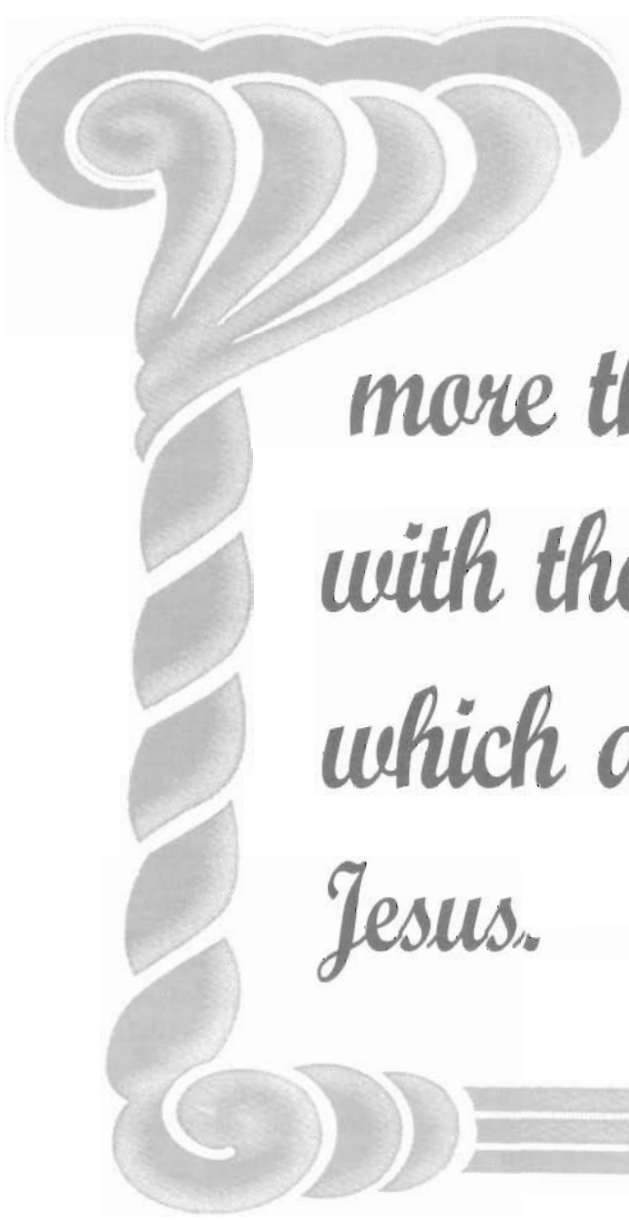
“kind intention of His will,” an apt definition of grace.

From this section of Ephesians we are led by God’s Spirit to a fuller understanding of grace. The “redemption through His [Christ’s] blood” speaks of the inestimable price willingly paid by God’s Son to show us His favor. Jesus died for ungodly sinners to show clearly God’s grace. He offers to all the full forgiveness of sins. God’s kind intention is that none should perish eternally, that none should be condemned forever, but that sins should be forgiven. So strong is His kind intention that even those who crucified Christ were offered forgive-

ness. We learn as well that the riches of grace are “lavished upon us.” God’s favor is such that He pours His kindness upon us abundantly. Where sin abounds, God’s grace is even more abundant.

The grace of God comes to us to make possible our salvation. Because God has chosen to show His unmerited favor to a lost creation, He can offer the great gift of forgiveness and the promise of eternal life freely. Rejoice in the fullness of His grace.

May the Lord make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee.



*And the grace
of our Lord was
more than abundant
with the faith and love
which are found in Christ
Jesus.*

— I Timothy 1:14 NASB



GRACE

express it clearly



— Pastor Terry L. Olson
Our Saviour's Lutheran
Thief River Falls, Minnesota

For by grace you are saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.

— Ephesians 2:1-10

Grace is one of the most important words of the gospel. It seems to be easy to define and explain. But as soon as we realize that our eternal salvation depends upon it, no word is more difficult to comprehend than grace.

Since our standing before a holy God must be by grace alone, this theology becomes and remains crucial. We must understand why God will receive us into His eternal heaven. We must not replace His grace with our works. In our ministry, whether in the congregation, or at home, grace must be expressed clearly and concisely to rightly divide the law and gospel.

Sin must be known

Because of original sin, man has nothing to offer a holy God in exchange for salvation. Paul describes you and me in our natural state as dead in trespasses and sins. This spiritual deadness expresses a complete inability to rid ourselves of sin and to stand righteous before God. We are by nature children of wrath. Recognition of this natural depravity is necessary. It is not until the greatness of our sin is known, that grace can be understood.

In "The Apology of the Augsburg Confession," the church fathers stated, "For the magnitude of the grace of Christ cannot be understood, unless our diseases be recognized. The entire righteousness of man is mere hypocrisy before God, unless we

acknowledge that our heart is naturally destitute of love, fear, and confidence in God." Any preaching or teaching of the law that minimizes man's natural condition is destructive to the understanding of grace.

The law must always be proclaimed so that it kills all hope of any righteousness in ourselves (II Corinthians 3:4-6). The law demands the willing obedience of heart, soul, mind and strength (Luke 10:27). Anything short of perfection brings God's wrath upon the sinner. The Holy Spirit continues to work this needed conviction in us so that we are finally convinced that "the mind of the flesh is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be" (Romans 8:7; I Corinthians 2:14). Romans 3:20 reminds us that "Through the law comes the knowledge of sin."

All preaching and teaching of the Law must not only bring to us conviction of sin but also point out that we are incapable of keeping the law through any efforts of our own. Therefore, the law makes us anxious to seek Christ and His righteousness. (Galatians 3:24).

Grace must be proclaimed

Grace is God's unmerited love toward us, forgiving our sins and justifying us freely through Christ who died on the cross for our sins. It is not some quality in man, whether inborn or infused, that gives him the ability to merit his own salvation. Luther said, "Grace consists in this, that God is merciful to us, shows Himself gracious for the sake of



the Lord Christ, forgives all sins and will not impute them unto us for eternal death. This is grace: the forgiveness of sins for the sake of the Lord Jesus, the covering up of all sins." Paul says in Ephesians 2, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us (made us alive) together with Christ, by grace you are saved." That is a gift of God!

When we proclaim God's grace by which believers are received into His Kingdom, we must remember that this grace is never given without Christ. It is necessary then to present the gospel of Christ in all of its truth and purity. The gospel lets us see the heart and attitude of God toward the repentant sinner. This saving message of Jesus Christ, true God and true man, who died on the cross for our sins and was raised again for our justification, cannot be preached and heard enough.

We cannot be saved by both grace and works (Romans 11:6). Our salvation must be by grace alone. Yes, Christ alone.

Grace is freely given then to the most undeserving, who realize they have no right

to this gift of forgiveness and know they deserve the wrath of God. The gospel of Christ's redeeming love must faithfully be told again and again, since by nature we cannot grasp it. May we always be clear when we preach and teach God's grace.

*Salvation unto us has come
By God's free grace and favor;
Good works cannot avert our doom,
They help and save us never.
Faith look to Jesus Christ alone,
Who did for all the world atone;
He is our one Redeemer.*

*From sin our flesh could not abstain,
Sin held its sway unceasing;
The task was useless and in vain,
Our guilt was e'er increasing.
None can remove sin's poisoned dart
Or purify our guileful heart —
So deep is our corruption.*

*Since Christ hath full atonement made
And brought to us salvation,
Each Christian therefore may be glad
And build on this foundation.
Thy grace alone, dear Lord, I plead,
Thy death is now my life indeed,
For thou has paid my ransom.*

— Paul Speratus
AMBASSADOR HYMNAL No.410



**"This saving
message of Jesus
Christ, true God and
true man, who died
on the cross for our
sins and was raised
again for our justifi-
cation, cannot be
preached and heard
enough."**

Sufficient grace

— Janet Fedje
Bethel Lutheran
Grafton,
North Dakota

The Friday evening birthday party two years ago started out as a pleasant end of another busy June day of swimming with my children and watching a Little League game. As I walked toward a chair with a plate of food and cake, a surge of intense pain went from my neck up to my head. A veteran of migraine headaches, I knew this was different.

My husband, Dick, took me home while I tried to convince myself the pounding pain really was just a migraine. Nausea and intensifying pain sent me to the emergency room later that night where I received pain medication and returned home to sleep it off.

The next three days were spent resting and trying to find a comfortable position that would minimize the headache. All the while, my neck was stiffening, my head throbbed and by Monday morning my speech became affected. On Monday, all my attempts to see a neurologist that day were thwarted simply because I didn't have a primary physician. I would have to wait until the end of the week. I was frustrated, in pain and felt like I needed to resume some normalcy. My solution was to sit in the car and watch my son's Little League game. I thought maybe, like a bad nightmare, it would just go away. But it worsened. I could no longer walk without doubling over after a few steps or tolerate bright lights and noise.

On Tuesday, with the help of a nurse practitioner friend and God's leading, I saw a neurologist and was admitted at United Hospital's intensive care unit in Grand Forks. I was alert enough to understand the thin thread holding me between life and death. A spinal tap revealed the seriousness of my condition: a brain bleed.



The rest of the evening was a whirlwind. Doctors whisked in and out, radiologists warned me of the risks of tests, and always the possible rebleed. I began to shake. I was scared. My husband and four children, ages two to 11, needed me!

Dick and I had been married only a short time when the Holy Spirit spoke to me during special meetings with Pastor Mike Brandt. For nearly 16 years, I had known what it was to walk with the Lord as my personal Savior. My fear that agonizing Tuesday evening was in leaving my family and the possibility of dying, even though I was prepared to enter eternity.

That night as I laid alone in that dark, quiet hospital room with Dick at my side, thoughts too overwhelming to express swarmed in my confused and numb mind.

Showing

— Betty Ann Kieselhorst
Lutheran Church of Hope
Loveland, Colorado

As you look around the sanctuary on Communion Sunday and watch the members as they return to their pew after receiving the wonderful gift of grace, what do you see on their faces? Happiness? Or is the pain of knowing what our sin has done reflected there? And yet we are forgiven. We can have pure joy. What could cause greater happiness?

It's true, the joy in our hearts might not always show on our faces. Yet we should have the desire to, in some way, let those around us see how precious is this gift and how happy we are to be recipients.

Have you ever noticed someone singing "alleluia" without one ounce of joy reflected on their face? How can we sing His praise and not smile? How can we con-

That's when God's grace became so real that I'll never be the same!

Bible verses I had memorized as a child and adult, flooded my soul; verses I never realized I knew in their entirety. I had taught children in our "Kid's Club" to memorize Scripture because "God will honor His Word hidden in our hearts." The Holy Spirit brought these verses of promised strength and comfort to me. Songs I had sung in concert or had taught the children's choir at church now ministered to my heart. When dawn broke, my fear had turned to remarkable peace.

Philippians 4:6-7 became most special: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

God proved Himself faithful to me in such a wonderful way. Later in that two-week hospital stay I was asked, "Why you, Janet?"

I answered, "I'm not sure, but I do know that God is my Rock, my Refuge and my Redeemer. It was my privilege to have experienced the power of the Holy Spirit as my Comforter. I know it is in Christ alone I can put my trust and not in my family or the doctors." Oh yes, there was pain from my head to the base of my spinal cord. Any bright light or sound was unbearable. My heart ached to hold my children. There were nights I hurt too much to be able to pray, yet I was comforted in knowing others were praying for me. God is faithful and I was on the receiving end of those diligent prayers.

I'll never forget that first Sunday I returned to church. I was overcome with the sense of honor and privilege to worship our gracious heavenly Father and be surrounded by faithful, praying Christians. To hold, teach, and train my children is such an honor. God has shown me His faithfulness in life and now He has shown me His faithfulness when facing death.

Indeed, His grace is sufficient for today!



God's grace

tain ourselves in praise of our merciful God who loves us so much?

I am not advocating a faith based on emotions. I do not purpose that we become "dancing-in-the-aisles" Christians. But it would be grand to see all of us experiencing and expressing God's love as we praise Him and place every ounce of attention, devotion and joy into our worship! He deserves no less and much, much more.

As Christians, our daily lives are also to show God's grace. Every minute of every day we are re-born, re-forgiven and welcomed into God's family as brothers and sisters of our Lord Jesus. How does this affect the way we respond to all those everyday things that make up who we are and what we do? We have no choice but to love as He first loved us. In every situation our first thought should be: "What would God have me do?"

Some of the young people in our congregation are wearing wrist bands that have the initials W.W.J.D. — standing for "What Would Jesus Do?" That is good for all of us to remember as we make the decisions that form the pattern of our day.

What would Jesus do if someone came to Him hungry? *Yes, I'll help at the soup kitchen next week.*

What would Jesus do if someone came to Him in rags? *Yes, there are unused clothes in our closet that we'll give to the poor.*

What would Jesus do if someone came to Him beaten by an out-of-control mate? *Yes, I'll spend some volunteer hours at the shelter for battered families.*

What would Jesus do if He found someone dying to hear the gospel? *Yes, Lord, send me!*

Respond to God's grace. Show your appreciation that He does not treat us as we deserve but rather as loved, forgiven, cherished children. Above all, share this glorious news at every opportunity God gives you. So many are lost and afraid. We must reach out just as He asked us to do. Knowing what He has done for us, how can we refuse?

"What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul ... And when from death I'm free, I'll sing His love for me, and through eternity I'll sing on, I'll sing on; and through eternity I'll sing on" (AMBASSADOR HYMNAL, No. 72).



From deaconess to dorm grandma

— Louise Burton
AFLC Schools librarian

These past two years Helen Kjos has had the title of head housekeeper at AFLBS. She has also served as master gardener and lawn mower, transportation chief, tutor, counselor, friend, and dorm grandma.

Serving her Lord has long been her life's desire. She grew up in El Campo, Texas, in a church that was part of the former Augustana Synod (Swedish Lutheran).

"Confirmation was such a meaningful time for me," said Helen. "It was when I dedicated my life to Christ. I remember going outside and telling God that I was His, and asking Him to use me. I asked Him to show me what I should do."

Shortly after that, an article on Augustana's Immanuel Deaconess Institute, located in Omaha, Nebraska, appeared in a Sunday school paper.

"I immediately knew that was what I should do," Helen smiled, "I wrote for information, and during the rest of high school, my goal was to go to Immanuel."

Immanuel trained women to become deaconesses: full-time Christian workers on the mission fields, in churches, hospitals, social missions and other church institutions. The Omaha school had a nursing home, invalid home, children's home, hospital and a school of nursing. The women students had to be at least eighteen and single. The first year of training included Bible study, classes in social services and work in every department of the institute. Helen especially liked working in the children's home.

Though it has been over thirty years ago, she recalled her first attempts at cooking for the children. "I was making gravy. First, I put in too much flour. It was too thick, so I poured in more water. But then it was too thin. Finally, after repeated additions of flour and water, I got it the right thickness. But by then I had enough gravy to feed an army,



Helen Kjos

and I don't think it tasted very good!"

After one year, the women were invested. They received the title of sister, and were given a uniform — a simple blue or gray dress with a white collar. Helen, along with many of the other sisters, then went on to a year at the Lutheran Bible Institute in Minneapolis, the first Lutheran Bible school in America.

After that, the career paths of the deaconesses branched out. Those planning to become nurses went back for nurses' training. Many became parish workers in local congregations, where they did office work and hospital visitation, among other things. Others became overseas missionaries. Some became teachers at nursing schools. The dean of women at LBI was a sister of the diaconate, another sister was in charge of Augustana Homes.

They were encouraged to get further training. After receiving a B.A. degree, they would then become a consecrated sister.

"Normally, deaconesses were provided with food, lodging, and clothes, and did not receive a salary," Helen explained. "We would be given an allowance of about \$50 a month."

Helen became a counselor at Bethany Children's Home in Duluth, Minnesota. "It was for kids in trouble. This home was often the last chance for kids before being sent to reform schools. I was responsible for a group of six girls, ages 12 to 18."

She did everything from getting them up in the morning to getting them to bed, from cooking to tutoring to mentoring to leading in devotions. It took a lot of energy, faith and courage. Helen grinned, "Sometimes a girl would refuse to get up. So, I'd lift the mattress and roll her right out!"

She worked at Bethany for ten years. During that time, she met and married John Kjos. "Sisters had to be single, so when we married, I had to resign from the diaconate. But I worked at the home five more years," Helen said.

The diaconate movement is nearly forgotten in many Lutheran circles today. According to Abdel Ross Wentz's *The Lutheran Church in American History*, "Dr. W.A. Pas-savant, the founder of the Pittsburgh Synod, took the lead in establishing institutions of mercy. He got his inspiration from Pastor Fleidner, of Kaiserswerth, Germany. He began with a hospital in Pittsburgh in 1849. Then came an orphanage at the same place, ... That same year he brought some Lutheran sisters from the Kaiserswerth institutions and thus introduced the Protestant order of deaconesses into this country."

With the beginning of the 1900s, it was Georg Sverdrup who was instrumental in encouraging the Norwegian Lutherans in America to develop a deaconess program as a way for women to serve in ministry.

One hundred years later, the Lutheran "Mother Houses" have nearly all disappeared. A remnant continues in Lutheranism, generally in the eastern U.S. and among some German Lutherans in America.

An ELCA deaconess community continues in Gladwyne, Pennsylvania, which is a merger of the Omaha, Philadelphia and Baltimore communities. Last May it was decided to move this community to Chicago in the future.





The 1997-99 FLY Board (L. to R.) Wes Paterson, Ben Monseth, Pastor Tom Schierkolk, Jeremy Erickson, Wade Mobley, Holly Roed, Pastor Kevin Olson, Bob Halvorson, Nicole Papilon, and Andrew Papilon.

WMF In Memoriam

Myrtle Keller, Wallace, SD
 Eileen Sherman, Morris, IL
 Marjorie Larson, Morris, IL
 Agnes Vietti, Houston, TX
 Rev. Harold Gridal
 Carol Nels James, New Hope, MN
 Jon Hanson
 Marion Calton, White Earth, ND
 Kathryn Verke, Minot, ND
 Ardene Thompson, Froid, MT
 George Sandberg, Tioga, ND
 Lawrence Thompson, Brookings, SD
 Margaret Sletten, Bagley, MN
 Helga Baker, Clearbrook, MN
 Margaret Nelson, Kirkland, WA
 Clarabelle Johnson, Webster, SD
 Minnie Olson, Drummond, WI
 Larry Meidema, Bismarck, ND
 Dulcie Sunne, Baudette, MN
 Grace Beek, Buffalo, ND
 Bjorn Martinson, McVile, ND
 Arnold Mathison, McVile, ND
 Irene Rasmussen, Sunburg, MN
 LaVerne Solberg, Aneta, ND
 Derald Hartsoch, Ray, ND
 Evelyn Hove, Ray, ND

The 1999 FLY Convention

preparations began last September, immediately after the 1997 convention. The Free Lutheran Youth board is responsible for planning the biannual national youth convention. Each meeting begins with a prayer and praise time as the next convention is lifted up in prayer. President Bob Halvorson says, "It is an overwhelming task to plan a well organized event for 1700 people."

The 1999 convention is June 29-July 3 at Estes Park, Colorado. The theme *More to this Life*, was suggested by Ben Monseth. He said, "I believe there are many youth out

there asking themselves, 'is there more to this life?'" The board voted unanimously on the theme and chose John 10:10 as the Bible verse on which to base the next convention.

Watch for the brochures and the T-shirts that will be printed this summer. Jeremy Erickson and Josh Skogerboe will be working on a music CD that will be ready before the convention and can be used as a teaching tool for new songs that will be sung at the '99 convention. Please join the FLY Board in praying that Jesus would be lifted up in the mountains of Colorado!

Rev. Leslie F. Brandt, 78,

one-time pastor of Pukwana and St. Olaf congregations in South Dakota, died on January 14, in California. A retired ELCA pastor, his roots were in the Lutheran Free Church, where his father, Rev. E.F. Brandt, served for some years as the church evangelist.

Leslie Brandt gained wide recognition through his paraphrases of Scripture, particularly the Psalms, and eventually published 24 books in the "Now" series.

Educated at Augsburg College and Theological Seminary, he had served briefly as a missionary to China and as a service pastor in Taiwan and Japan. In addition to the Pukwana parish, he served in Minneapolis, Minnesota; Williston, North Dakota; and Westminster, California. At Williston, in the late 1950s, he was a pioneer TV preacher in western North Dakota through a Sunday evening telecast from the studio of the local station.

Last October he was honored as a distinguished alumnus of Augsburg College.

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard
 Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences (4 months) - January 1 - April 1998

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN APRIL	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$224,870.00	\$18,247.66	95,932.15	43
Seminary	112,558.00	8,750.84	29,061.93	26
Bible School	180,678.00	13,155.01	42,992.20	24
Home Missions.	260,263.00	18,107.74	76,241.91	29
World Missions.	420,686.00	31,501.17	117,722.88	28
Capital Investment	16,276.00	522.43	1,874.17	12
Parish Education	50,335.00	3,726.88	19,697.32	39
Church Extension	18,092.00	301.94	1,741.41	33
TOTALS	\$1,278,758.00	94,313.67	385,263.95	30
TOTALS 1997	1,223,905.00	90,584.04	343,377.21	28
Goal 33%				

Thief River Falls, Minnesota — Our Saviour's Lutheran is building their new church. The 400-seat sanctuary is located on Highway 59, southeast of the city. Projected occupancy is scheduled for later this fall.

Greenbush, Minnesota — United Free Lutheran Church celebrated their 25th Anniversary on June 14, 1998. Guest speaker was Pastor Gene Sundby, Outlook, Saskatchewan, and president of the AFLC-Canada. Pastor Dennis Gray serves the congregation.

Lincoln, Illinois — Good Shepherd Lutheran Church of Lincoln, one of the AFLC's newest congregation, celebrated the installation of Pastor Roger David on Pentecost Sunday, May 31. AFLC President Robert Lee officiated, and friends from the Ottawa and Milford, Illinois, congregations were present for the service. Pastor David, who will continue to work as an attorney for the State of Illinois on a part-time basis, has been licensed as an AFLC lay pastor by the coordinating committee.

Pastor Earl Korhonen recently began his new ministry serving the Hosanna and Timberland Lutheran congregations in the Cumberland and Barronett area of Wisconsin. His new address and phone number is 20648 County Road H, Barronett, WI 54813, Home: (715) 468-4187, Timberland office: (715) 468-4403, Hosanna office: (715) 822-5255. His e-mail address is: Ejkorhonen@Juno.com.

Pitt Meadows, British Columbia — A new Bible study fellowship began meeting on May 31, 1998, with Pastor Steve Olinger of Ferndale, Washington as the leader. The community is a rapidly growing suburb of Vancouver, British Columbia with a young population. The AFLC-Canada has been praying for this area after a local couple contacted them. If you know someone in the area who might be interested, contact Pastor Gene Sundby at (306) 867-8785, Pastor Steve Olinger at (206) 380-3509, or the AFLC Home Missions office at (612) 545-5631.

Pastor Michael Burke, Ottawa, Illinois, has accepted a call to Hope Free Lutheran Church, Ishpeming, Michigan. Formerly with the Church of the Lutheran Brethren, Pastor Burke was approved for the fellowship roster by the AFLC Coordinating Committee through colloquy.

Jason Norlein, Coon Rapids, Minnesota, began work at the AFLC headquarters and campus on May 1, 1998 as a computer technician. The 1998 University of Minnesota graduate is a member of Maranatha Free Lutheran in Spring Lake Park. His summer position is to be re-evaluated on August 31. Jason plans on attending AFLBS in the fall.

Mesa, Arizona — The Bible study fellowship at the Don and Delores Olson home passed a resolution to organize as a worshipping congregation, setting a goal of beginning worship in late fall of 1998. The group began with about 12 members, and has seen as many as 29 attending.



New members at Resurrection Lutheran.



The Guatemala mission team.

Beltrami, Minnesota — Pictured are the new members who joined Resurrection Free Lutheran this spring. Pastor Tim Johnson serves the congregation which will be celebrating its tenth anniversary this year.

Early last spring, Resurrection Lutheran sent out a mission team of six members including its pastor, to

San Andres, Guatemala. A son of the congregation, Tim and Dena Stromstad, work with the Bible and Literacy League and direct an orphanage in both Guatemala and Costa Rica. During the two-week stay, the team helped with work projects and shared their testimonies and the gospel. Pastor Johnson preached in English while it was

being translated into Spanish and Quiche. Several people responded to the message by coming forward for prayer. A lot of the team's time was spent with the 28 orphan children. The congregation sent out another team of six to Costa Rica on June 2-13. The vision of missions has increased in the congregation and lives have been changed.

News briefs from the mission field

Furlough begins in December. We are truly looking forward to seeing many of you and sharing about the work in Brazil first hand. However, we are realizing how much we will miss the school and students as well as our congregation. Campo Mourão now seems like home. We are praying that God will provide teachers to take our place next year. If your church or a group in your church would like to see and hear about Brazil please contact us as we are already setting up our travel schedule. Whenever possible, we would like to spend several days with each supporting/interested congregation to be able to get to know individuals better and attend weekly events at your church. We are a large family with four little ones under seven, but our children come equipped with sleeping bags, and camping is an adventure for them, so hopefully finding a corner for us to sleep won't be a burden for your churches.

— **David and Sarah Nelson**
Campo Mourão, Brazil

Pastor Tom Olson recently passed the necessary tests for receiving his private pilot license. Being able to fly a plane is a necessity for Pastor Olson as he begins his new ministry pastoring congregations in Naknek and South Naknek, Alaska. He rejoices as well in the way God has provided for the costs of the flying lessons to be covered. The Olson family left for Alaska on June 19.

Beaverton, Oregon — Willamette Free Lutheran began meeting in June in a new facility. The not-yet-one-year-old congregation is renting 24 hours a day, seven days a week, a former craft store in the suburb of Portland. The congregation is served by Pastor Craig Johnson.

Earlier this spring we began another evangelistic Bible study in a suburb called Ojocaliente. The first day, two of the women were so anxious to know Christ after having experienced much false teaching that they prayed to receive Him as their Lord and Savior. It was a very joyful moment, but I must confess I've grown a little skeptical after seeing the same thing happen other times and absolutely zero fruit of repentance and righteousness in their lives.

That hasn't been the case this time. Both Leti and Ana Maria have shown that there has truly been some changes in their lives. The Apostle Paul said that after the seed is planted and watered, finally it is the Lord that causes the growth. We praise God for the little sprouts that we have seen in the lives of Leti and Ana Maria. Pray with us for Ana Maria's husband as he is now coming with her to worship at Spring of Living Water Lutheran Church in Aguascalientes.

Thank you for your prayers for the spread of the gospel here in Aguascalientes. As we see Satan prowling about as a roaring lion seeking to devour new Christians and hinder God's work in people's hearts, we are daily reminded that we cannot do this work alone. You are in our hearts and our prayers and you have encouraged us.

— **Todd and Barb Schierkolk**
Aguascalientes, Mexico

Pastor John Allstaedt, Eben Junction, Michigan, has resigned as pastor of Calvary Free Lutheran Church to accept a position as resident chaplain in the Clinical Pastoral Education program at Wausau Hospital, Wausau, Wisconsin. He has served the Upper Michigan congregation for the past five years, and will begin his new ministry on July 1.

Thanks for the encouragement

We are thankful to God for Pastor Jerry Peterson's sharing from God's Word with us these past few months as the writer of "An Encouraging Word" column. We welcome as our new writer of the column, beginning this issue, Pastor Del Palmer of Shakopee, Minnesota.

— **The Editors**

Monroe, Washington — Monroe Free Lutheran Church, at a special congregational meeting on May 31, 1998, voted to change the name of the congregation to New Hope Free Lutheran Church. The congregation changed its name to coincide with a geographical move of nine miles to the east to the town of Snohomish. The first worship service in Snohomish was June 7. The congregation has entered into a rental agreement with the Seventh Day Adventist Church of Snohomish to use their facilities.

Please continue to pray for the congregation during these times of transition. Pastor Earl Korhonen completed his ministry there on June 21.

Pastor Wayne Juntunen, Grafton, North Dakota, resigned as pastor of Bethel Free Lutheran Church, which he has served since 1991 together with Aspelund Lutheran Church, Walhalla. His last Sunday in the parish will be July 12. He has accepted a call to serve as interim pastor of Zion Lutheran Church (Apostolic), Hancock, Michigan.

Ishpeming, Michigan — Hope Free Lutheran held spring special meetings April 24-26, with Pastor Tim Carlson of Wheatland, Iowa. The theme for the meetings was "New Life in Christ." Pastor Carlson also shared slides and testimony of his recent trip to Israel during a Saturday men's breakfast. Saturday afternoon he spoke with the youth on creation followed by a picnic/fishing trip to Goldmine Lake. Praise be to God for a wonderful weekend in the Word.

Churches celebrating 100th Anniversaries in 1998

Zoar Free Lutheran, Hatton, North Dakota, July 18-19.

St. Paul's Lutheran, Cloquet, Minnesota, July 24-26.

Morgan Avenue Lutheran, Minneapolis, Minnesota, October 4.

Christianity will top two billion by start of new millennium

By the year 2000, the number of Christians on earth will exceed two billion for the first time in history, according to missions statisticians David Barrett and Todd Johnson. Using a fairly broad definition of "Christian," the researchers calculate that today, Christians number 1.985 billion, but at the present rate of growth that number will reach 2.024 billion by the year 2000.

During the 20th century, the number of Christians has increased 350 percent, from 558 million at the turn of the century. The gain is consistent with world population growth, which has nearly quadrupled from 1.819 billion in 1990 to a projected 6.091 billion by the year 2000.

In fact, the percentage of Christians in the world's population is

declining slightly, from 34.4 percent to 33.2 percent. Barrett and Johnson say the decline comes because most Christians live in the developed world, where birth rates are lower than the world average.

Christianity remains the world's largest religion. In second place is Islam with 1.179 billion adherents, or 19.9 percent of the world's population. Islam is growing much faster than Christianity, and has increased nearly six-fold from its turn-of-the-century total of 200 million.

Ranking third are the world's 767.4 million Hindus, representing 12.9 percent of the world population.

Those professing no religion have grown explosively in this century, up from 2.9 million in 1990 to

786.7 million today, an increase of 262 times. Buddhists number 356.9 million (six percent of world population). There are 148.4 million atheists in the world today (2.5 percent) — the only group which has shown a decline since 1970. Sikhs number 22.9 million (0.4 percent), and there are 15 million Jews (0.25 percent).

Within Christianity, the greatest number belong to the Roman Catholic Church, which has over one billion members worldwide. Protestants number 386.8 million, Orthodox 224.7 million, and Anglicans 55 million. Europe has most of the world's Christians (531.5 million) followed by Latin America (461.5 million), Africa (329.9 million), Asia (288 million), and North America (223.5 million).

Survey: Christianity showing no visible signs of nationwide revival

America's Christians are talking about revival. They're praying for revival. They're anticipating revival. But according to an annual national tracking study of religious behavior and beliefs conducted by the Barna Research Group, Americans are not yet experiencing revival.

Each year Barna conducts surveys about church attendance, Bible reading, Sunday school attendance, involvement in small groups that meet for religious purposes, volunteering at a church, and whether the person being questioned can be defined as a born-again Christian or evangelical Christian. For all seven of those measures, the responses from a national sample of 1006 adults questioned in 1998 were statistically identical to the responses from the 1997 survey. In fact, when compared to statistics for 1991, church attendance and Bible reading show lower levels of involvement (the other five measures are essentially unchanged from their levels of seven years ago).

A large majority of adults describe themselves as "religious" — currently more than two out of three adults (69 percent). This is up from

six out of 10 (61 percent) in 1991.

Other behavioral indicators have remained stable. Overall, slightly more than four out of 10 adults (43 percent) claim they attend church services in a typical week. That is identical to the 1997 figure. While there have been minor dips and jumps in this figure in the past six years, the level has stayed relatively constant since 1993. Church volunteerism and small group involvement have also remained stable. One out of four adults volunteer in a typical week (25 percent); slightly less than one out of five adults (18 percent) attend a small group that meets during the week for Bible study, prayer or Christian fellowship (other than a Sunday school class). Four out of five adults (80 percent) claim they prayed to God during the past week, a figure unchanged from the most recent prior measurement (83 percent in 1996).

Bible reading may be experiencing a bit of a rebound, even though the current levels are well below those experienced in the late '80s and early '90s. Today, slightly less than four out of 10 adults (38 percent) read

the Bible during a typical week, other than when they are at a church.

The study also found that a significant proportion of adults plan to change their church in the coming year. Among people who attend a Christian church at least once a month, 11 percent said such a transition was likely. If true, that represents more than 15 million people changing their church home in the next 12 months.

George Barna, president of the research firm that conducted the survey, summarized the findings. "God and faith are still hot, but long-term or intense religious commitments are not. Despite their fascination with spirituality, most church people are only moderately devoted to their current church and they are not deeply invested in spiritual growth. It seems that many adults are awaiting the next big spiritual fad to explore. The breadth of our intrigue with faith remains much more extensive than the depth of our commitment to genuine spiritual development."

(The above stories were used by permission of the EP News Service.)

What we need to hear

We often put the word grace in the name of our churches and in the lyrics of our songs. But is it at the center of our lives? A recent survey by the Barna Report said 54% percent of Lutherans surveyed agreed strongly or somewhat agreed with the statement "Can a good person earn his way to heaven?" We in the AFLC must not dismiss those statistics by saying, "That must be those other Lutherans." We ourselves need to hear time and time again that salvation is not earned. It is a gift of God's grace.

Grace is God's undeserved goodness to us, expressed most clearly and powerfully in Jesus' death on the cross for our sins and His resurrection from the dead, giving us life abundant and eternal with Him. Grace is what God has done for us. It is to be the main thing we declare to others and meditate on ourselves.

It is tempting to make the law — instruction on what we must do — the main item we present to Christian and non-Christian alike. The non-Christian does need to hear the law. That is because "through the law we become conscious of sin" (Romans 3:20, NIV). He needs to hear that he has broken God's law and is deserving of death (Romans 6:23).

The one who is apart from Jesus does not need to first hear direction on how to be good. He is unable to keep those commands if the Spirit of God isn't living in his heart. The Bible tells a person not made alive by Christ they are "dead in your transgressions and sins" (Ephesians 2:1, NIV). No matter how clear the teaching or how gifted the instructor, a dead dog isn't going to do any tricks. It needs to be alive.

Instruction on what to do will not give life. It is the good news of what Jesus has done that does that. "The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life" (II Corinthians 3:6, NIV). "The letter" is described further in II Corinthians 3 as the ministry of Moses, "the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone" (II Corinthians 3:7, NIV).

Many want to see the Ten Commandments hanging on the walls in all classrooms and courtrooms. This would be good, but if it does happen and everyone reads and memorizes them they will not then all be right with God. They may live a little more moral lives, but still be just as lost if they don't hear about Jesus. To be in a right relationship with

the Lord, people need to hear they have failed to keep the Ten Commandments and they are worthy of condemnation. But Jesus kept the law perfectly on our behalf and because of His sacrifice we can be children of God. It is His "ministry that brings righteousness!" (II Corinthians 3:9, NIV).

"If a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law" (Galatians 3:21, NIV). It is Christ who justifies, who makes us right with God. "The law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:24, NIV).

But what about the Christian, the one who has already heard about Jesus and the cross and the resurrection? Isn't what he needs now a whole bunch of "do this" and "how to's"?

Yes, we need to hear what we are to do. That is part of God's Word. But it is not the main part. Even those who know the Lord as their Savior need to continually hear the heart of Scripture: the good news of what Jesus has done.

The Bible asks, "After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?" (Galatians 3:3, NIV). Our good works don't get us into the kingdom of God and they don't keep us in. We remain dependent on Christ. It is by focusing on Christ and what He has done, is doing and going to do that we find strength and motivation to grow in Him. As Dr. C. F. W.

Walther said in his book, *Law and Gospel*, "Even the most corrupt congregation can be improved ... by nothing else than the preaching of the Gospel in all its sweetness."

Our tendency is often to wake up worrying about what we need to do. We go through the day telling others what they need to do and getting frustrated when they don't do it. Then we go to bed full of guilt about what we didn't do. Let's instead begin the day with eager anticipation, thinking about what God has promised to do. Spend the day trusting in God's grace, looking to see what Jesus is doing and for opportunities to share grace in our words and actions. Then end the day thanking the Lord for His forgiveness and for what He did. Because of grace we can make grace more than a word in our church names and songs, but the core of our sharing and living.

— *Pastor Craig Johnson*

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THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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Periodicals

Camp is Coming!

Family Camp at The ARC is a fantastic vacation package!

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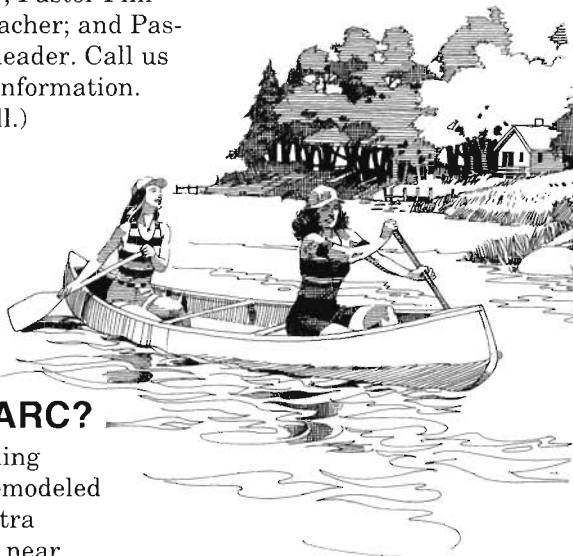
The ministry staff will be: Pastor Jeff Swanson — evening speaker; Pastor Phil Haugen — morning Bible teacher; and Pastor Tim Carlson — worship leader. Call us at 1-800-294-2877 for more information. (The Good News Lodge is full.)

**Call us at
1-800-294-2877
for more
information!**

What's new at The ARC?

Bethel Chapel, the building used for VBS classes, was remodeled this winter and is a great extra meeting space. The building near the "Welcome" sign was remodeled and will be used for registration, the nurse's station, etc.

The ARC board approved ground breaking this summer for a new auditorium/gymnasium! We are excited as this project will potentially introduce more groups to The ARC. The new building will hold up to 1000 people when used as an auditorium and will have two basketball courts for use as a gymnasium. Lutheran Brotherhood is currently setting up a matching fund program specifically to help us finance this project. This is separate from the program already in place for outdoor ministries.



Can't make it to family camp this summer? We've got several other retreats remaining this year and there is always next year!

Single's Retreat

September 18-20, 1998

Open to any and all single adults. Come, enjoy the speaker, Keith Quanbeck, the music and activities.

Classic's Retreat

October 2-4, 1998

For adults of a certain *classic* age. Hear Pastor Walter Johnson and experience the luncheon cruise on the St. Croix River in full color!

Fall Family Retreat

October 23-25, 1998

Hear Pastors Jerry Holmaas and Kevin Olson and the Landgren Family Puppets.

Please pray for the safety of The ARC staff as we begin construction of this new building. Continue to remember us as we minister to hundreds of men, women and children who may not know Jesus Christ as Savior. That connection is the sole purpose of our work here. Pray for hearts to be receptive to the gift of eternal life that spans generations and denominations.